

AMALEK IN EARLY RABBINIC LITERATURE

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters
and Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

March 1971

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DIGEST OF THE THESIS

The thesis is an analytic examination of the dominant literary and theological themes found in the early Rabbinic material bearing upon Amalek, the symbolic arch-enemy of the Jewish people. Though the study is subdivided into seven major headings, the whole actually separates into two distinct parts: sections I and II deal with literary aspects, and sections III through VII with the theological motifs.

The first chapter explicates Amalek's genealogy as formulated in the early aggadic literature, tracing Amalek's heinous character traits to his ancestor Esau. The genealogical analysis continues as we note that the vanquishers of Amalek also must possess special lineage: namely, from Rachel the Matriarch. We then proceed to examine in detail the various character formulations of Amalek, and the specific qualities of evil, which the Rabbis ascribed to the enemy. We then present the view that "Amalek" was used as a metaphor for Rome during an early stage of the Aggada, but that the term "Edom" gradually replaced it.

In the brief second chapter, we explore the association of Amalek with Purim and the Scroll of Esther. Haman, the Agagite, being the offshoot of the King of the Amalekites, becomes the embodiment of Amalek. Thus we find the view that the public reading of the Book of Esther in fact constitutes a recounting of Amalek's nefarious deeds. Haman, being the remnant of Amalek, serves as a reminder to generations that

the Jews have struggled against enemies more powerful than themselves and have prevailed.

With chapter III we enter the theological realm. We here discuss two major concepts of divine retribution: Measure for Measure and the alternate view that there exists no direct correspondence between sin and suffering. According to the first theological tendency, Amalek acts as a chastising strap toward sinful Israel. The enemy serves the end of urging Israel back to the ways of the Torah. According to the second view, God and Israel suffer together when the enemy approaches.

We note that the victory over Amalek at Rephidim as described in Exodus 17 served definite teleological purposes. The specific roles of Moses, Joshua and Jethro during the battle all relate to that teleological direction.

Since the halakhic aspect of Rabbinic thinking concerning Amalek also bears upon his treatment in the Aggadah, we turn our attention to the mitsvot regarding Amalek and discuss their aggadic amplification.

Of paramount significance for the understanding of the totality of passages is a grasp of the two great poles which shape the Amalek literature: Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim, the attributes of strict justice and mercy. Therefore, in chapter VI we analyze a variety of germane passages which clearly reflect those tendencies.

In chapter VII we address ourselves to two questions: who is ultimately responsible for the final extermination of

Amalek, and when is the final end of the dreaded people to come about. These questions take us into eschatological considerations.

In our final chapter, we attempt to pull together all the literary and theological strands in order to arrive at an over-all Gestalt for the character of Amalek and the theological notions which surround him in the early Rabbinic literature. We then relate that configuration of elements to the question of the Nazi holocaust and to the problem of how the Jew is properly to relate to his enemy.

PREFACE

גִּדְר

על דעת עיני שראו את השכול
ועמסו זעקות על לבי השחות,
על דעת רחמי שהוריני למחל,
עד באו ימים שאימו מלסלח,
גדרתי הגדר: לזכר את הפל,
לזכר - הדבר לא לשפח.

דבר לא לשפח - עד דור עשירי,
עד שחן עלבוני, עד מלם, עד מלחם,
עדי יכלו כל שבטי מוסרי.
קונם אם לריק יעבר ליל הזעם,
קונם אם לבקר אהזר לסורי
ומאום לא אלמד גם הפעם.

Shlonsky's poem first came to my attention as I sat, during the Seder meal, among the members of Kibbutz Lahav, a settlement in federation with the Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir movement located in the northern Negev. It surprised me to discover that even among Jews ascribing to the most secular of ideologies, the symbol "Amalek," saturated as it is with connotations from the Tanakh and Rabbinic literature, continues to convey rich meaning. In modern Israel "Amalek" has become once again a living metaphor for the perennial enemy of the Jewish people, and refers first and foremost

to the Nazi regime which decimated European Jewry and gave the Jewish State its raison d'etre in the sight of the nations of the world.

