



DESTROYING OUR INNER AMALEK

ERADICATE THE AMALEK FROM WITHIN

This evening I would like to speak about a subject related to Purim - a subject that is important all year round. Most people are aware of the general story of Purim. There was a fellow named Haman, who plotted with King Achashveirosh - who was the ruler of the world. Haman managed to make a decree to annihilate the Jewish people in one day, throughout the entire world. The plan was to prepare for this for eleven months. The plan was to set up organizations in all the provinces to find out who are the Jews, where are the Jews, to list them and then to effectively annihilate them in one day.

But the story holds a much deeper meaning for each and every one of us when we become aware of the fact that Haman was not just another one of the gentiles. Haman was a descendant of Amalek.

Now, practically the *mitzvah* of eradicating Amalek seems to be a difficult one to fulfill. Nowadays, there is no nation of Amalekites. As a matter of fact, most of the nations, if not all the nations, have become assimilated and mixed up over the last two thousand years. So, we don't know who Amalek is. Yet, we still persist in reading the Torah, to remember the Amalekim and to remember the *mitzvah* to eradicate Amalekim and any vestige of the Amalekim. And the question begs, how do we begin to do this *mitzvah*? Where do we find Amalekim? The great Torah giants of the traditional Torah world, and the great Torah giants of the Chassidic world, both agree that the main *mitzvah* of Amalek today is to eradicate the Amalek from within ourselves.

Now, you have to understand, when Amalek engaged the Jewish people in war, it was shortly after the birth of the Jewish nation. Just a few short weeks after their exodus from Mitzrayim, the Amalekites came to engage the Jewish people. And you have to know that in that interaction the Amalekites were beat down. But the interaction with these Amalekites was just the beginning of an infusion of their ideology and what they represented in this world. It was their attempt to influence and muddy the waters of the Jewish people's development. The Gaon of Vilna writes that in the time before the arrival of Moshiach, we're going to face the seeds that Amalek planted throughout history. It's going to become manifest during that era, and we're going to face it from within the Jewish people themselves. Amalek today has infiltrated our nation, our great people, and every one of us today has a *mitzvah* to look in the mirror and to see where the essence of Amalek is within ourselves, and to eradicate that Amalek.

THE ROTTEN CORE OF AMALEK: CYNICISM

In order to begin to eradicate the Amalek, you have to know what Amalek is. What type of evil does he represent?

Now, I'm going to share with you a teaching from my father's *rebbe*. His name was Rav Yitzchak Hutner, and he put it into his own words, but it's all founded on the words of our sages. He says like this. The Torah writes about Amalek that they are *leitzim*. In English many people think a *leitz* is a comedian, the fellow who is the stand-up comedian, the guy who is good with the one-liners. That's not Amalek. That's not a *leitz*. A *leitz* is someone who is a mocker and who is a scoffer. A *leitz* is someone who is a cynic. That's what a *leitz* is. When you see cynical people and you face cynicism, you have to know you are facing Amalek.

Now, let us understand what it's about. What is a cynic? What is cynicism? What isn't cynicism?

Let me explain it like Rav Hutner explains. The Torah teaches us an amazing way of figuring out who a person is. What a person is all about. Generally, normal people have a sense of values. People, healthy individuals, attempt to present themselves as being people that have a certain standard, a certain value system. They like to think of themselves as being a *mentsch*. One person calls his value system the value system of a *mentsch*, while another person considers his values to be the value system of a *mentsch*.

The Torah tells us an amazing thing, that if you want to figure out what a person is, observe what that person praises. This is an amazing piece of psychology. You can tell a person through and through by what he praises.

It means like this. If someone praises good deeds, if someone praises people that are sages and full of wisdom, if someone praises the wise, the righteous, we know without a doubt that person is fundamentally a good person. Does it mean he makes no mistakes? No. It means he's rooted in goodness and righteousness. If, however, you have a person who praises despicable deeds and evil people, clearly that person is evil. Someone who praises deviant behavior, although he might not ever do anything wrong, he is clearly rooted in evil. In other words, a person's character is determined by what he respects and by the values that he holds dear.

