

In this Torah portion we learn about how to be a human being, how to be concerned about our neighbors, how to be helpful, how not to harm others even captives. We learn how we are to conduct ourselves as a compassionate human being, how we are to help the poor and the widow, etc. At the very end of this Torah portion we learn something that does not seem to fit in at all. We learn how we are to remember what Amalek did to us when we left Egypt, how he attacked the stragglers. Immediately afterwards we learn how we are to blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. This is obviously a contradiction. First we are told to remember Amalek and then to blot out the memory of Amalek, not Amalek, but the memory of Amalek from the world. What can this mean? Also, what is this whole story about Amalek? What did they do really so bad? They did not enslave us for 210 years as the Egyptians. They did not throw all our baby boys in the river. They did not act as other nations had. All they did was stage a raid against some stragglers of the Jewish people, people who the Rabbis explain were outside the clouds of glory. They were Jews who were backsliders yet Moshe told Joshua to go take an army and to protect them because every Jew is precious to us not just those who are frum or pious. All Amalek did was make one raid and there branded eternally as our enemy. What's going on here? It's true that all of us have an animal nature. Man is part animal. We have basic animal drives that we must satisfy. We must eat and drink and satisfy our urges, but we are not just animals. Science for many years set about to destroy the uniqueness of man, to tell everyone that we were just a little smarter ape. Now they are changing and even science affirms that man is unique and special. We all do things that are not necessary for our biological survival. It is not true that we have developed only those traits that will assure our biological survival. We spend enormous amounts of energy and time to develop skills and institutions which have nothing at all to do with our biological survival. For example, what does music have to do with biological survival? What do concertos,

symphonies, even rock music have to do with insuring our biological survival? We also by our very nature are very curious. We want to know everything about our universe and ourselves but how is knowing the names of faraway stars and faraway galaxies going to insure our biological survival? We also construct value systems and try to live by them. No animal does that. It's true that we have an animal nature but that's not all there is to us. We say that unlike other religions and philosophies that in order to reach the spiritual we must go through the physical. When we go to hear a violinist all we are interested in is the beautiful music. However, in order for that violinist to play that music he had to practice for hours and hours. In order to reach the spiritual he had to go through the physical. In order to reach the spiritual we have to work very very hard. No animal even works. This is why we remember Amalek. Amalek was the symbol of those people who believed in the survival of the fittest, that all that was important was biological survival. He was an Am Lo Kashas. He was interested only in eating and drinking. His philosophy was a lot like that of the Nazis who carried the idea of the survival of the fittest to its logical conclusion. Who was the survivor of the fittest? The killer, the warrior. The animal who survives the best is the animal who kills the best. We disagree with that. We say this is false. We are to remember Amalek and we are to wipe out Timche, the memory of Amalek. The word Timcha in Hebrew has other meanings besides to wipe out. It means to protest, to write a check, to touch, to dilute, to become an expert. You know how to wipe out the memory of Amalek? You wipe out the memory of Amalek by protesting against injustice, by writing checks to help the less fortunate, by touching others, and making lasting and loving relationships. You wipe out the memory of Amalek by diluting sorrow, by sharing experiences and by becoming an expert on things in the world, by study. There is no greater spiritual pleasure a person can receive than by learning. A Jew does not believe in

the survival of the fittest. A killer is not our hero. Our heroes are heroes of the spirit and it requires hard hard work in order to achieve things of the spirit. We must become sensitive to things around us. In this week's Torah portion we learn how we are not supposed to work with a ox and donkey together on the same yoke. The Rabbis explain that the ox and the donkey have different strengths and it will harm the animals if you work them together. Other Rabbis say that there is even a deeper reason. An ox chews its cud but a donkey does not. While an ox and a donkey are working together the donkey will look up and see the ox chewing. He will think that the ox is eating and he is not eating, and will suffer. We all wish each other Brocha and Hatzlocha. We know that Brocha means blessing. In order to bless we have to know how to thank and appreciate, etc. Many of us do not know that Hatzlocha also has another meaning. Tso'lah in Hebrew also means to ford a river, to cross a river. Amalek when he crossed the river swam across. When a Jew crosses a river he is supposed to build a bridge so others can cross, too. It's true we have an animal nature but we also have a spiritual nature. In order to be truly human we must achieve this spiritual nature. The Nazis are wrong. Amalek was wrong. We are not just animal beings. We are spiritual beings, too.]The story about the four women who were talking and the first said, "Oy". The second said, "Oy vay". The third said, "Oy vay izmeer". The fourth one looked at the ladies and said, "Ladies, we promised we would not talk about our children". If we train our children to know that they are spiritual beings based on an animal nature and not just animals we will not have to worry about these types of "oy vays".

