

## REMOVING ALL TRACES OF AMALEK A SOURCE OF ELEVATION FOR ISRAEL

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

**G**-d ordered King Saul to wipe out the descendants of Amalek from off the face of the earth, as it is written, "So said the L-RD, Master of Legions: 'I have remembered what Amalek did to Israel – [the ambush] he emplaced against him on the way, as he went up from Egypt. Now go and strike down Amalek and destroy everything he has" (I Samuel 15:2:3). Thus the annihilation of Amalek comprises one of the three mitzvot that the Eternal commanded the Children of Israel for their entry into the Holy Land (Sanhedrin 20b).

Commenting on the verse that states, "Saul said to the Kenite, 'Go, withdraw, descend from among the Amalekite, lest I destroy you with them'" (I Samuel 15:6), the Zohar asks why the Holy One, blessed be He, was so merciless with regards to Amalek, even more so than with any other nation (Zohar II:194b). Rabbi Chiya responds: "Because the battle with Amalek took place from above to below and on every side." Exactly what does this mean?

Everyone should constantly connect themselves to G-d, on every side, from above and below; this resembles "A ladder [that] was set earthward and its top reached heavenward" (Genesis 28:12). This is done in order to bind the supernal world with the lower world, so that the Eternal may "dwell in the midst of both" (see Exodus 25:8).

Following the example of Egypt, all the nations acted only with hate in regards to the Children of Israel. Yet they didn't try to distance them from their faith in G-d. Amalek, on the other hand, tried to completely distance the Children of Israel from G-d, as much in the supernal world as in the lower one. At their departure from Egypt, they yearned with fervor to purify themselves from all their spiritual blemishes. They engaged themselves in the study of Torah, even while on route, as it is written, "you will speak of them [Torah matters] ... while you walk on the way" (Deuteronomy 6:7). Yet just as someone who wants to cool the waters of a hot bath (Tanhuma, Ki Tisa 9), Amalek came to chill their enthusiasm and to make them cross over the threshold of the fiftieth gate of impurity. He wanted to make them descend from the spiritual levels that they had ascended upon leaving Egypt and to prevent them from receiving the Torah. Over the course of the generations, there was thus never a worse enemy for the Jews than Amalek. His hatred for our nation has never been equaled in the history of humanity.

Amalek's brazenness stunned and chilled all the nations that considered his actions as tantamount to an all-out war not only against the Holy One, blessed be He (and His Shechinah), but also against Israel. Amalek had not understood that he couldn't triumph over them. He even ignored the fact that a powerful nation such as Egypt wasn't able to defeat them. The workings of the Satan succeeded nevertheless: The Children of Israel were terrified by him and began to abstain from Torah study. The forces of evil thus managed to defeat them in the supernal and lower worlds. Amalek, the descendant of Esau, knew perfectly well that as long as the voice of Jacob was not heard in the synagogues and yeshivas, he would triumph, as it is written, "when you are aggrieved, you may cast off his yoke from upon your neck" (Genesis 27:40).

The Eternal therefore ordered Saul to annihilate all the descendants of Amalek, who chilled the enthusiasm of the Divine service, spiritually weakened the Children of Israel, and brought forth accusations both in the supernal and lower worlds. Amalek's fate is the fate of all those who follow in his footsteps, such as the Greeks, Haman, etc. For instead of encouraging them to engage in the study of Torah, he made them commit sins and prevented shefa (abundance, both spiritual and material) from descending into the world. If fact, in a manner of speaking, he prevented the Kingdom of G-d from descending into the world as well. Amalek and his group aimed at wiping out the creation of the Holy One, blessed be He. Thus His Name and His Throne will not attain perfection until all traces of Amalek are erased (Tanhuma, Ki Tisa, end). The Kingdom of G-d will then spread out and nothing, neither in the supernal nor lower worlds, will hinder Israel's Redemption.

Having temporarily refrained from Torah study, the Children of Israel were attacked by Amalek and strengthened the power of the Kelipah. Moses then said to Joshua, "Choose men for us" [Exodus 17:9] – 'courageous and devout' [Mechilta and Rashi] – who are not afraid of Amalek's Kelipah. I will fight him from above, and you from below, and we will triumph over him." However Saul did not act in this way, and that is why he was dethroned.