This is such an important lesson! We have to emphasize this. This is clearly the barometer. Here is one person. He might be a very religious person. But when a sage walks into the room, he doesn't move. But then if somebody walks into the room, and someone says, "You see that fellow? He's a multimillionaire, mega bucks." All of a sudden, the guy says, "Really? Hello, how are you sir?" And then you can have someone else who is an ignoramus, an average fellow. He's in awe of a Torah scholar, and he honors him. If somebody says, "That man is a real sage." "Really?!" He gets up and he praises him. The real religious person in the first example has a very poor character and the simple Jew in the second case is of much greater character, because a person defers and a person submits to things he respects, things that he values, and that he aspires to. And when a person submits, and he humbles himself, and defers to somebody who has megabucks, who drives a big fancy car that says a lot about him. Let's say a guy hears of someone who has a Hummer. "A hummer?! I'm out the door." You have people like that. "Let me see it. Let me take a look at it." "You know what he drives? You know what kind of home he lives in?" That shows the character of an individual.

However, that rule only applies to somebody who has a healthy sense of spiritual values. There are some people, however, who constantly struggle with their desire to be cynical and skeptical. There are some individuals who have no inner sense of values whatsoever. You know why? Because they're being enticed and ensnared by an inner voice that's whispering to them and propels them to deny the very existence of anything important.

DIMINISHING THINGS OF IMPORTANCE

Rav Hutner writes: You have to know, there's a *yetzer hara* in the world, there is a force of evil in the world. There are people who are driven by love of money. That's a powerful force. There are people that are driven by the love of honor, respect. And there are people that are driven by physical pleasure. They're hedonistic, looking for carnal pleasures. And then there are people who have a new *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* is to tear down anything of importance. The entire purpose of giving praise to something is to express appreciation, and give it importance. A person who says, "Wow, that's a really good car." He's giving importance to that car. He appreciates the car. A guy who says, "Wow, what a home!" He appreciates the architecture, the expense, the cost, the wisdom, whatever it is. A guy who says, "I appreciate a great rabbi. I appreciate the wisdom. I appreciate this." He's giving importance and meaning to it.

The cynic, however, is constantly striving to denigrate anything of value, and he wants to establish that nothing is important. That is Amalek. Amalek is the quintessential, the ultimate cynic. That's his whole being. There's nothing of importance that exists in his world for such a person! And this is truly frightening. The fact that there is such a *yetzer hara* in the world, that there's such a force of evil in the world, is mind boggling to the human being! This piece of information, when people become aware of it, opens up a whole new world to them. That person, a cynic, has no value system. You can't determine who that person is. Nothing is important. Money is not important. He puts down people with money, and people with fancy things. He puts down people with wisdom. Everything, he just tears down. He tears down everything that's important.

Now, the Torah tells us an amazing thing about someone who has that character of being a cynic, someone who's a mocker, a scoffer. לֹץ, "do not admonish a scoffer" (Mishley 6:8). A cynic cannot accept any admonition. He cannot be repaired. So long as someone is a cynic, he is beyond repair. He has no ability to accept. It'll prevent the person from accepting or being open minded. It closes down his mind. It shuts down his heart. He has no system because he has closed down his system of having values. If I have a value system and I acknowledge something is important and I think money is important, you can come and tell me: "No, money is not important. Honor is important." People say, your word is important. Your respect is important. I can tell you, "Wisdom is important." But the person who doesn't understand at all, who doesn't acknowledge the significance of important things, who takes nothing seriously, he's finished. He's gone. He pushes away all admonition, all significance, and all importance.

Now, you have to keep in mind, the Torah which we read yesterday tells us to remember what Amalek did to us, בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם, "when you were leaving Mitzrayim." (Devarim 25:17). When we were leaving Egypt and we were heading to receive the Torah from Hashem at Har Sinai, remember what happened to you on the road. He killed all your weaklings, he attacked your rear when you were faint and exhausted. That's what the Torah says. But the word the Torah uses is אָשַׁר קָרַךְ, The Hebrew word *korcha*, Rashi says, implies that Amalek not only attacked the Jewish people, but Amalek "cooled you off." Amalek cooled us off. What does it mean to say?

