

# In Hilchos YOM TOV

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## Parshas Zachor

A summary of the weekly Wednesday night shiur by **Rabbi Shmuel Stein** at the Miami Beach Community Kollel / To receive a copy send an email to [InHilchosShabbos@gmail.com](mailto:InHilchosShabbos@gmail.com)

On the Shabbos before Purim, we read *Parshas Zachor* to remind us of the evil which the nation of *Amalek* did to us as we left Mitzrayim. The Torah states two *mitzvos* which must be fulfilled concerning the nation of *Amalek*:

- 1) *Mi'chias Amalek*: Erasing the remembrance of *Amalek*
- 2) *Zi'chiras Amalek*: Remembering the evil deed that *Amalek* did

In the following paragraphs we will discuss these two *mitzvos*, and the *halachos* of *Parshas Zachor*.

### 1) *Mi'chias Amalek*: Erasing the remembrance of *Amalek*

The Torah<sup>1</sup> states:

*"It shall be that when Hashem, gives you rest from all your enemies that are around you, in the land that Hashem gave you as an inheritance, you shall erase the remembrance of Amalek from under the heaven, you shall not forget!"*

The *Rambam*<sup>2</sup> explains that "when the Jewish people entered *Eretz Yisroel* they were given the *mitzva* of *Mi'chias Amalek* - to kill out and destroy all of the descendants of *Amalek*, men, women and children."

#### *Amalek's evil deed*

When the Jewish nation left Mitzrayim by miracles which Hashem performed, the verse<sup>3</sup> states that "the nations of the world heard (about the miracles), and they trembled." Yet, *Amalek* was not afraid, as the Torah<sup>4</sup> states, "They did not fear Hashem." Rather, they went to confront the Jewish people, as the Torah<sup>5</sup> states, "And *Amalek* came, and they waged war against the Jewish people." *Amalek* could not tolerate the revelation of Hashem and thus immediately went to wage war against the Jewish people.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of *Amalek* waging war against the Jewish nation the fear which was etched in the hearts of the other nations began to diminish as well, as the verse<sup>7</sup> states, "(*Amalek*) cooled you off." *Chazal*<sup>8</sup> give the following parable:

There was a bath full of boiling hot water that no person could enter, until one careless person jumped into the boiling hot water. Although he was scorched by the boiling water, he cooled off the bath for everyone else.<sup>9</sup>

*Amalek* may have been defeated in the battle, but they were successful in cooling off the fear that the other nations had towards Hashem and the Jewish people.

The *Ramban*<sup>10</sup> explains that Torah commands us to erase the remembrance of *Amalek*, because they did not fear Hashem, even when the fear of Hashem evident in the world. Instead, they waged war against the Jewish nation, as if to wage war against Hashem.

### 2) *Zi'chiras Amalek*: Remembering the evil deed of *Amalek*

The Torah adds another commandment of remembering the evil deed of *Amalek*, as the Torah<sup>11</sup> states:

*"Remember what Amalek did to you as you were leaving Egypt."*

The *Rambam*<sup>12</sup> explains, "We are commanded to remember the evil that *Amalek* did so that the animosity that we have towards *Amalek* does not diminish." The purpose of preserving this animosity towards *Amalek* is to ultimately wage war and destroy the nation of *Amalek* and fulfill the *mitzva* of *Mi'chias Amalek* – wiping out the remembrance of *Amalek*.<sup>13</sup>

### How to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek*

*Chazal*<sup>14</sup> teach us that it does not suffice to remember what *Amalek* did in our hearts, rather one must actually say what they did. Therefore, once a year we read *Parshas Zachor*, which recounts what *Amalek* did to the Jewish nation as they left Mitzrayim. The *Chasam Sofer*<sup>15</sup> explains that *Parshas Zachor* must be read once a year because the Torah<sup>16</sup> obligates that we "do not forget" what *Amalek* did, and *Chazal* teach us that after twelve months a person begins to forget. Therefore, in order to prevent forgetting what *Amalek* did, we read *Parshas Zachor* once a year.<sup>17</sup>

