



KI TEZTE

WHY EVIL EXISTS

When Opposition Demonstrates the Greatest Support

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Ki Tezte

Seventy-four of the Torah's 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) are in the *parshah* of *Ki Tezte*. These include the laws of the beautiful captive, the inheritance rights of the firstborn, the wayward and rebellious son, burial and dignity of the dead, returning a lost object, sending away the mother bird before taking her young, the duty to erect a safety fence around the roof of one's home, and the various forms of *kilayim* (forbidden plant and animal hybrids).

Also recounted are the judicial procedures and penalties for adultery, for the rape or seduction of an unmarried girl, and for a

husband who falsely accuses his wife of infidelity. The following cannot marry a person of Jewish lineage: a *mamzer* (someone born from an adulterous or incestuous relationship); a male of Moabite or Ammonite descent; a first- or second-generation Edomite or Egyptian.

Our *parshah* also includes laws governing the purity of the military camp; the prohibition against turning in an escaped slave; the duty to pay a worker on time and to allow anyone working for you—man or animal—to “eat on the job”; the proper treatment of a debtor and the prohibition against

charging interest on a loan; the laws of divorce (from which are also derived many of the laws of marriage); the penalty of thirty-nine lashes for transgression of a Torah prohibition; and the procedures for *yibum* (“levirate marriage”) of the wife of a deceased to his childless brother, or *chalitzah* (“removing of the shoe”) in the case that this brother-in-law does not wish to marry her.

Ki Tezte concludes with the obligation to remember “what Amalek did to you on the road on your way out of Egypt.”

TEXT 1

Deuteronomy 25:17, 19

יז. זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק, בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם
מִמִּצְרָיִם . . .

יט. תִּמְחָה אֶת זֵכֶר עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם, לֹא תִשְׁכַּח.

17. Remember what Amalek did to you during your journey shortly after you left Egypt. . . .

19. Erase the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens. Do not forget.

TEXT 2

*Rabbi Aharon Halevi of
Barcelona, Sefer
Hachinuch, Positive
Commandment 189*

שצונו לזכור מה שעשה לנו עמלק בהקדימו להרע
לנו, ולשנוא אותו בכל עת ועת. ונעורר הנפשות
במאמרים להלחם בו, ונזרז העם לשנוא אותו עד
שלא תשכח המצוה, ולא תחלש שנאתו ותחסר
מהנפשות עם אורך הזמן.

G-d commanded us to remember what Amalek did to us when he hurried to be the first to harm us. We are commanded to rouse our passions to fight and hate him. We must always remember this commandment and never allow our hatred of Amalek to fade with time.

It is a mitzvah
always to
remember to
fight against him
and to obliterate
his influence.



TEXT 3

Exodus 20:7

זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ.

Remember the day of the Shabbat to sanctify it.



The Jewish people felt that remembering Shabbat and Amalek was beyond them.

TEXT 4

*Midrash, Pirkei Rabbi
Eliezer 44*

אמרו לו ישראל: משה רבינו, כתוב אחד אומר:
"זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק", וכתוב אחר אומר:
"זכור את יום השבת לקדשו" - היאך יתקיימו
שניהם?

The Jewish people complained, "Moses our teacher, one passage reads, 'Remember what Amalek did to you' (Deuteronomy 25:17). Another passage reads, 'Remember the day of the Shabbat to sanctify it' (Exodus 20:7). How can both prevail?"

TEXT 5

*Rabbi Aharon Halevi of
Barcelona, Sefer
Hachinuch, Introduction*

ששה מצות מהן שחיובן תמידי - לא יפסק מעל
האדם אפילו רגע בכל ימיו. ואלו הם: (א) להאמין
בשם. (ב) שלא להאמין לזולתו. (ג) ליחדו. (ד)
לאהבה אותו. (ה) ליראה אותו. (ו) שלא לתור אחר
מחשבת הלב וראיית העיניים.

There are six constant commandments that
we may not forget all our lives for even a
moment. They are: (a) believe in G-d, (b)
reject all other deities, (c) believe in G-d's
unity, (d) love G-d, (e) fear G-d, and (f) resist
the temptations of our heart and eyes.

TEXT 6

*Midrash, Pirkei Rabbi
Eliezer 44*

אמר להם: לא דומה כוס של קונדיטון לכוס של
חומץ. זה כוס וזה כוס. זה "זכור" לשמור ולקדש
את יום השבת, וזה "זכור" להשמיד ולהכרית את
כל זרעו של עמלק.

Moses replied, "You can't compare a goblet of
fine wine to a cup of vinegar. They are both
cups. This is a cup to observe and sanctify
the Shabbat, and that is a cup to destroy and
uproot the descendants of Amalek."