This occurred immediately after the emergence of the Jewish people. The world had just been privy to a lesson of the Living G-d, taking the master of all nations, the master race, the Pharaoh, the Egyptians, they were the ruling people of the universe. They were just brought down to their knees by a rabbi with a stick, a rabbi with a staff who said he was a messenger of G-d. Which G-d? The G-d who created the universe. And they went through a very intense lesson. They were slow students. And they had to go through 10 plagues, and the whole country was brought down, not to its knees, to its ankles! Egypt now was taught the lesson in the clearest way that, yes, there is a G-d. They knew there was a G-d. All the nations in the world knew there was a G-d. And Amalek in this moment comes and challenges the Jewish people. When they're basking in an aura of awe and everybody's thinking, "Wow! These people are the people of G-d." That's when Amalek comes and - boom. He says, "I'm going to take these guys out. I'm not impressed. Nothing impresses me."

So what does he do? Rashi says the sages give a comparison. Here's a pool filled with boiling water that no person would dare to jump into because they knew they would be severely scalded. Comes along one wiseguy and says, "Ah, you're afraid of this water? It's not hot water." He jumps in. And he gets scalded. You know what he says? "You see? I did it. Now everyone else could do it." They don't see the guy in the hospital. If the guy would be carried away with a stretcher, they'd say, "Oh, he's a brave guy. That guy is fearless. He has no fear. That's a man! There goes a tough guy!" But once he had jumped in and they pulled him out, by this time the water had cooled off. So the next guy figures, "I'll jump in, too."

The Torah tells us, at this time the Jewish people were compared to a boiling moment. It was their moment. They were at the 'boiling' point. The world was awed by the Jewish people. They were in a state where there was just amazing respect for Hashem. Amalek could not tolerate the fact that there's something important. "This is real importance? Oh no. I'm going to show you." So Amalek attacks the Jews and you know what the nations of the world see? They're not invincible. They're still human beings. You can still shoot at them. Ai, you end up defeated? So what? But you can take them on. That's Amalek. They promote the power of skepticism in the world that exists in the heart of mankind. And you have to know, you know why that exists? Because it undermines the belief in Hashem, and Hashem's control over man. This is the essence of Amalek.

EVERYONE CAN IMPROVE – EXCEPT AMALEK

You know what the Torah tells us about Amalek? Rebuke does not help Amalek. The actions of Amalek reflect his inability to accept any change. Hashem says, there's only one cure for Amalek - eradicate him from the face of the earth! There are other nations in the world. They may not be great nations. They may not be righteous. You know what Hashem says? "They're not beyond hope." Every day the Jew says אחד אלוהינו ה' שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אחד, "G-d is our G-d and G-d is one." Rashi asks, do you know what that means? *Shema Yisrael*, Hashem is Elokeinu. We recognize that Hashem is the G-d Who created the world. But right now, Hashem is our G-d. Other nations don't recognize Him. But someday Hashem will be *echad*. Eventually, all the nations of the world will all acknowledge the dominion of Hashem over the universe. All that is, except for one. Who is that? Amalek. No matter how evil the nations of the world

may be, they are receptive to admonition. This opens the possibility of their eventual recognition of Hashem's kingship. There's hope that they can be salvaged. Amalek, his whole essence is not like that.

This is something that you have to study. You have to know because every one of us has within himself - some have drops, some have more than drops - of cynicism, and this cynicism makes us skeptical. People say, "I'm a skeptic." How many people have I heard saying, "Rabbi, I'm a cynic." I say, "You're not a cynic. You're a dummy." You think it's great to be a cynic. What does that mean you're a cynic? It's like some kind of a badge to hold up? "I'm a police officer." "I'm a cynic." What have you done to be a cynic? You just don't want to accept anything. You want to shut down. What do you respect? Nothing. Myself. That's what you respect.

LIBERATED FROM ACCEPTING AUTHORITY

Why do people want to be cynical? You know why? It's the most liberating thing. If nothing is important, I'm a free man. I could follow any impulse I have because who are you to tell me what's right and what's wrong? Who are you to tell me what's important or the correct thing to do or what's not the correct thing to do? Who are you to tell me that Torah is important and the correct way of life? Who are you to tell me I should be a *mentch*? Who are you to tell me?! That's your business. If I'm cynical, I'm emancipated. I'm free to do whatever it is I please. I have no personal responsibility. That's the driving force behind cynicism. It means, I don't want to go to school, I don't want to get educated, or don't want to be part of the world.