It is this that we recall on Shabbat Zachor, and all throughout the year. We see to it that we take the battle to Amalek and that we triumph over him in the upper and lower worlds. Shabbat, which constitutes a foretaste of the world to come, is a particularly appropriate time to destroy the serpent and the forces of evil. We must never forget what Amalek did to us when we left Egypt (see Deuteronomy 25:17).

"Then Esther summoned ... one of the king's chamberlains ... and ordered him to go to Mordechai, to learn what this was about and why" (Esther 4:5). Esther wanted to know if accusations had been brought against Israel in the upper and lower worlds. Mordechai then told her what had happened (v.7), and even in fact that the death sentence had been pronounced against the Jews (on high as well as below) who had rejoiced in Ahasuerus' banquet and had prostrated themselves in front of an idol (Megillah 12a), and who had seen the vessels of the Holy Temple in their splendor without lamenting over them. Instead of crying over the Temple's destruction and the fact that its vessels were in Babylon since then, they rejoiced with the gentiles. Their religious observance had also grown cold, as during the time of Amalek. Esther then said to Mordechai, "Go, assemble all the Jews that are to be found in Shushan" (Esther 4:16). This is what Mordechai did, who assembled children in yeshivas to study Torah (Esther Rabba 9:5) in order to correct their remoteness from it. Thus when we remember throughout the years, and in particular on Shabbat Zachor, these events in our history, we push ourselves to repair spiritual blemishes and to engage in the diligent study of Torah. These awakenings, below and above, eliminate all strict judgments and even bring redemption closer, as was the case during Mordechai's and Esther's era.

Even though the miracle was essentially due to Esther, her name is always preceded by that of Mordechai, who was the



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first to become aware of the accusations brought against the Children of Israel in the upper and lower worlds, and who preceded the rectifying punishment by refusing to bend the knee and prostrate himself before Haman (Esther 3:2), which is to say, before the descendant of Amalek and the forces of evil. On the other hand, Esther, who didn't know what attitude to adopt, was content to ask what this was all about and from where it originated.

Haman therefore hurried to prepare gallows from which to hang Mordechai. He did not want to wait for the death of the other Jews in order to kill him because Haman knew that Mordechai had knowledge of the formidable secrets of Kabbalah in order to eliminate all the accusations brought against the Jews in the upper and lower worlds. Yet he did not succeed, for it was precisely on that night that the king could not sleep (Ibid. 6:1). The Talmud reports that Mordechai could also not sleep that night (see Esther Rabba 10:1). In the book of records, it was found that Mordechai had saved Ahasuerus from certain death. Finally, it was Haman who was hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordechai (Esther 10:2), and the accusations against the Jews were abolished. They passed from darkness to light and were delivered from their oppressors. The Eternal therefore commanded that we remember what was done to us by Amalek, who wanted the kingdom of evil to

dominate the world, and who was opposed to G-d's Name being complete. He commanded us to remember "from generation to generation," which is to say, from that of Moses to that of Saul, and from that of Mordechai to that of our Redeemer (Rashi).

Haman was therefore hanged during the month of Nissan, more specifically on the day after Passover. He was hanged on a tree – the gallows – to show all the generations what happens to one who attacks the tree of life (which is the Torah), and what happens to these who uphold it (Proverbs 3:18).

It not being enough to just recall this event, Mordechai prescribed that these days be made ones of feasting and rejoicing, ones during which we send food to one another, and during which we distribute gifts to the poor (Esther 9:22). In demonstrating kindness towards the poor, we recall that which the Holy One, blessed be He, did by saving us from the accusations which the serpent brought against us in the upper and lower worlds. Moreover, We should note with regards to this that the Kelipah bears the name anyah (poor) (see Zohar I:13a; III:273b). It draws its sustenance only in the remnants of holiness, like a dog that licks the scraps of its master (Ibid. III:197a). Thus in occupying oneself with the ani, the poor, one weakens the power of the anyah, the Kelipah, and by this one strengthens the power of holiness in the world.

## Current Issues

### The Protector of One People

It is written, "Then Haman said to King Achashverosh, 'There is am echad [one people], scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from every other people's, and they do not observe the king's laws.'" (Esther 3:8).