Wine



Vinegar



TEXT 7

*Rabbi Aharon Halevi of
Barcelona, Sefer
Hachinuch 33*

משרשי מצוה זו, כדי שנתעורר מתוך מעשה זה
לזכר גדולת היום, ונקבע בלבבנו אמונת חידוש
העולם "כי ששת ימים עשה ה' וגו'".

ועל כן נתחייבנו לעשות המעשה עם היין, לפי
שטבע האדם מתעורר בו הרבה שהוא סועד
ומשמח. וכבר אמרתי לך כי לפי התעוררות האדם
ומעשהו יתפעל אל הדברים לעולם. ומזה השורש
אמרו בגמרא (פסחים קו, ב) זכרונם לברכה, שאם
הפת חביב על האדם יותר - שיקדש על הפת, כי אז
מתעורר טבעו יותר למה שהוא תאב.

This is a commandment to remember the greatness of this day and to fix faith in Creation in our hearts. As the Torah states, "Remember the Shabbat to sanctify it, . . . for G-d made the world in six days and rested on the seventh" (Exodus 20:6–11).

We sanctify it over a cup of wine because it is human nature to be aroused by wine, as it satiates and causes joy. I have often explained that our inspiration is more permanent when we translate it into physical acts. Thus, our sages taught (Talmud, Pesachim 106b) that those who prefer bread over wine sanctify the Shabbat over bread, for we are each aroused by the things we crave.



Shabbat is meant to remind us that we are not the masters of our destiny. We are always in G-d's hands, and He alone is our constant Creator.

TEXT 8

Daily Morning Prayer,
Siddur Tehilat Hashem

ובטובו מחדש בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית.

In His goodness, G-d constantly renews the works of Creation each day.

TEXT 9

*Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Lubavitch, Derech
Mitzvotcha, p. 95a*

עמלק רוח אחרת היתה בו והוא כמו שאמרו
רבותינו זכרונם לברכה עליו: "יודע ריבונו, ומכוין
למרוד בו".

ופירוש המרידה הוא ענין חוצפה, שענינה לא
מחסרון הדעת באלוקות, אלא אדרבא - יודע ומכיר
היטב גדולת הבורא, ואף על פי כן . . . לא יכול
לבבו משום דבר גדול, והוא החוצפה והתנשאות
שבלא טעם וטענה כלל. והוא כענין החצוף
בגשמיות, שיודע ומכיר פחיתותו וחסרונו היטב,
ואף על פי כן יכול הוא להעיז את שר גדול או צדיק
עתק.

Amalek had a different attitude. Our sages
of blessed memory described him as one
"who knows his Master and deliberately
rebels" (*Sifra*, Vayikra 26:14)

Amalek was impudent. He did not lack
knowledge of G-d. On the contrary, he
knew and recognized G-d's greatness.
Nevertheless, he . . . refused to be
intimidated. His impudence and audacity
drove him to reject G-d without reason or
justification, like impudent people who
know they are inferior yet stand up
brazenly to powerful or righteous people.



Amalek had an
anti-G-d agenda.

TEXT 10

“Dust and Ashes: Wiping Out Amalek,” A Kol in der Midbar, Agudath Israel Underground Newspaper, Yad Vashem Archives, JN/3452/8

Amalek and Haman are targeting the Jews less as a people than as a Divine people. . . . Therefore, their war is directed mainly against the G-d of Israel. . . . They object to His Torah. . . . They are uncomfortable with a G-d Who sees everything and demands an accounting for wrongdoing. These things are not to the Amalekites' liking; they don't want them. They, therefore, wish to destroy the Jewish people who stand for perfect faith in the G-d of Israel. This is why G-d's name and throne cannot be complete as long as Amalek exists. . . .

Consequently, we must never forget what Amalek did to us and what he continues to do.



Wine and vinegar are not so different after all. Yes, wine is delicious, and vinegar is disgusting, but they are from the same family.

TEXT 11A

*Merriam-Webster
Dictionary, "Vinegar"*

Definition: A sour liquid obtained by fermentation of dilute alcoholic liquids.

TEXT 11B

Everwonderwine.com

So, what happens when a bottle of wine “turns to vinegar”?

Without getting into all the technical details, the wine has simply gotten “infected” with bacteria. This bacteria occurs naturally in the air and on fruit. This leads to acetic acid building up in the wine in combination with too much exposure to oxygen. When this happens, you’ll immediately notice that your wine will take on a sharp vinegar smell that’s also been described as being like nail polish remover.

TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei Sichot
19, pp. 224–225*

אין פנימיות הענינים מיינט עס: אויך עמלק (חומץ)
האט א שרש בקדושה.