I remember speaking to a young man who decided to become a gambler. I said to the guy, "You know what the Torah teaches about gamblers? They're not part of society." I said, "What does that mean to say? It means you're not a citizen. The human race means we're all working together and we all contribute to society. The *gemara* says a gambler does not contribute to the society. He's a person who lives independent of the whole universe. He lives for himself by himself and he couldn't care less about anybody else. The *gemara's* language is *eino min hayishuv*. He's not part of the settlement. He's living in his own world." I told him, "You're a human being. Human beings have responsibility." Oh, did he let go on me. "Oh, I don't buy that. Oh, you don't understand." I said, "Excuse me. I know you. It's such a true fact. You're a loner. You live in your own world. You do your own thing. I understand you want to do your own thing. You want to live by your own *meshugas* so therefore you say nothing is important."

CHALLENGE IS A DOORWAY TO IMPROVEMENT

That's how people are. If there are things that are important, then I have to ask myself: "What is important to me? What is my value system? How do I determine what's right and what's wrong? What's my barometer? Am I skeptical? Am I a cynic?" Of course we are! Everyone has that. I have to be aware of it. You know why? Because every time I face a challenge, when I learn something new that I had not known before, it opens up for me a new challenge - will I accept this or not accept this?

So, here's a person who grew up not observing the Shabbos, and then he finds out that a Jew *has* to observe Shabbos. It's not just, "Well, if you like it, you do it. You don't like it, you don't do it." So do you know what he says? "Who says?!" All of a sudden he puts on his cynic jacket and he says, "I'm skeptical about that." That's what it does.

Or, you tell a person, "You have to keep kosher. There's a Jewish diet. Most Jews know Jews have a kosher diet." So some guys are skeptics. "No, I don't trust it. I don't believe that." Because you know why? If he would start to respect it and say, "Well, I respect it. It's interesting," he would have to change his ways. So instead, he mocks it. He says, "It's high cholesterol. It's bad for the heart. A kosher diet makes you sick," whatever it is, as if kosher diets can't be healthy.

But that's what the skeptic does. He says, "To eat kosher, you need to have the *schmaltz*, you have to eat chopped liver, you have to eat *kishke* and herring." The guy decides that's what it's all about, that's what the 'diet' calls for, and he puts it down. He scoffs and mocks it. You know why? Because he's not willing to be open. "Maybe there's a value system here that I'm not living up to and I have to accept it." Do I have to wear *tzitzis*? Do I have to cover my hair? Do I have to go to the *mikveh*? Do I have to give *tzedakah*. You know how people are skeptical? "Oh, I don't believe in that. This is some kind of thing. The rabbis made up a system you should give *tzedakah* so then they support themselves." That's cynicism. People who don't want to be kind, they don't want to accept that system, the value system of being kind, they'll be skeptical. They'll mock it. Instead of saying yes, "I've got to work on it. I've got to become a kinder person," they'll just mock the whole system.

And there are some people who are not totally cynical. You know what they'll tell me? I was once speaking about *tzedakah* and a young woman said to me with all seriousness, "Rabbi, I don't know what you're talking about. I grew up Jewish. I was taught that the worst thing you can do to somebody is give him charity. You enable people to become takers. The worst thing in the world is to help somebody with financial assistance." I said, "You grew up Jewish?" I said, "They didn't tell you the truth. That's not what Judaism is about."

Now, obviously, her parents had a challenge with *tzedakah*. They didn't want to give *tzedakah*. So they told their kid, we don't give *tzedakah*. We don't believe in that value system.

This is what a person has to know. You have to understand that every one of us, even the biggest rabbi, is faced with this challenge. You know why? He learns and he becomes aware of new things. There may be areas he has certain deficiencies in. A human being has deficiencies. As long as you're alive, you have deficiencies that you have to work on. And now he is having a difficult time. How does he deal with that? He can be skeptical. He can be cynical. He can say, "Nah." Or he could say, "You know what? I have to learn and train myself, and retrain myself how to accept this thing."

