

I would like to welcome and thank the congregation, my family and friends for attending my Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Today is a very special day for me, and I am so happy that all of you can share it with me.

When I first began studying my parshah, I was very enthusiastic-- until I discovered how complex it was. Out of the Torah's 613 commandments, there are seventy-four listed in this week's parshah, Ki Teitzei. This is more than any other parshah in the Torah. I talked to Rabbi Spiegel and he recommended that I should spend the next several days elucidating each of them, in detail, with all of you... Just kidding! Instead I will name only a few; these commandments include the rights of a captive woman, the inheritance rights of the firstborn, the punishments of the wayward and rebellious son, burial and dignity of the deceased, returning a lost object, sending away the mother bird before taking her young, and the various forms of kil'ayim, forbidden plant and animal hybrids.

Ki Teitzei concludes with the obligation to remember "what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt" and I believe that this is the most significant commandment in this week's Torah portion.

Now that I have briefly explained the meaning of this week's parshah, I am going to discuss the thoughts of Rabbi Rambam on remembering Amalek. He states that it is a good deed to continually recognize Amalek's attack and that it is forbidden to forget our disgust for them.

Why, though, is it imperative for Jews to comprehend and remember Amalek's assault on us? Prior to the ambush, the Israelites were tired and weak. There was a limited amount of food and water, and the harsh conditions of the desert served as no aid. They were struggling and starting to lose their faith in G-d. Amalek did not fear G-d's power and wrath, so they ambushed the Israelites from behind. Because the Israelites traveled with the strong in the front and the weak in the back, Amalek's strategy was particularly immoral. In fact, this meant that they primarily attacked the greatly disadvantaged of the group: the women, children and elderly. By doing this, Amalek managed to completely overwhelm the Israelites. With much perseverance, however, the Israelites prevailed-- but at a great cost.

According to one of the mitzvot in Ki Teitzei, if a child is erratic, his parents have the first responsibility to discipline him and teach their child lessons on how to behave. However, if the child continues to be crude, even past community intervention, then he will ultimately be put to death. I believe that G-d is the parent; he teaches his children by disciplining them. The Israelites are his children. When they were losing faith in G-d, G-d sent Amalek's attack in order to teach the Israelites a lesson. This is why we must never forget Amalek's evildoings: if we forget this, we also forget its significant moral.

I feel that Amalek is more than just an evil tribe that attacked the children of Israel when they were leaving Egypt. Amalek symbolizes the collective nefarious servants that have and still do exist in the world. Throughout our history, many nations attempted to annihilate the Jewish people: the Ancient Egyptians, the Philistines, the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Spanish Empire, the Russian Empire, the Nazis, the Arab Nations, the Hezbollah, and Hamas.

My family has experienced our own hardships brought on by this concept of Amalek. During World War II, the Nazis murdered approximately 550,000 Jews out of the 825,000 Hungarian Jewish population. It was only by luck that my grandmother, Miriam Revi, was a survivor of this holocaust. She, as well as my great grandmother, Gizella Revi, and my great great grandparents, Ferenc and Aranka Revi, were all on a train that was supposed to head to Auschwitz. Due to a clerical error, the train went to Vienna, Austria. If not for that error, I would not be delivering this speech right now!

Today, Jews and the state of Israel face numerous threats and attacks namely: Anti-Semitism in Europe which is on the rise, Hamas relentless rocket attack against civilians and finally 170,000 Iranian rockets and missiles aimed at Israel.

From the ambush of the Israelites to the holocaust, Amalek has played a significant role in our history as Jews. It is important not to forget Amalek because history seems to always repeat itself. G-d wants us, the children of Israel, to have faith in him and follow his mitzvot. If we all follow G-d's commands and not lose faith in him, he will not send Amalek to punish us.

To conclude, I would like to thank Rabbi Spiegel, Chazan Pablo, my teachers, family and friends for coming to my Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Shabbat Shalom!