This study represents an attempt on my part to come to terms with the last thirty years of Jewish history through a re-examination of a group of early Rabbinic texts which address themselves to the symbol of the perennial enemy, Amalek. My purpose was to search for notions and symbology which could assist us in our search to bind past to present, to develop a theological attitude toward the holocaust appropriate to its mystery and organically related to Rabbinic categories of thought.

This study is motivated in no small measure by the fact that I have been deeply influenced through the years by stories of the Germany of the 1930's that I have heard since early childhood. The desire to turn my interests in such a direction was amplified by a year's exposure to the life of our people in the Land of Israel.

I wish here to thank my thesis referee Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski and his family for the support and encouragement necessary to complete this study.

This work is dedicated to the memory of Benedict and Ida Baruch, my grandparents, who perished during the dark years.

CHAPTER ONE

The Identity and Character of Amalek

A. Introduction

Enemies have threatened the existence and way of life of the People Israel in virtually every period of their existence. Inasmuch as Rabbinical literature of the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods is generally indifferant to precise chronology, it follows consistently that the Aggadic literature should group all enemies from disparate periods under a few highly charged, symbolic designations. The nation Amalek serves as one of the most generative of these symbols in the Aggadic sources. "Amalek" designated the hatred of the nations for Israel, and, like all Israel's misfortunes, this nation becomes the eternal "Chastening rod" which lashes Israel at various junctures in their History.¹ In fact, according to one source, the very inception of Amalek was - in the teleological-historical framework of the Aggada - punitive in intent:

... 'Lotan's sister was Timna' (Gen. 36:22). Who was Timna? She came from royal lineage, as it is written: 'The chief of Lotan' (Ibid. vs.29), 'The chief of Timna' (Ibid. vs.40). - now, every 'chief' (aluf) designates an uncrowned ruler. - she (Timna) wished to become a Jew. So she went to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but none of them were willing to receive her. She then became the concubine of Eliphaz the son of Esau, for she thought: it would be preferable to be a servant to this people than a mistress to any other. Amalek came forth from her, who vexed

Israel. What was the reason (that this occurred)? They (the Patriarchs) ought not to have driven her off.²

Amalek thus comes into existence because an important mitswah had been violated, that of properly receiving converts. We clearly recognize that in this aggadic statement the term "Amalek" is metaphoric; it is a connotative word meaning "that which vexes Israel to chastise them." Often, as we shall see, the context of a passage will not give us nearly so clear a notion of the referent for the word "Amalek" as the above. We shall need clearly to differentiate between those aggadic strands in which "Amalek" indeed denotes a particular nation - either the historical Amalek or another specific national group - and those strands in which the word connotes something much broader. At the outset, however, it is necessary to clarify the function of the name "Amalek" as we find it among other protagonists in the aggadic "cast."

B. Amalek as the Offspring of Esau

We have already noted that Amalek, according to one source, was born to Timna, the concubine of Eliphaz, the son of Esau. Amalek is thus Esau's grandson. This information is stated already in Genesis 36, where we concomitantly learn that Esau was the progenitor of the Edomite nation (Edom), which dwelt in the vicinity of Mount Seir (Gen. 36:8f). That Esau is the progenitor of Amalek is of great importance

for the Midrashic development of the latter's character. The Rabbis gave Esau a quite well defined disposition as a thoroughly evil and corrupt personality, and as such he became Amalek's archetype. That Amalek is associated closely with Esau is clear from the following brief statement: "And Amalek came" (Ex. 17:8). Rashi says: they came from the mountains of Seir."¹ Seir is the home of the Edomites, who, according to the Torah, are the offspring of Esau; thus Amalek must have come from Seir. What stamp of character did wicked Esau imprint upon his descendants? The following story from the Tanpuma² gives us a clear notion:

"Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut. 25:17) ... "Now the lads grew up; Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a perfect man (ish tam), who dwelled in tents" (Gen. 25:27). Both went to school and both returned (home together). No one could distinguish between them for fifteen years. R. Levi said: What were they like? They were like a myrtle and a thorn bush. While they were small no one could distinguish between them. But when they grew up - one turned out his thorns while the other gave forth his sweet fragrance.