AMALEK, FUELED BY ARROGANCE

Now, the Torah tells us an amazing thing. What was the driving force behind Amalek's cynicism? What drove Amalek? What drove Amalek was arrogance. Egotism. The driving force behind Amalek was that Amalek said, "If I don't have this system, I'm not going to be fettered (i.e. restricted). I don't want to be fettered. I will dictate and I will decide - and everybody could decide what they want, where they want, how they want, and when they want." The driving force behind Amalek is *ga'avah*, and when a person has *ga'avah*, he has arrogance and he's struggling with his ego, you know what happens? They can't accept authority. You struggle with it.

This is one of the most difficult impediments to coming close to Hashem. You have to get rid of your arrogance.

There was a codifier of the *mitzvos* (R' Moshe ben Yakov Couci, d. 1260) who wrote a *sefer* known as the *Sefer Mitzvos Hagadol* (*Se' Mag*) He writes there: I had a dream and from heaven they gave me a message. The message was: You forgot the main *mitzvah* of the Torah. "Be careful lest you become arrogant" (Devarim 8:11). Originally, he was not going to list this as one of the 613 *mitzvos*, but then he did. He lists it as one of the negative commandments, "Thou shall not be arrogant." He writes the story over there, and he says, "I forgot the main *mitzvah*. This is the main *mitzvah*."¹

ARROGANCE & CYNICISM VS. HUMILITY & CHANGE

This is what a person has to know. This is what we all have to know. And we must work on this because every single one of us is challenged with this - especially in the society we live in today, where we are trained that everybody has to be egotistical. Everybody should be arrogant. Everybody should do whatever he wants, wherever he wants, whenever he wants. You're a free man. Arrogance leads to cynicism. Humility means: I don't know. I'm not perfect. I'm not necessarily great. I'm open to learn. Yes, I have to grow. And yes, I have to change, and I will change. That's the lesson.

You have to know, we find the word 'despised' used twice in the Torah. Once is by Eisav. The great-great-great-granddaddy of Haman was Eisav, the brother of Yaakov. And what happened was that one day Eisav came in from the field. He was weary, he was tired, and he sees his brother cooking up a pot of beans and he says to his brother, "Can I have the pot of beans?" He says, "I'll give it to you if you sell me the spiritual rights reserved for the firstborn." Eisav says, "Sure. What's the spiritual rights to being a first born? What's the big deal about that? I'm not going to be here forever? It's worth a pot of beans," and he sells it for a pot of beans. The Torah says, Eisav ate the beans and then he got up and he despised the firstborn rights. That despising something of value means he became a cynic.

The other place that Torah says it is by Haman. The king decreed that when Haman walks around, everybody bows down to him. So everyone was bowing down to him. But there was one person that wouldn't budge and did not bow down - that was Mordechai. Now, at first when Haman was told about it, you know what Haman said? "I don't believe it. I don't believe anybody would be that stupid not to bow down to me. And a Jew no less?" So the next time Haman walks in the street, he makes sure he walks right next to Mordechai. You know what Haman says? "I'm sure he didn't see me."

Now, this is arrogance. We think, "Wow, what a nice guy. He's so understanding!" No. He was so arrogant and full of himself, he couldn't imagine that somebody would not bow down to him. So he walks next to Mordechai and Mordechai does not budge. Mordechai doesn't even move a bone. As a matter of fact, you know what Mordechai tells him? "I know of your humble beginnings. You were a barber for twenty years. You're not G-d. You're a barber. Nothing wrong with being a barber but I don't bow down to barbers." Another thing he says. "We've met before, and you belong to me. I own you, my friend."

It says, Haman became so filled with rage, he despised Mordechai at that moment and he decided he was so important, "I'm going to take out his people, his children, his women. All of them! Every last Jew, I'm taking out of the world." That's called, 'nothing is important.' The lives of millions of people has no value in the eyes of a skeptic. A million people dying is nothing. So what? They're not important. They're dispensable.

A lot of us can't imagine how Saddam Hussein did these horrendous deeds. People were indispensable to him. He was cynical. He was a mocker. These people are not people. You think Hitler had problems sleeping at night? Nah. He scoffed.

He said, "They're nothing. They're not people. They're not human beings. They're not part of the human race." He took the part of the human race that history acknowledged was so important, he took a human race that had proved its importance to the world beyond the shadow of a doubt, no other nation can hold a candle to it, and what did he say? "Important? You're zero. You don't exist. You're swine. You're dogs." He called them every last name in the book. That was the cynicism.

