



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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The *Shabbat* which immediately precedes the festival of *Purim* is known as *Shabbat Zachor*, the Sabbath of Remembrance. On this *Shabbat*, we read of the biblical mandate to remember how the tribe of *Amalek* attacked the Jewish People as we departed from Egypt. This passage is read specifically on the *Shabbat* preceding *Purim*, since *Haman*, arch enemy of the Jews of *Shushan* and villain of the *Purim* story, is a descendant of *Amalek*.

The passage we read is the very conclusion of *Parshat Ki Tetzei* (*Devarim* 25:17-19).

*“Zachor-Remember what Amalek did unto you, as you were en route of departure from Egypt. **Asher Karcha BaDerech-** How they came upon you on your way, and struck the back of your encampment, all that were enfeebled in the rear of the camp, when you were faint and weary; they did not fear G-d. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your G-d has given you rest from all your enemies, in the land which the Lord your G-d has given you as an inheritance to possess it, that thou shall blot out all remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, lo tishkach- you shall not forget...”*

Rashi, citing the *Midrash Tanchuma* offers an interesting insight regarding the words *Asher Karcha BaDerech-How they came upon you on your way.*

Asher Karcha BaDerech this is connected in meaning with the phrase קור וחום “cold and heat” and it means: he made you cold and lukewarm after the boiling heat you had before. For all the nations were afraid to war against you and this one came and began to point out the way to others. A parable! It may be compared to a boiling hot bath into which no living creature could descend. A good-for-nothing came, and sprang down into it; although he scalded himself he made it appear cold to others...

Rashi suggests that *Amalek* somehow represents the Jewish People, being cooled off, becoming vulnerable once again to our enemies, and the powers of evil.

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The great Chasidic Master, the **Maor VeShemesh, zy'a** offers a beautiful insight to explain this idea of *Amalek* cooling off the Jewish People and becoming vulnerable.

Amalek cooled the Jewish People, they caused the Jewish People to be cold toward one another, they cooled off their burning good hearted kindness for one another.

What was it that *Amalek* caused to happen, that made us vulnerable and susceptible to harm? A lack of warmth, empathy, and love for one another.

As we prepare ourselves for *Shabbat Zachor*, let us work to internalize this powerful short teaching from the *Maor VeShemesh, zy'a*- and may we recognize the power and protection that *achdut*-unity- provides for *Klal Yisrael*. ■

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