When the wicked Haman tried to warn King Achashverosh about the Jewish people, he fueled his hatred by saying: "There is am echad [one people], scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples." The Midrash asks whether the term echad ("one") isn't redundant. After all, every people is "one" in regards to others! In that case, why mention that they are echad?

The Midrash goes on to explain how Haman and Achashverosh found it difficult to understand how the Jewish people have survived. In fact they were scattered throughout his realm, a people spread over 127 provinces, and yet they managed to remain "one." How was this possible, and who and what united them? If something happened to Jews in India, why would Jews from another land come to help them?

Prior to the First World War, when a blood libel was brought against the Jews of Damascus, Sir Moses Montefiore launched an appeal in England to help the accused. The leader of Syria, who was with him at the time, could not help asking with great curiosity: "Sir, you have come here from England. What connection do you have with Jews imprisoned in Damascus? You have to explain the meaning of such solidarity to me. You're English, not Syrian, so how does this concern you?" That was how the Syrian leader spoke, as if to say: "If a non-Jew from Syria were to be sentenced to death, do you think that a non-Jew from India would come to his rescue?" However the evil Haman discovered the "secret" – the mysterious power of the Jewish people – which was hidden in the term echad: "There is am echad." What he meant was: "Although this people is scattered abroad and dispersed, the word echad is what connects them. From India to Ethiopia, they all recite the verse: 'Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is Echad [One].' This word [one] is what unifies the millions of Jews who are dispersed to the four corners of the earth."

Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky, the director of Yeshivat Chadera and a preacher, often recounted the story of what happened to him during the Second World War: "As we were fleeing from one place to another, the terrible and ominous war continued and confronted us on all sides. We therefore looked for any train that would get us further from the battlefield. However there wasn't always one available.

"Once as I was fleeing, I found myself stuck at the Bukhara train station without a ticket to continue on my journey. Obviously, I had no friends or

relatives in the region, and therefore I had no way to leave. It would soon be night, and I knew that anyone who lingered in the streets at night would be brought directly to jail...and from there he would die!"

The Rav continued his account:

"I was there all alone, lost in the middle of the train station, half an hour from sunset. It was getting progressively darker, but I still didn't find any train that would allow me to continue on my way (without a ticket). Where could I go? If I tried to hide beneath a bench in the station, the local police would find me.

"Suddenly, I noticed a man sitting in a corner and shining the shoes of anyone who asked him. I then allowed myself to be filled with a little hope, though tinged with fear: 'What if he were a Jew?'

"I thought about the situation: What if I went up to him and asked, 'Are you Jewish?' and yet I'm wrong...Sovereign of the universe, woe is me!

"I therefore stood there, my knees knocking together in terror. I wondered about the approach I should take. I then went up to him, in a mixture of apprehension and anticipation, and said in a loud voice [in Hebrew]: 'Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.' I thought that if he wasn't Jewish, he wouldn't understand me anyways.

"However this shoe shiner had clearly heard and understood these words. He raised his eyes and whispered to me [in Hebrew]: 'Blessed be the Name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever' with an old Bukharian accent. Oh! I was standing before a Bukharian Jew!

"I took shelter with him for 11 days. He didn't understand me, since I was from Poland. He didn't understand a word of Yiddish, for he only spoke Bukharian, a language I didn't know. We therefore communicated to one another with hand gestures. Thank G-d, my life was saved!

"One night as I was there, I began to think about all this. Warm tears then filled my eyes, for if I hadn't been Jewish, everything I would have shouted in Polish would have been useless. 'Go to hell!' this shoe shiner would have told me. 'Sovereign of the universe, what connection do I have with this Bukharian Jew? He doesn't understand my language, he doesn't know my parents, and he's never seen a Polish Jew...and yet! Both of us, him and I, recite the same Shema Israel.' Tears were dripping from my eyes: What is a Jew?

"There, in the middle of Bukhara, I understood the issue confronting the wicked Haman: 'There is am echad [one people], scattered abroad and dispersed' – true, this people is scattered abroad and dispersed across 127 provinces – and indeed, around the world – but all its members breathe the same air, that of the holy Torah and the omnipresence of the Creator, Who is One and Whose Name is One."

## *The Torah Shall Never Depart*

It is written, “Command Aaron and his sons, saying: ‘This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt-offering...’” (Vayikra 6:2).