Now, today we're plagued with it. We're surrounded by it. You have to know what's the motivation that we shouldn't be cynical? There are a number of motivations. One motivation is cynical people are generally unhappy. People who have no value system and they're cynics and skeptics, they're not happy people. Most people like to be happy. It says, אור זרוע לצדיק ולישרי לב שמחה, "to those who are straight of heart there is joy" (Tehillim 97:11). A person who is a straight-hearted fellow is happy.

COMPLAINER OR EXPLAINER? THREE BAD RESULTS

Rav Hutner used to say over a very interesting thing. What does it mean לישרי לב, "straight-hearted" people? He said the Targum translated לבריות, people who "explain the behavior of others." The type of people who see people behaving and instead of being cynical about how other people behave, they rather explain other people's behavior. Those people are happy. Either you're a complainer or you're an explainer. The cynic is the complainer. He's always mocking. He's putting down. He's complaining. "That's not important. This is not important. This person he's nuts. That guy is out of his mind. I don't like this. I can't stand this." Complainers are unhappy people. They're unhappy with their marriages. They're unhappy with their family life. They're unhappy with their jobs. They're unhappy with the place they live. They're just cynics. That's what they are. They don't understand any importance. They say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, but..." That's what they say. If somebody points out to them, "It's not bad. Look at what you had before. Look what you have now. Look where you are." "Ah, but...but..." That's how people are.

Another thing is, if you're cynical, you're going to end up being foolish, because you're locking yourself out, you're shutting yourself out from acquiring wisdom. That's how it is. "Fools find fault," says Shlomo Hamelech. That means if you find fault, you're a fool. That's what he's saying. The *middah*, the characteristic of people who complain is that they're foolish. Do you want to be wise or do you want to be foolish?

¹ וזאת בחלום במראית הלילה הנה שכחת את העיקר השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' והתבוננתי עליו בבקר והנה יסוד גדול הוא ביראת השם הואילתי לחברו בעזרת ה' חכמת לחימין אחרי כן עיינתי בספר פ"ק דסוטה [דף ה'] וגרסין שם בהדיא אזרה לגסי הרוח מניין רב נחמן ברבי יצחק אמר מהא ורם לברך ושכחת את ה' וכדברי אבין אמר רבי אלעאי דאמר כל מקום שנאמר השמר פן ואל יזינו אלאל לא תעשה (ספר מצות גדול, לאוין ס"ד)

And the third consequence is if you have kids. No parents want their children to be cynics. We want our children to have a positive attitude. We want them to be upbeat. We want them to be trusting. And people that are cynical will create little cynics and little skeptics. And they'll create little monsters. That's what you create. It's the worst thing to happen.

So if nothing else, keep an open mind. And yes, the parents say: "I may not be the best. I'm not a super human being. I didn't learn, but I will learn. I'm going to be open to study. I'm going to be open to growth. I'm not going to put down others who know more than me. I'm going to respect people who are committed to a value system in their life. I'm not going to knock them down." And the person will then generate a positive attitude about the people around him, and then the person will become a better person.

SUBMIT TO HASHEM AND CORRECT OUR WAYS

We are now standing on the eve of Purim! When we read the story about eradicating Amalek, we need to think about this message. It's very easy to talk about eradicating an enemy which you can't see. It's easy to talk about eradicating an enemy as long as it's somebody else. What we need to do is we have to look at the enemy within. Amalek has infused himself within ourselves. Let us look in our relationships between husband and wife how much egotism, how much arrogance exists? Sometimes the wife is arrogant. Sometimes the husband is arrogant. Sometimes a person who is a teacher is arrogant. Sometimes a person who's a friend is arrogant. Sometimes an employer is arrogant. "I'm the boss. I'm in charge. I'm the king. I don't defer to you. I don't submit to you. You defer to me. You submit to me. You humble yourself."

Here is a person who is arrogant. He can't defer to Hashem. He can't submit to Hashem, and say, "Yes Hashem, You're right. Yes Hashem, I'm wrong. Yes Hashem, I have shortcomings. Yes Hashem, I don't understand this. Yes Hashem, I can't understand this. I'm a human being. Yes Hashem, this is what I have to do. This is what I shall do. Yes, I'm open to learning. Okay, I will learn something new. I'd like to learn about it. I'm open to change. Yes, I'm open to becoming kinder."