The juxtaposition of the Amalek verse beside the statement about Esau, gives us the clue that what holds true for the archetype (Esau) holds equally for the descendant (Amalek). Esau's character traits are clearly defined; then the aggadist projects those traits onto Amalek.

The Rabbis utterly blackened the image of Esau. He

sinned against God by burning the Torah.³ He sinned against his brother by plotting to kill him.⁴ He managed even to wrong Abraham, his grandfather, inasmuch as his murderous and incestuous behavior caused the old man much bitterness of heart and thus shortened his life; similarly, he grieved his father Isaac by marrying idolatrous women and by himself committing idolatry.⁵ Perhaps worst of all, Esau was heretical. He denied the fundamental dogma of the Resurrection of the Dead:

While Joseph acknowledged the (truth of) the Resurrection of the Dead...Esau denied it:
 "(Then Esau said:) Lo, I am going to die (so what good is this birthright to me)" (Gen. 25:32).⁷

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan⁸ presents an unusual view when it pins the blame for Amalek's enmity upon both Jacob and Esau:

...It was because of the hatred between Esau and Jacob that (Amalek) came and waged war against Israel at Rephidim...

The line of influence from Esau to Amalek is not consistently drawn in the aggadic literature. According to Deuteronomy Rabbah⁹, Eliphaz, Amalek's father, was a righteous man, while Amalek received the full brunt of Esau's influence. Another source¹⁰ claims that Eliphaz actively participated in this process of bad influence.

The connection between Amalek and his ancestor Esau

also manifests itself in the concept of Amalek as Esau's agent. According to one source, Esau labored unsuccessfully to eliminate Jacob, and the task fell to Amalek to continue Esau's efforts by vexing Jacob's descendants:

Esau said to Amalek: Oh how hard I tried to kill Jacob, yet he slipped through my fingers. Concentrate your efforts on exacting vengeance for me! He (Amalek) said to him: "How can I attack them?" He (Esau) replied: "This advice I pass on to you: when you see them stricken by pestilence - then strike them!"¹¹

More specific is the order from Esau directed to his grandson Amalek found in Numbers Rabbah:

Why did he (Amalek) see fit to station himself on the border where Israel was to enter into the Land? Esau, his grandfather, had thus commanded - that he (Amalek) removed from his place and ensconced himself on the way: "Then the Amalekite and the Canaanite (Who dwelt in that hill country) came down, and smote them and beat them down, even unto Hormah" (Numbers 14:45).¹²

We see, then, that the relation between Esau, the progenitor of the Edomites who dwelt in the region of Mt. Seir, and Amalek is so intimate that whatever applies to one, generally applies to both. Therefore any prophecy concerning Edom, such as we find in Ezekiel (Chapters 35-36), can be applied, in the Rabbinic schema, to Amalek as well. A good example appears in the Mekhilta in its exegesis upon the verse "(And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people) with the edge of the sword (l'fi harev)" (Ex. 17:13):

Others say the following scriptural verse was fulfilled (by this discomfiture):
 "therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee; surely thou hast hated thine own blood, therefore blood shall pursue thee." (Ez. 35:6).¹³

The exegetical possibilities surrounding the Amalek passages expand greatly because of his descent from Esau - Edom. Virtually all aggadic material bearing upon Amalek's particular identity relates itself to this lineage, as will become clear.

C. The Offspring of Rachel as the Appointed Vanquishers of Amalek

We have now established that the archetype Esau and his offspring Amalek are frequently telescoped into one unit: Amalek's first vanquisher, as recorded in Exodus 17:13 was Joshua. We learn from Numbers 13:8 that Joshua was an Ephraimite, and as such the aggadic material considers him the direct descendant of Joseph, one of Rachel's two sons. This connection with Rachel is of the utmost significance, for the Rabbis, basing themselves on Jeremiah 31:15, portray Rachel as the great intercessor on Israel's behalf, as the tender supplicant who wins from God the promise of Israel's restoration when even the patriarchs fail.¹⁴

A passage from the Pesikta de-Ray Kahana¹⁵ clearly establishes the role of Joseph's line as vanquisher of Amalek:

It is written: "Then Moses said to Joshua: 'Select men for us (and go forth and battle against Amalek)'" (Exodus 17:9). Because he (i.e. Joshua) proceeded from the tribe of Joseph. It is further written: "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame. (And the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken)" (Obadiah 1:18). Let the flame go forth from the house of Joseph and consume the stubble of the house of Esau - this means Joshua who killed Amalek, as it is written: "Joshua vanquished Amalek..." (Exodus 17:13).