It is a rule: Wherever the term *leimor* (“saying”) appears, it is an order to say to others. Thus Moshe received the order to teach three generations: Aaron, his sons, and the sons of his sons.

In the book *Yismach Israel*, Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer Zatzal sees in this verse an allusion to a teaching of our Sages on the verse, “They [words of Torah] shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your children, nor from the mouth of your children’s children, from now and for all time” (Isaiah 59:21): “He who is himself a Torah scholar, his son is a Torah scholar, and his son’s son too, the Torah will never cease from his descendants... From then on, the Torah seeks its home” (Bava Metzia 85a).

Hence the verse states: “Command Aaron and his sons” – these being two generations; “saying” – this being the third generation. “This is the law of the burnt-offering” – we teach the laws that relate to the burnt-offering. We will thereby merit “the burnt-offering” – this Torah will always seek its home, and everyone will know it perfectly well.

## *For the Sake of Heaven*

It is written, “This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt-offering shall be on the hearth, upon the altar” (Vayikra 6:2).

The Ben Ish Hai explained this verse by telling the story of a great Torah scholar who entered the Beit HaMidrash and saw many students learning Torah by the method of *pilpul* with razor-sharp concentration. He realized, however, that everyone was learning Torah with an ulterior motive. He said to them, “I see the Beit HaMidrash filled to the brim with Torah.” The students rejoiced in his words, for they thought that he was giving them a compliment.

When the Torah scholar saw that they had not understood his words, he said to them: “Know that the breath of learning ascends before Hashem, for the Torah is called ‘fire,’ and by nature fire rises. However if learning is done for selfish reasons, the breath of the Torah cannot rise, for Heaven pushes it away and it remains in the Beit HaMidrash. That is why I said that I see the Beit HaMidrash filled with Torah.”

This is alluded to in the verse, “This is the law [torat] of the burnt-offering,” meaning that the greatest kind of Torah study – “is the burnt-offering” – which immediately ascends [oleh] on high, and is not pushed back below. This only happens when it is “on the hearth, upon the altar” – meaning that Torah learning is done with enthusiasm and for the sake of Heaven alone.

## *In the Desert of Sinai*

It is written, “To bring their offerings to Hashem in the desert of Sinai” (Vayikra 7:38).

Why does the verse specifically mention the desert of Sinai? Was there something special about this desert, something did not apply to the other places where they brought offerings?

Noting how peculiar this is, Rabbi Chizkiya ben Manoach (the Chizkuni) explains that the Children of Israel did not bring offerings before having arrived in the desert of Sinai, and that they remained there for an entire year less ten days (they arrived at the desert of Sinai on the first day of Sivan in the first year, and the cloud arose on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year).

Once they left the desert of Sinai, they no longer brought offerings, for the prophet Amos says: “Did you bring offerings and meal-offerings to Me for 40 years in the desert?” (Amos 5:25). Even the Pesach offering was only brought in Egypt and in the desert of Sinai, as were the Yom Kippur offerings in the second year.

This is why the verse underlines that they brought “their offerings to Hashem in the desert of Sinai.”

## *Hashem Never Rejects the Repentance of a Jew*

The joy of Purim is greater than that of Chanukah, for during Chanukah the Greeks sought to attack the spiritual existence of Jews, without threatening their physical existence. In fact Hashem promises Israel in the Torah: “Yet despite all this, when they are in the land of their enemies I will not cast them away, nor will I loathe them, to destroy them utterly and to break My covenant with them” (Vayikra 26:44). Even when Jews have rendered themselves impure in the land of their enemies, as long as they are alive, they still have a chance to repent. G-d even helps them to free themselves of this impurity, into which the wicked have immersed them.

Nevertheless, the wicked Haman first wanted to tarnish their souls by means of a royal banquet, in order to immediately kill them physically. Furthermore, this massacre was to take place in a single day, thus preventing them from repenting and making sure that the Jewish people would never, G-d forbid, recover.

Our Sages recount that the disciples of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai once asked him, “Why was Israel in that generation deserving of extermination?” He replied, “Answer this yourselves.” Hence they responded, “Because they partook of the banquet of that evildoer” (Megillah 12a).