KI SAYTZE 1982
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion, Ki Saytze, we start off with the phrase "when you will go to war on your enemies and G-d will give him in your hand". Here "you will go out" is singular. In the Torah portion, Behaaloscho, we learn something different. There it says "when you will go out to war in your land on the enemy who is afflicting you and you shall blow on the trumpets and you should be saved from your enemies". Why in our Torah portion does it say "you will go out to war and G-d will give him in your hand" while in the other Torah portion it says "when you will go to war you first have to blow the trumpets and then you will be saved". Why in one case does G-d give your enemies immediately into your hands and in the other you first have to blow trumpets? The answer the Rabbis explain is that in our Torah portion He uses the singular "when you will go out". In the other Torah portion the "you" is plural. When the Jewish people are united then G-d will give the enemies in our hands, but when we are all divided it is a different story. We learn that Ahab, who was always victorious when he went into battle even though he worshipped idols because the people were in back of him. He was united with them. It was only when he turned the people against him that he ever lost. G-d says that as long as we are united, that one Jew does not turn against another and do hateful and spiteful things to each other, then He will give the enemies into our hands. However, if we are all divided one Jew against another then we have to blow the trumpets. It takes a great miracle to have us be victorious. We Jews should remember this. Many times we do to ourselves what our enemies cannot do to us. I just returned from Israel where the people are united basically in back of the government. The Rabbis compare the commandment of Zochor, of remembering the Sabbath to remembering Amalek. They say that Amalek ends in an empty table and the Sabbath ends in a table filled with food and wine. They also say that in the beginning of the Torah where we learn that the earth was empty and void that this refers to the deeds of evil people, and when G-d said, "Let there be light" this refers to righteous people. How do we know that G-d likes deeds of righteousness? Because it said, "And He saw that the light was good". This seems a ridiculous Medrash. Can anyone ever think that the deeds of the evil people would be considered good? What we are learning here is that we are

to judge the deeds by the results. The evil people's deeds lead to chaos. The righteous deeds to life. We must look and see what are the results of their deeds, not their talk. It is obvious what the deeds of the PLO were. I think none of us should be upset by the media's propaganda. The true facts will eventually come out and people will see what the true deeds were. It is like the children's story they say when they ask, what did the grape say when the elephant sat on him? Not much, but he gave a little whine. That is the same thing here. All the propaganda will fall away and we will see that it did not amount to anything.

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KI THETZE 1983
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Ki Thetze we find right in the opening verse what looks like a grammatical error. It says, "When you will go out to war against your enemies and the Lord, your G-d will give him in your hand." Enemies is plural. G-d is going to give him, singular, in your hand. In life we all face two challenges, the external challenge and the internal challenge. Each of us competes in the world with others. Each of us wants to make his mark in the world. Each of us wants to be a huge success. We compete with others for grades and we compete with others for our livelihood. The word "Oyaiv" in Hebrew means adversary as well as enemy. Each of us have competitors. It is true that there is a scrap dealers association, etc., but when all is said and done each member is a competitor although maybe a friendly competitor. Life is filled with challenges, but the challenge that is the most important is the inner challenge. G-d has assured us if we will do the right thing He will allow us to be successful. However, we must cope with the inner challenge. Pretty soon it will be Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur, the High Holiday season. On the High Holidays we ask for Chaim. Chaim is plural. Why should this be so? Again, to teach us that we each have an inner life. So many times it happens that people are outwardly successful but inwardly they are failures. Look at many of the movie stars and great financial wizards who have committed suicide. Elvis Presley had everything but he spent his days shooting out T.V. sets with a 45. In this Torah portion we also find how we are to blot out the memory of Amalek. Amalek is considered the arch enemy of the Jew. Why should this be so? After all, it does not seem to make sense that Amalek, who only staged one raid against the Jewish people, should be considered our enemy while Egypt, who enslaved us for 218 years, is not considered an enemy. Look at all the countless thousands of people the Egyptians killed, the babies they threw into the Nile, the families they broke up, the suffering they caused, yet we are taught not to hate the Egyptians but Amalek we are told to wipe out their memory. What is going on here? Amalek was a people who were devoted solely to success. They believed in the survival of the fittest. The weak were deserving of no quarter. They were a people with a Nazi-like philosophy. The Egyptians failed and they did evil, but they were not committed to evil wholly. Every nation occasionally does bad things. In America

we had our Wounded Knee and other atrocities yet the people in America down deep knew that was not right. The Amalekites, though, believed that the strong should survive and the weak should die. This is the reason why they are the general enemy of the Jew. We do not believe in the survival of the fittest. Man is not just an animal. A wounded animal is immediately pounced on by the other animals. Nature is very cruel. They have made studies of lions in Africa. They do not just kill for food. They also kill just for the fun of it. We spend an awful lot of our energy on things which just do not assure our physical survival. Look at all the time and effort we give to music. We are curious about all the heavens and the stars. Man also has an inner being which must be satisfied. Those who want to succeed at any price end up destroying their inner being. The word for "wipe out" in Hebrew has other meanings. We are to wipe out the memory of Amalek by protesting against injustice, writing out checks, diluting sorrow, touching others' lives, and becoming an expert. The word "Teemcha" has all those meanings besides wiping out. Many times teenagers have an idea that all that is important to do is to succeed. They are looking for mastery over others. In order to be a human being you have to know how to be defeated, how to fail, how to say, "I made a mistake." Too often people come up with smart answers which makes them come out looking like a rose although they smell like something else. They may have a powerful intellect but they are destroying their inner essence. The inner life demands that we be honest and admit when we are defeated. We learn from our mistakes and come back, but if all we are seeking is mastery and control over others then we will all end up destroying ourselves. The talents that G-d gave us He gave us to help others not to lord it over them. The story about a robin who picked up a piece of baloney early in the morning. He started to sing. Immediately a cat pounced on him. This just goes to prove that when you are full of baloney do not open your mouth.

KI SAITZAY 1989
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Ki Saitzay we learn that "fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin." In this statement we learn a basic concept in Jewish law, ~~and that is that of~~ individual responsibility, that everyone is punished for their own sins, not for the sins of the fathers. This is still a concept which is not fully recognized throughout the whole world, and we do know that there are many who ^{have been} ~~are~~ put to death just because they are the sons and daughters of a famous man and vice versa. This was outlawed in the court of Jewish jurisprudence from ~~the~~ ^{its} very inception. However, we find in the Ten Commandments where it says that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children for the second and this generation. How are we to understand, though, that this is not contradictory to what we just learned right here when it says in the Ten Commandments, in the second commandment, "You shall not bow down to idols and should not serve them, because I am the Lord your G-d, a jealous G-d, Who remembers the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations to those who hate Me". How can we reconcile what is said in the Ten Commandments to what is said here in the Torah portion Ki Saitzay?

The answer could be that here we are talking about criminal punishment, but if we look at life the way it really is we know that children suffer because of the misdeeds of their parents. We know that if a mother gets AIDS the children that she bears will also have AIDS. We know that if a father is a criminal and is sent to jail that the children will have a lot harder time in the world, that the sins of the father are inflicted upon the children but not in a criminal way, but that just their life, itself, will be more difficult, that each of us bears a responsibility to future generations to live in an upright fashion so that future generations will not suffer. It

does not mean that they are going to be criminally prosecuted, but it means that they will have a tough life if we do not wise up and conduct our own lives in a proper and decent way.

Also in this Torah portion we learn something very strange. We learn how it says that an Ammonite and a Moabite cannot enter into the congregation of the Lord. The Jewish people could take converts from all peoples, but they could not take converts from the Ammonites and Moabites. It seems strange that they could not take converts from these two peoples. The answer they gave is because "they did not meet us with bread and water when we came out of Egypt and that they hired against us Bilam Ben Ba'Or from Tzor to curse us". In other words, the two reasons that are given seem almost inconsequential. One is that they did not offer us hospitality, and secondly, they hired a soothsayer in order to destroy us. They hired a Madison Avenue PR firm to destroy our will to resist, etc., but why should this be considered such a terrible sin? After all, the Egyptians enslaved us for 210 years, the Malakites attacked us, other nations did terrible things to us, yet, they are all allowed into the congregation of G-d. In fact, today, of course, there are no such people as the Ammonites and Moabites so everybody is allowed to be a convert who wants to be a convert to Judaism. Why were these two peoples singled out for these particular peccadillos? They do not seem serious offenses. The rabbis say that these two reasons really go together.

It is true that they would not have been excluded from the Jewish people because they did not offer bread and water to the Jewish people when they were leaving Egypt because after all, they could claim that there were terrible conditions and the plagues made earning a living very difficult, and how could they share with the Jewish people if there was not enough for themselves?

