

IMAGINATION: THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND

Background

For generations, we are called upon to remember that which the Amalekim did to us. According to Rashi, their main damage was that they cooled off the fear that gentile nations had of us. By attacking us, they were effectively “jumping into the scalding bath.” Even though they got burned, the bath was cooled down, and others would learn from their ways and attack us.

Questions

The Rosh Ha Yeshiva observed: the parable doesn't seem to fit. How would Amalek's attacking us “cool down the bath” and make it easier for other enemies to attack us? If anything, now the gentile nations should be more afraid to attack. What had been only a theory – that any nation that starts with the Jews starts with G-d Himself – was now proven. Amalek had attacked and had been destroyed. So surely, any enemy of the Jews should be more filled with fear as a result of Amalek, not less.

ספר דברים פרק כה

(ז) זָכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק בְּדַרְךָ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם:

(ח) אֲשֶׁר קָרַךְ בְּדַרְךָ וַיִּזְנֵב בְּךָ כָּל הַנְּחָשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶתָּה עֵינֶיךָ וַיִּגַע וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹהִים:

(ט) וְהָיָה בְּהֵנִיחַ יְדוּד אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ מִכָּל אִיבֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב בְּאַרְצְךָ אֲשֶׁר יְדוּד אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחְלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ תִּמְחָה אֶת זִכְרֵ עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח

17) Remember that which Amalek did to you on the way when you were leaving Egypt.

18) That he happened upon you on the way, and he killed among you all the weak ones in the rear when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear HASHEM.

רש"י על דברים פרק כה פסוק יח

(ח) אֲשֶׁר קָרַךְ בְּדַרְךָ - ד"א לשון קור וחום צננך והפשירך מרתיחתך שהיו העובדי כוכבים יראים להלחם בכם ובא זה והתחיל והראה מקום לאחרים משל לאמבטי רותחת שאין כל בריה יכולה לירד בתוכה בא בן בליעל אחד קפץ וירד לתוכה אע"פ שנכוה הקרה אותה בפני אחרים

Rashi – That he happened upon you... Another explanation: from the expression “cooling,” meaning they cooled off the heat. The idol worshippers were afraid to fight with you, and this group came and started up. They showed the way for others. A parable would be to a boiling bathtub that no creature could enter. Some fool jumps in and is immediately scalded, thereby cooling down the bath for others.