### When to read *Parshas Zachor*

The *mitzva* of remembering *Amalek* can technically be fulfilled at any time of the year, however, *Chazal* instituted that *Parshas Zachor* be read on the Shabbos prior to Purim so that we remember the destruction of *Amalek* at the same time that we remember the destruction of *Haman* (who was a descendant of *Amalek*).<sup>18</sup> Just as his ancestors, *Haman* despised Hashem and His nation, as the *Megillah*<sup>19</sup> states that, "[*Haman* told his advisors that] 'all of this [wealth and fame which I have acquired] is worth nothing to me, every time I see *Mordechai* the Jew sitting in the king's gate [and he does not bow to me].'"<sup>20</sup>

### *Parshas Zachor* is read on Shabbos

The *Mishnah Berura*<sup>21</sup> explains that we read *Parshas Zachor* on Shabbos because that is when the community gathers together in Shul and is therefore the most opportune time to remember the evil deed of *Amalek*.

### Listening to *Parshas Zachor* from a *Sefer Torah* with a *minyán*

Although the *mitzva* of remembering *Amalek* may be fulfilled by merely reading *Parsha Zachor* to oneself from a *Chumash*,<sup>22</sup> *Chazal* enacted a number of requirements to enhance the *mitzva* of remembering *Amalek*:

- a) **With a *minyán***: One should listen to *Parsha Zachor* being read in the presence of a *minyán*.<sup>23</sup>
- b) **From a *Sefer Torah***: The *Parsha Zachor* should be read from a *Sefer Torah*.<sup>24</sup>
- c) **With a *t'rop* (cantillation)**: *Parsha Zachor* should be read with its correct *t'rop*.<sup>25</sup>

### Having in mind to be *yotzei* with the reading of the *ba'al koreh*

Since it does not suffice to merely remember what *Amalek* did in one's heart, rather one must actually speak out what *Amalek* did, the *ba'al koreh* recites *Parshas Zachor* on behalf of the entire congregation. Based on the principle of *shomeh k'oneh*, we can consider it as if the people listening actually said *Parshas Zachor* themselves.<sup>26</sup> *Mishna Berura*<sup>27</sup> writes that the *ba'al koreh* must have in mind to be *metzei* the congregation when he reads *Parshas Zachor*. Similarly, everyone listening must have intention to fulfill their obligation of *Zi'chiras Amalek* by listening to the reading. In many congregations the *gabbai* announces that everyone present at the reading should have in mind to fulfill their *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek* with the reading of the *ba'al koreh*.

### The *berachos*

According to the majority of *poskim*,<sup>28</sup> *Chazal* did not institute that a *beracha* be recited over the reading of *Parshas Zachor*. Thus, the *berachos* which are recited on the Torah reading of *Parshas Zachor* is not part of the *mitzva*. Accordingly, one