דאס הייסט, דאס גופא, אז עס זאל קענען זיין א
מציאות פון "מכוין למרוד בו" בעת אין דער אמת'ן
איז "אין עוד מלבדו" (דברים ג, לה), איז דאס מצד
דעם כח פון אויבערשטן וואס ער איז כל יכול.

When we examine the concept of Amalek from the perspective of Jewish mysticism, we discover that Amalek (represented by vinegar) is also rooted in holiness.

How can anything deliberately rebel against G-d if “there is none besides Him” (Deuteronomy 3:35)? It is only possible because there is nothing that G-d cannot do.



Amalek indicates
that G-d is
omnipresent even
in the face of evil.

TEXT 13A

Talmud, Yoma 18B

חומץ משיב את הנפש.

Vinegar restores the soul.

TEXT 13B

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman of
Liadi, Shulchan Aruch
HaRav, Orach Chayim
204:2*

כל דבר שנשתנה לקילקול - נשתנה ברכתו
המיוחדת לו, ומברכים עליו ברכה הכוללת הכל
שהיא "שהכל נהיה בדברו" . . .

יין שהחמיץ, עד שבני אדם נמנעים לשתותו מפני
חמיצותו, מברכין עליו "שהכל נהיה בדברו".

When a food item spoils, the blessing
[recited before eating it] must be altered.
[Rather than chanting a blessing for this
particular food category of wine,] we
recite the blessing that encompasses all
food groups, ". . . that His word made all."
. . .

When wine goes to vinegar and becomes
so acidic that people refrain from drinking
it, the blessing for it [should one drink it]
is ". . . that His word made all."



There is value to his acid because it is only through his acidic rebellion that we discover the true extent of G-d's omnipresence and omnipotence.

TEXT 14

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei Sichot
19, p. 225*

און דאס האט משה רבינו געזאגט "לא דומה כוס של קונדיטון לכוס של חומץ זה כוס וזה כוס כו": דאס וואס עס קען זיין די זכירה פון עמלק צוזאמען מיט זכירה פון יום השבת איז עס דערפאר, וויילע ביידע זיינען אן ענין פון "כוס" — א כלי קיבול צו נעמען דורכדעם דעם גילוי פון קדושה און אלקות, ווייל אויך עמלק האט א שורש אין קדושה כנזכר לעיל.

אבער פונדעסטוועגן איז "לא דומה" . . . זכור לשמור ולקדש . . . וזה זכור לעונש", דאס הייסט, דער גילוי אלקות ביי זכירת שבת איז בו בעצמו: "זכור לשמור ולקדש את יום השבת" — דער "זכור" גופא טוט אויף די קדושה, דער גילוי פון אחדות ה'; אבער דער גילוי אלקות דורך זכירת עמלק ווערט אויפגעטאן דוקא דורך זכור לעונש, דורך מבטש און מבטל זיין די תנועה פון "מכוין למרוד בו".

און דעמאלט ווערט נתגלה דער "כוס של חומץ" ווי אויך "חומץ" איז א זאך וואס איז משיב (מגלה) את הנפש, ווארום דוקא דורך זכירת עמלק ווערט נתגלה אז אויך דער ענין פון עמלק קומט (דוקא) מצד דעם כח הבלי גבול פון אלקות.

Moses implied all this by saying, "A cup of wine cannot be compared to a cup of vinegar" (Midrash, Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer 44). Shabbat and Amalek are both cups through which we are filled with the revelation of sacred G-dliness because Amalek is also rooted in holiness.

However, the two cups are not equal. The Shabbat cup urges us to observe and sanctify, while the Amalek cup urges us to punish. By remembering Shabbat, we reveal G-d's omnipresence on earth. Remembering Amalek doesn't reveal G-d's presence on earth. Only when we punish Amalek—crush and obliterate all movements that aim to rebel against G-d—is G-d's true omnipotence revealed.

[Thus, vinegar is an apt metaphor for Amalek.] When we obliterate Amalek, the cup of vinegar is revealed as a medium that restores and revitalizes our soul. This is because remembering [to destroy] Amalek demonstrates that Amalek's existence derives exclusively from G-d's unlimited omnipotence.

KEY POINTS

1. To remember something in its truest sense is to relive the emotional experience, whether trauma or joy.
2. Remembering Shabbat entails living inside the moment of Creation, subsumed by G-d's omnipresence. Remembering Amalek includes living inside the rebellion against G-d.
3. The two can only be relived simultaneously because both communicate the same point. Shabbat declares that G-d is the true Master, Who is omnipotent and omnipresent. Amalek declares that G-d is omnipresent even in the face of evil.

KEY POINTS

4. Remembering Amalek is not enough. We must remember to fight Amalek until he is crushed. Only then is the full scope of G-d's omnipresence revealed.
5. Evil exists only to demonstrate G-d's omnipresence in the face of evil, which is why we fight evil wherever we find it and why we can always overcome it.

