

A Study in Contrasts: Parashat Ki Teitzei 5786

Source Sheet by Rabbi Vanessa Harper

Deuteronomy 22:1-3

(1) If you see your fellow Israelite's ox or sheep gone astray, do not ignore it; you must take it back to your peer. (2) If your fellow Israelite does not live near you or you do not know who [the owner] is, you shall bring it home and it shall remain with you until your peer claims it; then you shall give it back. (3) You shall do the same with that person's donkey; you shall do the same with that person's garment; and so too shall you do with anything that your fellow Israelite loses and you find: you must not remain indifferent.

דברים כ"ב:א'-ג'

(א) לֹא-תִרְאֶה אֶת-שׁוֹר אֲחִיךָ אוֹ אֶת-שֵׂיוֹ
נִדְחִים וְהִתְעַלְמָתָם מֵעֵינֶיךָ תִּשְׁבּוּ תִּשְׁבֵּם לְאָחִיךָ:
(ב) וְאִם-לֹא קָרֹב אֲחִיךָ אֵלֶיךָ וְלֹא יָדַעְתָּ
וְאִסְפָּתוֹ אֶל-תּוֹךְ בֵּיתְךָ וְהִנֵּה עִמָּךְ עַד דֶּרֶשׁ אֲחִיךָ
אֹתוֹ וְהִשְׁבֵּתוֹ לּוֹ: (ג) וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְחֹמְרוֹ וְכֵן
תַּעֲשֶׂה לְשִׁמְלָתוֹ וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְכָל-אֲבֵדֹת אֲחִיךָ
אֲשֶׁר-תִּאֲבֹד מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִצֵּאתָהּ לֹא תִוְּכַל לְהִתְעַלֵּם:

Deuteronomy 22:6

(6) If, along the road, you chance upon a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs and the mother sitting over the fledglings or on the eggs, do not take the mother together with her young.

דברים כ"ב:ו'

(ו) כִּי יִקְרָא קוֹן-צִפּוֹר | לְפָנֶיךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּכָל-עֵץ |
אוֹ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲפֻרְתִּים אוֹ בִּיצִים וְהָאֵם רֹבֶצֶת
עַל-הָאֲפֻרְתִּים אוֹ עַל-הַבִּיצִים לֹא-תִקַּח הָאֵם
עַל-הַבָּנִים:

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עַל-הַבָּנִים:

Deuteronomy 23:16-17

(16) You shall not turn over to the master a slave who seeks refuge with you from that master. (17) Such individuals shall live with you in any place they may choose among the settlements in your midst, wherever they please; you must not ill-treat them.

Deuteronomy 24:17-18

(17) You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. (18) Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that your God redeemed you from there; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment.

Deuteronomy 23:4-9

(4) No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of Adonai; no descendants of such, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the congregation of Adonai, (5) because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt, and because they hired Balaam... to curse you....(7) You shall never concern yourself with their welfare or benefit as long as you live. (8) You shall not abhor an Edomite, for such is your kin. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in that land. (9) Children born to them may be admitted into the congregation of Adonai in the third generation.

דברים כ"ג:ט"ז-י"ז

(טז) לֹא-תִסְגִּיר עֶבֶד אֶל-אֲדֹנָיו אֲשֶׁר-יִנָּצֵל
אֵלָיו מֵעַם אֲדֹנָיו: (יז) עִמָּךְ יֵשֵׁב בְּקִרְבְּךָ
בְּמִקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר בְּאַחַד שְׁעָרֵיהָ בְּטוֹב לוֹ לֹא
תוֹנְנוּ:

דברים כ"ד:י"ז-י"ח

(יז) לֹא תִטֹּה מִשְׁפַּט גֵּר יְתוֹם וְלֹא תִחַבֵּל בְּגֶד
אַלְמָנָה: (יח) וְזִכְרָתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם
וַיִּפְדֶּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִיָּד מִצְרַיִם
לְעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

דברים כ"ג:ד'-ט'

(ד) לֹא-יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בְּקִהְלֵה' גַּם דּוֹר
עֲשִׂירִי לֹא-יָבֹא לָהֶם בְּקִהְלֵה' עַד-עוֹלָם: (ה)
עַל-דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּלָחֶם וּבַמֵּיִם
בְּדַרְךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֲשֶׁר שָׁכַר עָלֶיךָ
אֶת-בְּלָעַם בֶּן-בְּעֹזֵר מִפְּתוֹר אֲרָם נְהָרִים
לְהַלְלֶךָ: (ו) וְלֹא-אֲכָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשִׁמְעַע
אֶל-בְּלָעַם וַיַּהַפּוּ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָךְ אֶת-הַקְּלָלָה
לְבִרְכָּה כִּי אָהַבְתָּ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ: (ז) לֹא-תִדְרֹשׁ
שְׁלָמָם וְטַבָּתָם כָּל-יְמֵיךָ לְעוֹלָם: {ס} (ח)
לֹא-תִתְעַב אֲדָמִי כִּי אֲחִיךָ הוּא לֹא-תִתְעַב מִצְרִי
כִּי-גֵר הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶצוֹ: (ט) בְּגִיִּם אֲשֶׁר-יִוְלְדוּ לָהֶם
דּוֹר שְׁלִישִׁי יָבֹא לָהֶם בְּקִהְלֵה' ה':

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

(17) Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt— (18) how, undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear. (19) Therefore, when your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

Exodus 17:8-16

(8) Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. (9) Moses said to Joshua, "Pick some troops for us, and go out and do battle with Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in my hand." (10) Joshua did as Moses told him and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) Then, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (12) But Moses' hands grew heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands; thus his hands remained steady until the sun set. (13) And Joshua overwhelmed the people of Amalek with the sword. (14) Then God said to Moses, "Inscribe this in a document as a reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven!" (15) And Moses built an altar and named it Adonai-nissi. (16) He said, "It means, 'Hand upon the throne of Adonai!' God will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages."