1 Devarim 25:19 2 Rambam sefer ha'mitzvos aseh 189. The Rambam adds that there were three unique mitzvos given to the Jewish people when they entered Eretz Yisroel, the other two were, to coronate a king and to build the Bais Hamikdash 3 Shemos 15:14 4 Devarim 25:19 (see Rashi there) 5 Shemos 17:8 6 See sefer Kimu v'kiblu (Rav Shlomo Brevda) p. 20-21. Furthermore, Amalek has a power to unite all the other nations of the world against Hashem and the Jews (see *Yalkut, parshas Beshalach*, and sefer *Kimu v'kiblu* ibid) 7 Devarim 25:18, based on the third explanation of Rashi there *d'h asher karcha* 8 brought in Rashi ibid 9 Similarly, the Greatness of Hashem had been clear in the eyes of the other nations of the world, yet *Amalek* attacked the Jewish people in order to cast a doubt in the minds of the nations of the world, that perhaps the Jews could indeed be defeated. The numerical value of *Amalek* is 240 which is equivalent to the world *safek* – doubt, as *Amalek's* goal is to create a doubt in the minds of people whether Hashem is indeed in control over the world. The Torah (Shemos 17:16) writes, "Hashem maintains a war against *Amalek* from generation to generation," because *Amalek* is the antithesis of the Kingship of Hashem. Hashem swears that "as long as *Amalek* is not destroyed, my name and my throne will not be complete." (Rashi Shemos 17:16 *d'h ki yad*) 10 Shemos 17:16 11 Devarim 25:17 12 Rambam sefer ha'mitzvos aseh 190; see also sefer *ha'Chinuch* Mitzvah 603 13 See Rambam sefer ha'mitzvos aseh 190, sefer *ha'Chinuch* (mitzvah 603 - regarding why women are not obligated in the mitzvah of *Zichras Amalek*, because they are not obligated to fight the war against *Amalek*). See sefer *Harirei Kedem* 14 *Megilla* 18a 15 *Chasam Sofer E.H. siman* 119 explaining why nowadays we read *Parshas Zachor* once a year. However, see sefer *ha'Chinuch* (mitzvah 603) where he writes that we remember *Amalek* reading *Parshas Zachor* "once every year or two tears or three years, is sufficient to fulfill ones obligation" 16 Devarim 25:19 17 The *Chasam Sofer E.H. siman* 119 writes that although during a Jewish leap year 13 months pass without reading *Parshas Zachor* one does not violate the prohibition of "don't forget" because when *Chazal* give the timeframe of "twelve months" the intention is that when it is a leap year it is thirteen months. However, the *Maharam Shick* (Taryag mitzvos 605) writes that on a leap year the *Chasam Sofer* himself would have in mind [with a *tnai*] when the *tzibur* would read *parshas Ki Tzeitzei* during the year, to fulfill his obligation of *Zeicher Amalek*, so that twelve months would not pass without listening to *Parshas Zachor*. (see sefer *Mikadesh Yisroel*, Purim:24) 18 *Mishnah mesectah Megilla* 29a, Rashi there *d'h u'mafsiqin sefer ha'Chinuch* (mitzvah 603) 19 *Esther* 5:11-13 20 The *Megillah* states (*Esther* 9:24-26) that the holiday of Purim is named after the Persian word *pur*, which means lottery, "Because *Haman* cast the lot in order to terrify and destroy the Jewish people." Rav Shimshon Pincus explains (*Nefesh Shimshon Purim* pg. 21) that the reason *Haman* used a lottery to decide when to destroy the Jewish people was to show that everything in this world is based on chance, and Hashem is not involved in running the world events. However, the story of Purim revealed that it is Hashem running the world, and that even the outcomes of a lottery (*pur*) are not merely coincidental. 21 *Sh'a'ar Ha'tzion* 685:5 22 See sefer *Toras Chesed O.C. siman* 37 where he writes from the *Ramban*, *Rambam*, *Smag*, and sefer *ha'Chinuch* that although reading *Parshas Zachor* is *d'Oraysa*, reading it from a *sefer Torah* with a *minyán* is only a *takanas Chazal*. [See also *Sh'a'ar ha'Tzion* 685:6. (Kaf *ha'Chaim* 685:30), *Moadei Yeshurun* pg. 63 from Rav Moshe Feinstein, sefer *Mikrai Kodesh Purim siman* 6, *Moadim u'Zmanim* Vol.2:166, Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (Kovetz Halachos Purim pg. 18-19). However, the *Terumas ha'Deshen* and *Magen Avraham* (quoted in sefer *Toras Chesed* ibid) rule that reading from a *sefer Torah* with a *minyán* is also part of the mitzvah *d'Oraysa*. See sefer *Mikadesh Yisroel*, Purim:11 for different opinions on this issue.

does not need to have in mind to be *yotzei* with the *berachos* of the one called up to the Torah. Nevertheless, it is said that the *Chasam Sofer*<sup>29</sup> would announce before the reading of *Parshas Zachor*, that one should have in mind to be *yotzei* with the reading of *Parshas Zachor* and the *berachos*. Rav Moshe Shternbach<sup>30</sup> explains that since each person in the congregation is required to read *Parshas Zachor* from the *sefer Torah* (which is accomplished with the principle of *shomeh k'oneh*), each person must also recite the *berachos* on the Torah reading. Therefore, he must have in mind to be *yotzei* with not only the Torah reading, but to the *berchos* as well, so that it can be considered as if he has recited the *berachos*.

