

PARSHAS ZACHOR

תשפ"ו

This week, we read Parshas Zachor. And the haftarah is very important.

There is a mitzvah to wipe out Amolek completely. Not to leave anyone or anything alive.

In the piyyut after the Megillah, it says Homon did not remember the mercy Shaul Hamelech showed his ancestor Agog by keeping him alive. The midrash says Shaul was very conflicted about killing all the people he thought were innocent. He argued with Hashem, because he thought it was cruel to kill all these people. But the next day, Shaul did kill everyone – except for one person – Agog. He had pity on him, because Agog was a king who had lost everything.

Jews often suffer from inferiority complexes. Shaul was very humble. Shmuel Hanovi had to take him out of concealment among the vessels in order to anoint him king. He was very reluctant. Here, after the battle, he is about to confront a major Amoleki king. His respect for Agog caused him to leave him alive. That night Agog impregnated a woman, and a descendant that continued his culture was Homon.

When evil becomes an integral part of the national culture, the only way to stop it is to eliminate the nation entirely. The leftists are very humane, but the Torah says sometimes the biggest rachamim is to be cruel. When Shaul argued with Hashem to spare the innocent Amolekim, a bas kol rang out and said, "Don't be overly righteous. Those who are merciful to the cruel will eventually act with cruelty to decent, kind people."

The problem with leftists is that they don't want to recognize evil. They let violent criminals out of jail out of mercy and they just go back into society to do more violence. There is something called a criminal personality. There is something called an evil personality. Liberals often say Hitler was insane. But they are wrong. He wasn't insane. He was simply evil. The Torah commands us to recognize evil and eliminate it from our society. וביערת הרע מקרבך.

Even if the evil culture is found among Jewish people, the Torah demands the same total annihilation of the city. This is the halacha of the Ir Hanidachas. Men, women and children are eliminated.

Amolek had this evil culture as part of its national identity, and Shmuel tells Shaul that he was appointed by Hashem to carry out this mission to eliminate evil. Hashem's mission is to destroy Amolek and you have no say in the matter.

It is amazing that Amolek dedicated its entire national purpose to remove Hashem from the world. Hitler was clear – he had to get rid of the Jews because Jews represent the idea of a conscience – of a soul that is sensitive to morality and righteousness. Hitler didn't want the German people to be burdened by this conscience. They want to live as animals in the jungle where strong nations conquer all weaker nations. But we are the Am Hashem who represent Hashem's goals of ruchniyus in this world. As long as Amolek survives, our mission to bring ruchniyus and awareness of Hashem in the world is in jeopardy.

So you have to eliminate everything belonging to Amolek. You can't leave any remnant of their culture to survive. Why? Because people are fascinated by evil. Hitler's personal artifacts and Nazi memorabilia are always being auctioned off for very high prices. People want to own these things and pay a lot of money for them.

People set up memorials and testimonies of the evil to be reviewed and studied by later generations. This is wrong. Evil needs to be destroyed

and forgotten.

This is why the midrash tells us the waters of the Mabul destroyed the entire surface of the planet. Nothing from pre-Mabul civilization survived – not even a plow or a tool. Why? Because Hashem didn't want people after the Mabul being curious about this corrupt society and show any interest in it. The same is true with an Ir Hanidachas – everything in it is burnt in a giant fire and nothing can remain.

Shaul wasn't capable of carrying out his mission. He did almost all of it, but he couldn't completely destroy everything. But then he claims to Shmuel that he *did* the job. Shmuel says, 'I hear sheep and cattle in the background!' Shaul answers that he left the animals to offer as korbonos! Isn't that better than destroying them for nothing? Shmuel says no. Don't try to improve on the Torah. Hashem knows what's best. He didn't make any mistakes. Our job is to listen and obey – not to worry about if it's better a different way. We don't tell Hashem how best to serve Him.

Shmuel then says Shaul did something similar to avodo zoro. What is the comparison? Hashem gave us one set of rules in the Torah – He is the only absolute authority to determine what is right and wrong. When you set yourself up as another source of value and morality – independent of rotzon Hashem, that is akin to avodo zoro.

Shmuel adds another critique: Shaul was exceedingly humble. He felt inferior to another nation. If you are a king over Hashem's people, you cannot hold yourself as second-class to any nation. You represent Hashem and His people and you are superior to everyone. Don't be impressed by anyone.

Shaul lost perspective because of the pressures he was under. He was supposed to discount all those pressures and maintain his focus on Hashem's mission to eliminate evil. But he failed, and as a result, Shaul lost the throne.

In today's world, a yeshiva bochur represents Hashem when he walks in public. He has to show the world that learning Torah elevates you and makes you a superior human being. A yeshiva is a place where you are transformed and molded by the Torah into something much greater. Your job is to project that to the world.

When Dovid Hamelech confronted Golias, a giant of a man with heavy armor, Dovid said, 'I am coming to kill you with my slingshot because I am coming as the servant of Hashem. I can defeat you because I am Hashem's shliach. Hashem is more powerful than any warrior and I have nothing to fear.' This is why he could become the king and start the line of malchus until Moshiach.

We confront many people in the course of our lives as a bnei Torah. We confront non-Jews, secular Jews, and we always have to know we represent Hashem and not feel inferior. We are chosen for that mission and it has to be with us wherever we go.

Never try to think we can come up with something better than halacha to serve Hashem. The human mind can come up with all sorts of ingenious justifications to change the Torah, to "improve" the Torah. But it just doesn't work. The Torah is perfect. Distortions like driving cars on Shabbos, or giving semicha to Jews with alternative lifestyles, or getting drunk before Purim for no reason – it is all the same perversion of Torah and it is unacceptable for our community.