The Rambam has already taught us (Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Eikev) that a person’s blood comes from the food and drink that he consumes. This blood circulates in the liver, where it is partially “filtered,” and then it proceeds to the heart. From there, this refined blood supplies the brain, the center of intelligence and vitality in man. Whoever refrains from consuming impure food will therefore have clear and pure blood. Whoever is scrupulous and sanctifies his food according to the ways specified by Hashem in His Torah, such a person correctly “nourishes” his intellect, and his 248 limbs will then be sanctified and purified. Conversely, if a person eats whatever he wants without distinction, his intellect will be disrupted by foreign ideas and his vitality will diminish. This condition constitutes the highest degree of impurity: His 248 limbs will become tainted, he will be considered impure in all things, and he will adhere to dubious beliefs.

We therefore learn that ingesting forbidden food destroys our souls. This was Haman’s aim when he advised Achashverosh to invite Jews to his banquet. He wanted them to become impure by forbidden food and prostitution (Esther Rabba 7:13), thus perverting themselves. At that point his intention was to destroy them physically, such that the Jewish people would never be able to recover.

His strategy to decimate the Jewish people in a single day, not in one or two days, was well-planned. In fact he thought, “Their G-d extends His hand to those who repent. Even if they’ve degraded themselves by forbidden food and tainted their souls, there still remains the ‘risk’ that some of them – when confronted by such a trial – will acknowledge their sins and return to Him.” Indeed, G-d does not reject the repentance of a Jew, even when prompted by trials, as it written: “When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you at the end of days, you will return to Hashem your G-d and hearken to His voice, for Hashem your G-d is a merciful G-d. He will not abandon you nor destroy you, and He will not forget the covenant of your forefathers that He swore to them” (Devarim 4:30-31).

Hashem therefore dealt with Haman measure for measure: Haman wanted to destroy the bodies of the Jewish people, but it was his body that was destroyed. He wanted to break the soul and the Torah of Israel, but it was his descendants who taught Torah in Bnei Brak, meaning that they were the ones who abandoned the faith of their ancestor and adopted that of the Jewish people!

This is why our Sages state that the generation in the time of Achashverosh accepted the Torah once again, as it is written: “Yet even so, they accepted it again in the days of Achashverosh, for it is written: ‘The Jews confirmed and took upon themselves’ [Esther 9:27]. They confirmed what they had accepted long before” (Shabbat 88a). Since their souls were lost when they partook of Achashverosh’s banquet, they had to repent and “retrieve” them, thereby returning to the level they had occupied before this sin.

When the Rebbe of Novominsk, Rabbi Nachum Mordechai Zatzal, became old, he was struck with an extremely painful and debilitating condition. He was forced to undergo a very serious abdominal operation, and as a result all food was extremely painful to digest. The Rebbe had to eat in order to survive, and yet at the end of even the lightest meal, he would collapse without energy, so intense was his pain. He had almost no strength to open a Gemara and leaf through it. However once he did open it, he would rouse himself like a lion from its den and begin speaking with emotion. He would raise his voice, stand on his legs, and run to bring a book that he needed to support his viewpoint.

Sometimes the Rebbetzin, who feared for his health, would enter the Beit HaMidrash and beg him to take a break in the middle of his learning so as not to overtax himself. However Rabbi Nachum Mordechai would get upset and quickly tell her, “Do you want to take away my life?”

### *He Went Back to Learning with the Strength of Youth*

The gaon Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz Zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, also experienced painful health problems. He was born with a hearing problem, and over the course of the years he lost complete hearing in one ear. He was also hard of hearing in the other ear, to the point that he needed a hearing aid. There was a constant beating in his ears, which increased over time until an infernal machine was resonating in his head. His heart weakened, his blood pressure rose greatly, and he suffered from terrible headaches. In addition to all this, he suffered from a condition that produced pain throughout his body. One day, he was struck with paralysis in his throat and mouth, and until his final day he never completely recovered from it.

Yet all this suffering was not enough to divert him from learning. With a love for Torah that burned within him, he took advantage of every instant that his mind could think. His powers of concentration and diligence in learning were ever so great, never waning. Through superhuman effort, he arose like a lion to serve Hashem. Even a person who was not aware of his great weakness and the intensity of his pain was stunned by the physical and spiritual efforts that he put into learning. As for those who were close to him and saw him suffering yet controlling himself, there was no limit to their astonishment.