### **Zecher or Zaicher?**

The *Mishnah Berura*<sup>31</sup> cites a dispute as to whether the correct pronunciation of the word *Zecher* (memory of *Amalek*): is this word vowelized as *Zaicher* or *Zecher*? The *Mishnah Berura* writes that in order to adhere to both opinions one should read it twice, once as *Zaicher* and once as *Zecher*. Some<sup>32</sup> have the custom of repeating the entire verse, while others repeat only the word *Zecher*. Rav Moshe Feinstein<sup>33</sup> writes that although there is no need to repeat the entire verse, one should not merely repeat the word “*Zecher*,” rather he should repeat to the words “*timcheh es Zecher Amalek*” (i.e., “...*timcheh es Zaicher Amalek, timcheh es Zecher Amalek*...”).

Some congregations, particularly in *Sefardic* or German communities, do not repeat the word *Zecher* at all.<sup>34</sup>

### **Understanding the meaning of the words**

Some *poskim*<sup>35</sup> rule that one must understand the meaning of all the words of *Parshas Zachor*, so that he understands what *Amalek* did to the Jewish people. However, the majority of *poskim*<sup>36</sup> rule that although it is commendable to understand the translation of the entire *Parshas Zachor*, so long as one understands the general idea as to why we *Parshas Zachor* is being read he fulfills his obligation. As *poskim*<sup>37</sup> write, “since the goal of reading *Parsha Zachor* is to instill an animosity towards *Amalek* in our hearts, so long as one understands the general idea of why we gather to listen to *Parshas Zachor* it is sufficient to fulfill the *mitzva*.”

### **If one missed a word of Parshas Zachor**

Some *poskim*<sup>38</sup> write that in order to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Parshas Zachor*, one must be careful to hear every word of *Parshas Zachor*. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank<sup>39</sup> writes, “Certainly, one must listen to every single word of *Parshas Zachor* and ensure that he does not miss even one word.” However, Rav Moshe Feinstein<sup>40</sup> and other *poskim*<sup>41</sup> rule that even if one missed some of the words of *Parshas Zachor* he still fulfilled his obligation, so long as he hears the main idea of *Parshas Zachor*. When one listens to *Parshas Zachor* being read he instills animosity in his heart towards *Amalek*, even if he misses a couple words of the reading. Nevertheless, in order to comply with all opinions, one should *l'chatchila* try to listen to every word of *Parshas Zachor*.<sup>42</sup>

### **Are Women Obligated in Parshas Zachor?**

The *poskim* discuss whether women are obligated in the *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek*. Some<sup>43</sup> rule that since the *mitzva* of remembering *Amalek* is not a time-bound *mitzva*, as it can technically be performed any time during the year, women too are obligated in this *mitzva*. On the other hand, the *Sefer ha'Chinuch*<sup>44</sup> rules that women are not obligated in the *mitzva* of remembering *Amalek*. He argues that since the purpose of remembering the evil deed of *Amalek* is to ultimately lead to waging war against them, women who are exempt from fighting the war are also exempt from the *mitzva* to remember what they did.