דברים כ"ה:י"ז-י"ט

(יז) זָכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק בְּדַרְךְ
בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם: (יח) אֲשֶׁר קָרָךְ בְּדַרְךְ
וַיִּזְנֹב בְּךָ כָּל-הַנֶּחֱשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עֵיף וַיִּגַּע
וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹקִים: (יט) וְהָיָה בְּהִנִּיחַ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ
לְךָ מְכַל-אֵיבֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב בְּאַרְצֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ תִּמְחָה
אֶת-יִזְכָּר עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשְ�כַּח:

שמות י"ז:ח'-ט"ז

(ח) וַיָּבֹא עַמְלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִפְדִּים:
(ט) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּחַר-לָנוּ אַנְשִׁים
וַיֵּצֵא הַלָּחֶם בַּעַמְלֵק מִחֹר אֲנָכִי נֹצֵב עַל-רֹאשׁ
הַגִּבְעָה וּמִטָּה הָאֱלֹקִים בְּיָדִי: (י) וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר-לּוֹ מֹשֶׁה לְהִלָּחֵם בַּעַמְלֵק וּמֹשֶׁה
אָהָרָן וְחֹוֹר עָלָיו רָאשׁ הַגִּבְעָה: (יא) וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר
יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִגְדֹּל
וַיִּגְבֵּר עַמְלֵק: (יב) וַיִּדִּי מֹשֶׁה כַּבָּדִים וַיִּקְחוּ-אֶבֶן
וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ תַּחְתָּיו וַיִּשָּׁב עָלֶיהָ וְאָהָרָן וְחֹוֹר תָּמְכוּ
בְּיָדָיו מִזֶּה אֶחָד וּמִזֶּה אֶחָד וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה
עַד-כִּי הִשָּׁמַשׁ: (יג) וַיַּחֲלֵשׁ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת-עַמְלֵק
וְאֶת-עַמּוֹ לְפִי-חֶרֶב: {פ} (יד) וַיֹּאמֶר ה'
אֶל-מֹשֶׁה כָּתֹב זֹאת זִכָּרוֹן בְּסֵפֶר וְשִׁים בְּאָזְנוֹ
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כִּי-מָחָה אֶמְחֶה אֶת-יִזְכָּר עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת
הַשָּׁמַיִם: (טו) וַיִּבֶן מֹשֶׁה מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ ה' |
נָסִי: (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי-יֵד עַל-יָדָיו לֵה מִלְחָמָה לֵה
בַּעַמְלֵק מְדוֹר דָּר:

Rabbi Shai Held, *The Heart of Torah*

During the Shoah, many Jewish thinkers equated antisemitism with Amalek. One can easily imagine a Jewish thinker extending the image in a more generalized way to people who behave in monstrous ways, brazenly and remorselessly attacking the innocent (Think, for example, of ISIS.) This is eminently understandable: Amalek is the rhetorical device in Judaism's arsenal for speaking of utter ruthlessness and inhumanity. And yet such moves are also extremely dangerous: in labeling someone as an Amalekite, and thus raising them to the level of metaphysical evil, we run the risk of giving ourselves license to behave in savage ways in attempting to root out savagery. In the process we may become the very thing we set out to combat.

If we wish to employ the language of evil, we must be vigilant lest it pave the way for us to behave in evil ways. The Hasidic master Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev (1740-1809) teaches: "It seems that not only are the Children of Israel commanded to blot out Amalek, but also every individual Jew must blot out that evil part called 'Amalek' which is hidden in [their] heart. As long as the seed of Amalek is in the world, since a person is a miniature world (a microcosm), Amalek exists in the evil potential within the person, which awakens anew again and again to cause [them] to sin" (*Kedushat Levi, parashat Zakhor*).

...We should not invoke the language of Amalek--and of evil more generally-- unless and until we are willing to recognize 'the evil potential' within ourselves as well.

***Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishmael, BeShallah, Amalek 2* (trans. R' Held)**

R. Eliezer teaches: If anyone from any of the nations of the world comes to convert [to Judaism], they must accept [them], but from the House of Amalek, they must not accept [them].

Gittin 57b:7

The Gemara adds that some **of Haman's descendants studied Torah in Bnei Brak**, and some **of Sisera's descendants taught children Torah in Jerusalem**, and some **of Sennacherib's descendants taught Torah in public. Who are they?** They are **Shemaya and Avtalyon**, the teachers of Hillel the Elder.

גיטין נ"ז ב:ז'

מִבְּנֵי בְנֵי שָׁל הָמָן לְמַדּוּ תּוֹרָה בְּבִנְי בְּרַק;
מִבְּנֵי בְנֵי שָׁל סִיסְרָא לְמַדּוּ תִינוּקוֹת
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם; מִבְּנֵי בְנֵי שָׁל סְנַחֲרִיב לְמַדּוּ
תּוֹרָה בְּרַבִּים – מֵאַן אֵינּוּן? שְׁמַעְיָה
וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן.