

Nourishment for the Neshama

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What pains us?

Speaking from my own experience, the source of emotional pain is our interpretation of what is happening to us. Very often, we experience events with a sense of loss, especially if it is something where we have absolutely no control over the occurrence. Grief. Agony. And then, our own inner demons begin to concretize and weave themselves in, creating more darkness and depression.

Is this not universal? Where is Gd in this picture? Has Gd been relegated to some other-worldly vague force (Amalek)? Or just as destructive and possibly even worse, do we view Him with blame and mistrust as our own sense of what is RIGHT or SHOULD BE stands indignantly in the way of the reality that Hashem has declared as good (El Zar)?

There is a combination of negative attacks occurring that is affecting our soul. The sense that Gd is other-worldly, vague and remotely out there if at all – that is the part of us that we are called upon to annihilate from within us, the part we refer to as Amalek. We are told in the Torah that we must eradicate Amalek when we have the opportunity. For those not familiar with who the Amalekians were, they were the nation that attacked the Jewish people as they left Egypt, while we had the clouds of glory and the pillar of fire and the well of Miriam, all open miracles, known to the Amalekians but they attacked us anyway. Why? To defy Gd and to tell the Jewish people that they hated us so much, they were willing to attack Gd's protected nation no matter what. They destroyed a sense of security and peace and love that was there. We are told to never forget that. Why? Why never forget? Are we bearers of grudges? NO! It is because this happens to us thousands of times a day! Here we are, Gd's precious children, and thousands of times a day we forget that Gd is before us and we revert to actions speech and thoughts that "edge Gd out!" We can have the intention of praying with good kavannah and a few moments later we are rushing through. Why? What happened? We forgot that Gd is before us and instead think that we, with our meager mind, can "multi-task" and need to do so because Gd alone may not come through, chas v'shalom! When we do this, do you know what happens? Gd says "Great! Rely on what YOU think will work for you," and He takes a back seat.

It is very possible that all of human history since Adom's sin is nothing more than a continuing devolution away from knowing Gd is before us, succumbing more and more to the blow of Amalek attacking us to throw cold water on our knowing that Gd is before us and that we are protected! In the desert, Moshe led the fight against Amalek and we won. But the damage was done. The attack cooled off the incredible high of the redemption.

In the month of Adar Aleph, and especially this week, each one of us can do something to destroy Amalek. May each of us, when we feel afraid, angry, overwhelmed, disappointed or any range of negative reactions, remember that Gd is before us and that our simple task is to enlarge our picture of reality to see that in a way that restores our sense of safety and of being small and beloved in His eyes, for the negative event may be sent solely so that we can rise above it and quietly and calmly put the occurrence in its proper perspective. We can remain calm and retain a feeling of peace and of being beloved when we know with certainty that Gd is not vague and other-worldly but rather here in the PRESENT MOMENT, standing before us, asking us simply to remember and conduct ourselves according to His will rather than giving into the ever present yetzer hara, leading us to conduct ourselves according to the El Zar, the strange gd within us, that puts the crown on our own heads. Usually, our most visceral reactions, the ones where we have a gut reaction that our society has taught us is meritorious to act upon in order to "take care of ourselves," is where we need to apply this wisdom. Step back. Look in front of us. We are not here to serve ourselves. Gd is asking us to find His Will and do it and thereby destroy within us the force of Amalek. We can rise above ourselves creating holiness for ourselves by loving Gd.

May we succeed this week especially in elevating our thoughts in this way, creating holiness that will be a merit for us as individuals as well as for Klal Yisrael, and may Hashem find our efforts worthy of redemption.