The majority of *poskim*<sup>45</sup> rule that women are indeed exempt from the *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek*. Nevertheless, nowadays, many women are accustomed to coming to *Shul* on *Shabbos* to listen to the reading of *Parshas Zachor*.<sup>46</sup>

The *sefer Toras Chesed*<sup>47</sup> writes that a woman can fulfill the *mitzva* of remembering *Amalek* by reading *Parshas Zachor* at home from a *Chumash*. He argues that although *Chazal* instituted that *Parshas Zachor* be read in *Shul* with a *minyán* from a *Sefer Torah*, *Chazal* did not obligate women to do so since women are not obligated to come to *shul* to listen to the Torah reading. Therefore, a woman who has difficulty attending the reading of *Parshas Zachor* in *Shul* may rely on the ruling of the *Toras Chesed* and read *Parshas Zachor* at home from a *Chumash*.<sup>48</sup>

### **Making a separate women's reading**

The *poskim* discuss whether it is permissible to take out a *sefer Torah* to read *Parshas Zachor* for women. The *Prisha*<sup>49</sup> writes, “One should read from a *sefer Torah* only when there is an obligation to do so. When there is no obligation to read from the *sefer Torah*, reading from it is a disgrace to its honor. Only in the earlier generations when they did not write down *Torah she'baal peh* was there a need to read from a *sefer Torah* and was it permitted to do so, but nowadays that we have so many *sefarim* to learn from, reading from a *sefer Torah* is considered a lack of honor.” Accordingly, Rav Moshe Feinstein<sup>50</sup> and other *poskim*<sup>51</sup> rule that taking out a *sefer Torah* in order to read for women is considered a dishonorable to the *sefer Torah*. These *poskim* argue that since ten women do not constitute a *minyán*, we cannot consider their reading *Parshas Zachor* to be a “Torah reading,” if so there is no purpose to take out the *sefer Torah* doing so is disgraceful to the *sefer Torah*. Others<sup>52</sup> argue however that one may take out a *sefer Torah* for a separate women's reading. Since according to some *poskim* women are obligated to listen to *Parshas Zachor* read from a *sefer Torah* just as men are, taking out a *sefer Torah* for a women's reading is not considered a disgrace to the *sefer Torah*. Still, the *berachos* that are generally recited before and after the Torah reading are not recited at a women's reading.<sup>53</sup>

### **If someone was not able to attend Parshas Zachor**

The *Magen Avraham*<sup>54</sup> writes that if one is unable to attend *Parshas Zachor* being read in *shul*, he may fulfill his obligation by listening to the Torah reading that is read on *Purim* when we read the *parsha* of *Va'yavo Amalek* (in *Parshas Beshalach*). There it discusses the battle that the Jewish people fought against *Amalek* when leaving Egypt. *Poskim*<sup>55</sup> point out that one who wishes to fulfill his obligation with the Torah reading on *Purim* must tell the *ba'al koreh* that he should have in mind to be *yotzei* the people who missed *Parshas Zachor*, otherwise it cannot be assumed that the *ba'al koreh* will have this in mind when reading the Torah on *Purim*.

### **The other three Parshios**

Aside from the reading of *Parshas Zachor*, we also read three other *Parshios* - *Shekalim*, *Parah* and *ha'Chodesh*. According to all opinions reading the two *parshios* of *Shekalim* and *ha'Chodesh* are only a rabbinical obligation. There are dissenting views regarding the reading of *parshas Parah*: The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>56</sup> writes that the reading of *parshas Parah* is a *mitzva mid'Oraisa*. However, the majority of *poskim*<sup>57</sup> rule that the reading of *parshas Parah* is only rabbinical, because the *Gemara* does not cite a source in the Torah which obligates reading these *parshios*

### **Learning during Yotzros**

The *Rama*<sup>58</sup> writes that if someone finds himself in a place that recites *yotzros* (additional prayers) during davening, he too should join the congregation and read the *yotzros*. “One should not separate himself from the rest of the congregation but rather should join the rest of the congregation. One should not even learn Torah while the rest of the congregation is praying.”