In the foregoing passage there is an ellipsis between the initial quotation and the response "Because he (Joshua) proceeded from the tribe of Joseph." Here the missing question would probably have been: Why was it Joshua in particular whom Moses chose? The answer is satisfactory in terms of the prophecy which comes from Obadiah concerning the destruction of Edom.

In the Midrash Ha-Gadol¹⁶ we encounter a different question and response which introduces the matter of Rachel, Joseph's mother:

"...and go forth and battle against Amalek" (Exodus 17:9). Now would Moses stand there and tell Joshua: "Make war with Amalek!" (!?) Rather it is an established tradition (masoret) that the descendants of Esau fall only at the hands of the descendants of Rachel.

The whole point here is that Moses appears to be abandoning his responsibility to Joshua. It would seem reasonable that

Moses, the recognized leader of Israel should command the battle against Amalek, the enemy who endangers the very existence of the wandering people. Apparently the masoret with which we are here dealing, reflects a strong sentiment for the power of intercession which Rachel exercised and bequeathed to her descendants. The same tradition is stated in the Midrash Tanhuma (Buber)¹⁷ with the introductory words masoret agadah hi (It is an aggadic tradition) by R. Pinhas in the name of R. Shemuel bar Nahmani.

From I Samuel 9:1f we learn that Saul was a Benjamite, and since Benjamin was Rachel's second son, Saul's lineage justifies his warring against Amalek. That Saul inherited Joshua's credentials with respect to Amalek becomes clear in a passage from Pesikta Rabbati:¹⁸

And no sooner did Saul become king, than the Holy One, blessed be He, said: a descendant of Amalek can fall by the hand of none other than a descendant of Rachel...The Holy One, blessed be He, said: this tribe stands eternally prepared to requite Amalek. What is the scriptural proof? The verse wherewith the lesson in the prophets concludes:¹⁹ "Out of Ephraim came (Joshua), one who would pluck them up - them of Amalek - by the roots; after thee, (O Joshua, Saul man of) Benjamin, with thy many soldiers" (Judges 5:14).

The aggadic tradition which establishes Saul the Benjamite as Joshua's successor in the struggle against Amalek receives even more precise formulation in Targum Jonathan to Judges 5:14²⁰, which justifies the foregoing rendering of that verse:

From the house of Ephraim arose Joshua the son of Nun who, for the first time, battled against (the house of) Amalek. After him arose King Saul from the stock of Benjamin and killed off (the house of) Amalek.

The last statement in our passage from the Targum Jonathan raises the question of whether or not the line of Amalek did in fact meet its end at the hand of Saul, a subject to which we shall have cause to treat at length.²¹ Of significance for our discussion here, however, is that Joshua's deed is continued by Saul, and that both warriors stem from Rachel, the kindly matriarch.

David, however, we may surmise from I Chronicles 2:18, I Samuel 16:10f, and Ruth 4:18-22, was the offspring of Jesse the Bethlehemite and hence not explicitly of the offspring of Rachel. There does exist one aggadic tradition²² that David descended from Miriam, Moses' sister, but nowhere do we find an indication that he possessed the necessary yihus to qualify as a vanquisher of Amalek. Thus we have a seeming contradiction with the verses I Samuel 30:17f "And David smote them (the Amalekites) from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day..." A resolution to the problem is proposed in the collection Agadat Esther:²³

...and so you find in the case of David - that he did not war against the descendant of Esau until he joined forces with descendants of Rachel, as it is stated: "As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh: Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediael, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zillethai, captains of thousands

that were of Manasseh" (I Chr. 12:21). Therefore it is said: ("If Mordecai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews,) thou shalt not prevail against him, (but shalt surely fall before him") (Esther 6:13).