You have to be willing to diminish your ego. You have to acknowledge that the ego is the driving force behind your cynicism. So people will say, "Well, I don't trust people. I got burned so many times by people." I've had people who told me, "My mother didn't serve me porridge," or "the reason why I'm cynical is because my mother didn't smile at me." Or, "When I got a test, my mother said this to me and my father used to hit me." And everybody has all kinds of reasons for why they're cynical. They're still cynical. And cynicism is a very unhealthy attitude, and the Torah tells us, eradicate every last vestige of your cynicism from your heart. And then you can go with this to Purim.

That's one of the major lessons in the defeat of Amalek. And you know why the Jews defeated Amalek? Because instead of throwing their yarmulkes away when they were faced with annihilation, and instead of telling Hashem, "This is how You treat us? Hashem, this is what You put us up against? Where are You G-d? This is a G-d who puts His people in such a predicament? This is a G-d who sets us up for annihilation in one day? We thought this is the G-d that tells us we're special. Forget this G-d. I'm taking my *tefillin*. I'm going to step on it. I'm taking my yarmulke. I'm going to step on it. I'm taking the Torah. I'm going to burn it *challah*. I don't want anything to do with this G-d" - what did the Jews do instead? They submitted! They deferred! They said to Hashem, "Hashem *chataisi*, we have sinned. Hashem, we shall become better. Hakadosh Baruch Hu we will defer to You. We submit to You. We've made mistakes, and we shall correct them." And you know what Hashem said? "Yes, My children. That's the response. You deferred, you submitted, ah!!" Now, ויקר, ושחח וישון ויקר, ליהודים היתה אורה ושחח וישון ויקר, for the Jews there was light, there was joy, there was happiness, and there was respect. This is what it leads to.

Don't run away. Rid yourselves of this cynicism. Begin to live a happy life, begin to live a wise life and begin to generate positive attitudes to those people around you to whom you have an influence on.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Eradicating Amalek's ideology of cynicism, which has infiltrated our nation and its psyche, is the main mitzvah of "destroying Amalek" in our time. Amalek is a leitz, a mocker and a scoffer, a quintessential cynic. Rav Hutner explains, if you want to figure out who a person is, observe carefully what he praises, because a person's character is developed by what he respects, values and holds dear. If he praises good deeds, righteous people and Torah sages - people who are full of wisdom, then, without a doubt, he is a good person with a good foundation. But if he praises deviant behavior and despicable deeds, such a person is clearly rooted in evil. Besides the well-known yetzer horas of lust, the desire for money, honor and respect, and hedonism, there is a "new" type of yetzer hora. Its goal is to denigrate and tear down anything of importance - leitzanus. SeferMishley teaches us that a leitz is not able to accept admonition, be repaired, or be open minded. A person like that has no system of values. He represents the ultimate power of skepticism that undermines the belief in Hashem and the idea that Hashem is in control over man. This is the essence of Amalek. We all, of course, have some vestiges of cynicism-Amalekites to eradicate. Being a cynic is very 'liberating' as it gives birth to the attitude of "I am free to do what I please. I have no personal responsibilities." Cynicism is ultimately rooted in ga'avah, or arrogance, whereby a cynic cannot nor does he want to accept any authority over him. We can see, therefore, how arrogance leads to cynicism. A cynic is always complaining, and as such, he is never happy. Cynics also lock themselves out from being wise, as they choose not to change but to remain foolish and ignorant. The saddest part of all, is they also create children who are cynics and skeptics themselves. A healthy approach to growing and improving, on the other hand, is to say, "Yes, I may not know this, but I am willing to learn, to grow and to understand, to have an open mind." And this is precisely how the Yidden responded during the events of Purim, where they said, "Hashem, we submit to you, we accept that our sinful actions got us where we are now." No, they didn't throw their kippas away, but instead, they came to the point of self-realization. They set out to change and transform themselves, so they merited Divine intervention. As we read the section of the Torah of remembering Amalek this Shabbos, may we be zoiche to learn this lesson and walk into Purim with that same transformational mindset.