When he lived in the Diaspora, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz caught typhus, and for reasons that are easy to understand, he could no longer study. One of his students, who saw him suffering, said as a way to console him: “When someone is constrained, Mercy exempts him.” However Rabbi Chaim began to tremble, responding with an impassioned voice: “How can you speak like this about learning?”

One day towards the end of his life, Rabbi Chaim fainted. A doctor was called to his bedside, and he regained consciousness. When he woke up, he remembered that he had to give a class at the yeshiva, but he had been completely prevented. On another occasion, he collapsed and lost consciousness. Almost a half-hour passed from the time that he regained consciousness until he could speak, at which point he said to those around him: “At times like this, when I was unable to speak, I couldn’t do anything. That’s why I had time to prepare for a class.”

Sometimes, due to the effort that he put into learning, he would be completely exhausted. At such times, he would get up from the table and go rest a little in his room. No more than eight minutes would elapse before he was once again seated at the table, his strength renewed, completely radiating with the energy of youth. He would then begin learning again.

### *The Best Years of My Life*

Our teacher, the Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Eliezer Man Shach Zatzal, would

usually pay a devoted avrech to study Gemara with a boy from the yeshiva ketanah in order to help him learn. Nobody knew why he wanted to help that particular student, until finally they discovered that this boy was the only descendant of a woman who had helped Rav Shach during his youth in the Diaspora. He did it out of gratitude, as he describes it:

“I had only one single shirt, which I had worn for many years. Over the course of time, it became completely full of holes, but I had no other. I would wash it once a week, sometimes in the river, and other times in the washbasin of one of the synagogues. Until it was dry, I would hide myself in a corner to study. One day, as I was going to wash my shirt, a woman standing far away noticed me. She came closer and said, ‘I’ve been watching you for a long time, and I’ve seen that you go wash your shirt from time to time. But since it’s full of holes, how can you wear it?’ She hurried to bring me two shirts, one for Shabbat and one for the week!”

### *His Student’s Account*

Rabbi Meir Heizler Shlita, his student, recounted the following incident: “One afternoon, Rav Shach arrived at the yeshiva completely exhausted, and he immediately collapsed in his chair. I asked him from where he was coming, and he replied that he had just walked back from the funeral of a Jew in Givatayim. I asked him who that Jew was, who had the merit of this particular honor. The answer I got was that he had known him from one of the small towns where he had studied during his youth. I then asked him why he had not taken a bus, to which he replied: ‘The deceased merited that I go for him on foot. I will tell you how I knew him.’”

“I studied in the Beit HaMidrash during my youth. For many years, I wore the same clothing, and my shoes were worn-out and torn to the point that my toes stuck out. I could forgo food, but at night I was very cold. Boys would sleep near the furnace, but I wasn’t used to doing that. I slept in terrible cold on a bench, and if it happened that I found a few pieces of wood on which to rest my head, I was as happy as if I had found a good pillow. One day, a Jew entered the Beit HaMidrash and gave me an old coat with which to cover myself. From then on, my situation began to improve. The cold no longer affected me. Today was the funeral of that marvelous Jew, who indeed merited for me to go by foot to accompany him to his final resting place.”

With regards to that era, the Rav wrote in the introduction to his book *Avi Ezri* (5753): “How can I repay Hashem for all His mercies? Starting from the days of my youth, when I went through periods when I had nothing at all. I cannot adequately describe this period from the beginning of the First World War in 5674, when all Jews were exiled from Lithuanian towns and I did not know where my parents were, for I was alone in Slutsk and I had no contact with them. That was how I spent several years, suffering greatly.”

Despite the great suffering that was his lot, Rav Shach spoke of this era in the following way: “They were the best years of my life!” On another occasion he added, “That time was the best in my life.” He added yet again that he would not have been able to tolerate the difficulties if he had not studied Torah, for nothing would disturb him then. “Without Torah, my delight, I would have been lost in my poverty.”

## Guard Your Tongue

### *Who is Called an Apikorus [Heretic]?*

An apikorus (one whom it is a mitzvah to scorn and humiliate) is a person who denies the laws and prophecies of Israel, whether it be the written law or oral law. Even if he says, “All the Torah is true except for a single verse, a single kal vachomer, a single gezeira shava, or a single grammatical detail,” he is included in this category. – Chafetz Chaim