23 *Shulchan Aruch* 685:7 *Mishna Berura* 685:16. Some say that mid'Oraisa one must listen to *Parshas Zachor* with a *minyán* (see *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:12). The *Maharam Shick* (*mitzva* 605) explains that just as the *mitzva* to fight a war against *Amalek* is fought with a *tzibur*, so too the *mitzva* to remember what they did must be *b'tzibur*. 24 see *Mishna Berura* 685:14,16 and 18 25 *Rama* 685:7 26 685:14 27 Many *poskim* write that by listening to the *baal koreh* one fulfills the *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek* through the principle of *shomeh k'oneh* (*Binyan Shlomo* 54), *Har Tzvi* (O.C. vol. 1, 58); *Maishiv Davar* (1:47, d"h *siman* 128). However, Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos*, *Purim* p. 7, note 1) that it does not require the principle of *shomeh k'oneh*, rather so long as one remembers the evil deed of *Amalek* by hearing *Parshas Zachor* being read he fulfills the *mitzva*. 28 *Steipler* (*Orchos Rabeinu* Vol.3, pg.32), Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos* pg. 11), Rav Shmuel Felder (*Shiurei Halachos* pg. 2). This is based on the ruling of the *Rama* (282:4 *Mishna Berura* 282:23) that a child may be called up to recite the *berachos* on the reading of *Parshas Zachor*. 29 Quoted in *ha'gaos v'chidushei Chasam Sofer* in the back of the *Shulchan Aruch*. See *Moadim u'Zmanim* Vol. 2:87 30 *Moadim U'zmanim* 2:166 31 685:18 32 *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* Vol.5228,4 33 *Igros Moshe* (O.C. Vol.5:20:32) 34 See *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* Vol.5:228:4 and *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:25, where they writes that the main way to say the word is “*Zaicher*” . 35 *Netzai Gavriel* 19:5 36 *Emes L'Yaakov* (*ha'arah* 597), Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos* pg. 12) 37 Footnote on *Netai Gavriel* 19 note 8 38 *Mikrei Kodesh Purim* pg. 87 39 *ibid* 40 quoted in *Moadei Yeshurun* pg. 47 and in *Igros Moshe* (O.C. Vol.5:20:32) 41 see *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:10 42 Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos* pg. 12), Rav Shmuel Felder (*Shiurei Halachos* pg. 2, note 1) 43 Rav Nosson Adler (Rebbe of the *Chasam Sofer*) quoted in *sefer Binyan Tzion siman* 8, *Chasam Sofer Drashos* Vol.3 pg. 92; see *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:15 for opinions that hold that women are obligated in the *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek*. 44 *Sefer ha'Chinuch mitzvah* 603 45 *Chazon Ish* (*Teimei d'kra* 23), *Avnei Nezer* O.C. 509, Rav Moshe Feinstein (quoted in *Kovetz Halachos* pg. 13 note 13), Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos* pg. 18-19), *Yalkut Yosef Parshas Zachor*,10 writes that “the majority of *poskim* rule that women are not obligated. Nevertheless, it still is praiseworthy that they come listen to *Parshas Zachor* as well”. See *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:15 for opinions that hold that women are not obligated in the *mitzva* of *Zi'chiras Amalek*, yet he too concludes that it is fitting for them to come to *shul* to hear the reading of *Parshas Zachor* read from a *sefer Torah*. 46 *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:15, p.50 47 Vol. 1, *Siman* 37 48 See *Kovetz Halachos* (Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky) pg. 18-19 49 *Y.D.* 270:8 50 Cited by Rav Yaakov Forscheimer (*Kovetz Halachos*, *Purim* p. 22, note 14) 51 Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos*, *ibid*); *Toras Chesed* (37) 52 *V'Yaan Yosef* (3:406); *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:15-2. Furthermore, *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel* argues that if the *sefer Torah* is taken out in the same room as the *aron kodesh* is kept (or in the *ezras nashim*) it is less of an issue. See *sefer yemei Purim* (*siman* 10) where he writes that one should have the women's reading by *mincha* after the *sefer Torah* is taking out. 53 *sefer Mikadesh Yisroel*, *Purim*:15-2 54 end of *siman* 685. However, see *Mishna Berura* 685:16 where he disputes this ruling of the *Magen Avraham*. See Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos* pg. 8 note 2) 55 Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (*Kovetz Halachos* pg. 11)