That would have been a valid excuse, but they claimed they did not have money to give the Jewish people bread and water but they had enough money to hire a soothsayer to curse the Jewish people and try to destroy them that way. They had enough money for negative things. They had enough money to satisfy their urge to destroy a people, but to help a people they did not have enough money. That, of course, was their great sin.

You find many people today who do not have enough money to pay synagogue dues, but they lose \$50 or \$100 once a week at a poker game. They do not have enough money to send their children to a Hebrew school or day school and they beg for scholarships, but they have enough money to take a vacation to Europe and drive a fancy car. It depends what they want. They do not have enough money for positive things but they do have enough money for negative things. This, of course, is a terrible situation. These are people who rationalize away not only their future but the future of their children. They claim they do not have money for this or time for that, but they have time to go play golf and take vacations and spend hours gossiping with their neighbors, but they do not have any time to help others. The problem with Ammon and Moab is that they were selfish, and basic selfishness is what destroys a society. This is the major sin that is father visit upon their children is when they are selfish and do not prepare for the future. They do not take into consideration their childrens' needs. In fact, many times when a person is selfish it ultimately hurts themselves. We can see that plainly in the catastrophic medical bill which was passed by Congress last year. All of a sudden a few people are getting up and aided by the insurance company claiming it is way too expensive. Of course, the truth of the matter is that for most people it will hardly be any expense at all, but, yet, people, because they are selfish and do not want to help their neighbor, are screaming, although if they really analyze it they are going to wreck a very good deal

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for them, because, according to this new catastrophic medical insurance, their drug bills will be paid. So many times older people come to me who have drug bills of \$800 or \$1000 a month and their social security is only \$800 a month. You can figure out what straits they are in. This will help them and allow them to pay their drug bills, but instead, people are going to quibble because they have to pay \$10 or \$20 more a month, and, because of that, it is going to cost them thousands because now, of course, this new medical insurance after they reform it and revise it will not pay for medical bills, so the very act of being selfish causes their own destruction.

We all know that in a certain sense it is very important to have ambition and very important to want to get ahead and try to feather your own nest because in this way society progresses, but we have to make sure, too, that society is not taken advantage of, that we balance our need for self-advancement with the basic needs of the people around us. If we do not, then we are going to end up by destroying society. That is, of course, what happened in Argentina. Argentina at one time had the fifth largest economy in the world, and now it is suffering because people did not want to pay taxes and assume their civic responsibilities, and the country now is headed on a downward course. It is true that communism has failed because communism levels everyone and does not let people who have energy and ability and drive and know-how get ahead, and, of course, those people who are filled with know-how and ability and energy and ambition want to leave because they know they can do much better in the west. We have to make sure, too, that our economies do not collapse, and our economies, too, can collapse if those people who are not born with ambition and do not have the skills and the talent and the intelligence are not also taken care of. We should remember what happened in the 1920's in the United States where you had all sorts of enterprises

which were unregulated where the sharp mind and sharp business practices that made a lot of money for a few people but eventually it destroyed the whole economy. We have to remember that not everybody can be an entrepreneur. That, of course, is one of the basic problems we have here in this country today where the drug culture feeds on people who cannot seem to get ahead, who seem to be lost. We have to take of them, too. If it takes more taxes, we should be willing to pay the taxes. If we do not pay the taxes we cannot solve the problem because you are going to have people on the street. That is the basic contradiction in the American psyche today. We want a lot of services and want all the problems taken care of but we do not want to pay for them. In fact, what we are going to do is visit the sins of the father on the children because pretty soon all these chickens come home to roost. Unless we are willing to put our energy and our money and our efforts into solving the problems now we are going to have a very, very difficult time. Selfishness eventually does not pay. Selfishness actually ends up destroying a people. That is what was the problem with Ammon and Moab. They were a selfish people and did not want to extend themselves to help anybody. They always had enough money to destroy people but not enough money to help people.

Then the rabbis ask another question. They say that, let's assume that Ammon and Moab were very much afraid of the Jewish people, and, therefore, they did not want to help them in any way and hired a soothsayer to destroy them, but why didn't they hire a soothsayer to bless them so that they would be better than the Jewish people, so they would be stronger than the Jewish people and would have nothing to fear from the Jewish people because they had enough self-confidence to attain great things, but they did not do that. They would rather cut everyone down. They did not want to make themselves better but cut everyone down to size. Unfortunately, in the world today there are a lot of people like that. There are people who when they see

