

# Parashas Zachor Tetzaveh

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This week “hosts” the second of the special *Maftirs*, *Parashas Zachor*, that we insert at this time of year because of Purim and Pesach. Whether Haman was a purebred Amaleki or just “became” one in life, it doesn't matter. He acted like one and that is enough. He is there trying to do what the original Amalek did back in Moshe Rabbeinu’s time.

Regarding the writing of *Megillas Esther* and making it a national obligation to read each year, the Gemora says that Mordechai and Esther faced opposition. There were already three references to Amalekian wars and *Megillas Esther* would have been the fourth. Therefore, they needed a verse to justify an additional קמ"ד and, as the Gemora says (and history proves), they found it.

It’s an interesting footnote on history. If the story of Purim happened today, all the Jewish magazines would be all over it without even asking a *shailah*. True, what they might write would not become part of Tanach, but that seemed to be the lesser of the issues twenty-four hundred years ago. The main concern proclaims the Jewish victory to the nations of that time and henceforth.

The question is, how come no one knew about the fourth reference to Amalek before Mordechai and Esther? Was it one of those sources that you don't notice until you need it? If yes, then maybe there is a fifth, something we wouldn't have thought to look for until after the Holocaust. After all, many hold that Hitler, *yshv'z*, at least had the spiritual status of an Amaleki. He certainly played the part to perfection.

But, you will argue, all those *other* attacks resulted in some kind of miraculous victory for the Jewish People. The Nazis were defeated, but it was hardly a miraculous victory for the Jewish People. And even though it did lead to the return of *Eretz Yisroel* to Jewish control three years later, many argue that was no victory for the Jewish People either, and even just the opposite.

History sure has changed since the Purim miracle occurred. Until that time, prophecy had been a part of everyday Jewish life for a thousand years. Purim, it seems, was kind of a last hurrah for the days of more overt Divine Providence. Chanukah was a miracle, but they weren't even sure about making it a national holiday at first. And with the rise of the Roman Empire came the downfall of direct Divine assistance to overcome our enemies, at least on a national scale.

It's not that God was no longer pulling all the strings. Of course He was, *is*. But since that time, He has worked through so many intermediaries and used so many different means that it is easy for people to overlook His involvement, or doubt it altogether. Many have. Many do.

The other day in a taxi on the way to the *Kosel*, the driver asked me what I thought about America and whether they would come to Israel's aid in the impending war. I told him that I had little idea about what was going on since I don't really lis-

ten to the news these days.

He was surprised and questioned my judgment. I answered him that I didn't want to lose sight that God is behind all of it and only He knows what will really happen next and when.

He countered, mostly to justify his approach, that watching the news doesn't take away from the fact that God runs the entire show. But, he insisted, it does help to keep a person ready for what might happen next.

So, I explained further. "When I used to watch the news, I would get all riled up, either because of what people were saying or weren't saying. It mattered less that they spoke with certainty about things of which they were uncertain and more that they had such baseless opinions about things that mattered to me. It would be several minutes before I would calm down enough to remind myself that they were only messengers of God (if even that). That's how distracted from truth I would get."

"But," I continued, "when I *don't* watch the news, I walk around every day all day long remembering that God runs the world and rarely lose that focus." Then I paused to give him time to think about what I said. Finally, I added for good measure, "Besides, when the sirens go off, they catch all of us by surprise, and we all have the same amount of time to get to shelter."

What I didn't say, because I don't think he would have appreciated it, was that I remain calmer than others watching the news, and less vulnerable to the attacks of Amalek. Because Amalek's weapon of choice against a Jew is distraction, to grab their attention and keep it focused anywhere other than where it should be focused. And today, thanks to science and technol-

ogy, he has more “weapons” at his disposal than ever before.

This is why it is appropriate that *Parashas Zachor* is usually on *Shabbos Parashas Tetzaveh*. At first read, the two *parshios* seem very different from each other. But they’re not. In fact, *Tetzaveh* is really, to use the language of the Gemora in *Megillah*, the “*refuah* before the *makeh*—the cure before the illness.” The *parsha* discusses many things, but the main topic is the clothing of the *Kohen Gadol* and other *kohanim*.

This is what the Torah says:

*You shall make holy garments for your brother Aaron, for honor and glory. (Shemos 28:2)*

Why was this so important? Because a *kohen* wasn’t supposed to take his focus off God for even a moment, at least while in the Temple. He needed to be in a distraction-free environment, and he needed to dress in a way that would convey the seriousness of his responsibility and inspire him to live up to it. That’s how you create a personal “Cloud of Glory” to keep Amalek at bay.

Therefore, when you heard *Parashas Zachor* this *Shabbos*, b”H, and celebrate *Purim* the week after, take stock of where you are personally vulnerable to the “attacks” of Amalek and resolve to fight back, for God’s honor and glory.

Good *Shabbos* and *Purim Samayach*,  
Pinchas Winston