Though David requires the aid of members of the tribe of Manasseh in order to vanquish the Amalekites, we see that Mordecai qualifies to battle against Haman the Agagite. Mordecai, the son of Jair, is identified in Esther 2:5-7 as both yehudi and ish ye-mini, which the Aggadist took to mean that he was at least on one side of his family, a Benjamite. Mordecai's role as the vanquisher of the Agagite must be fully discussed, as we shall subsequently proceed to do.²⁴

The merit of Rachel is so highly esteemed by some of the aggadic authors, that her descendants virtually guarantee the People Israel their survival, when threatened by the line of Esau at any juncture in history. According to one source in the Pesikta Rabbati,²⁵ when Jacob "was greatly afraid and distressed" (Gen. 32:8) in anticipation of his imminent meeting with Esau, God Himself counseled:

What, the descendants of Rachel are with you and you are afraid? By your life, they will in the future requite him (i.e. the descendants of Esau) at every occasion when they threaten your sons.

Jacob is comforted, places Rachel and her sons in the rearward section of the camp, and says:

Even if they (i.e. Esau's host) should kill all my sons (lit. "his sons") - and only Rachel's son should survive, I (that is, the People Israel²⁶) would be rescued by Rachel's son: "the company which is left shall be for deliverance" (Gen. 32:9).

One is here inclined to question whether the Rabbis were positing a kind of rigid dynastic succession in regard to the vanquishers of Amalek, or whether other merits characterized the descendants of Rachel beside their yihus. Further, one may inquire whether distinctions are to be drawn among Rachel's descendants with reference to greater or lesser merit. Numbers Rabbah²⁷ makes a bold comparison between Joshua and Saul:

One finds that the Omnipresent loves him who cleaves to His Word, as was the case with Joshua who tenaciously battled against Amalek, acting toward them according to the commandment of the Torah, as it is said: "Joshua vanquished Amalek..." (Ex. 17:13). The Omnipresent said to him: From your tribe will I raise up a perennial requiter for Amalek: "Out of Ephraim (will proceed one who) will uproot them, (that is, them of) Amalek" (Judges 5:14). Saul, too, tenaciously battled (against Amalek) but was not found true to his charge, but rather: "But Saul and the people spared (Agag)..." (I Sam. 15:9). He (Saul) was turned back (neh-zi-ro le-aha-rav) and the kingdom was taken from him: "After you (O Joshua, in obedience,) is the Benjamite (Saul)" (Judges 5:14).

In the preceding passage, the emphasis is clearly on Joshua's obedience rather than on his lineage from Rachel. Other aggadists developed the masoret concerning the descendants

of Rachel, questioning the meaning of this tradition and replying with assertions about the moral superiority of her descendants. The following passage clearly outlines this process:

Why do Joseph's descendants (have the privilege of) requiting Esau? Now, Joseph's brothers hated him, as we know from the verse "And they hated him" (Gen. 37:4), but he turned hatred into love. Esau, on the other hand, turned Jacob's love to hatred. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph come and requite him.²⁸

The question we must ask regarding this passage, of course, is: Are we here confronted with a separate "Joseph tradition" or is this a variation on the "Rachel theme". William Braude draws our attention to Psalm 80:3 and 18 for a possible basis for this Joseph emphasis.²⁹ Though these verses do mention Joseph, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh in connection with the seeking of God's salvation, the line of Esau is nowhere cited in this psalm; its value for us, therefore, in finding a basis for a separate "Joseph tradition" would seem negligible.

In the preceding passage, Joseph's special merit consisted in his penchant for turning hatred into love. Benjamin shares another Rabbinic merit with Joseph according to another passage,³⁰ namely, lowliness, humility:

Another interpretation of "we-yerd" (Numbers 24:19) The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Not from the greatest sons of Jacob but rather from the lowliest (ye-rudim) (will come the

requiter of Edom). Who were the lowliest of the tribes? These were Joseph and Benjamin. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I shall turn the wicked nation (mal-khut ha-rish'ah) over to the lowliest of Jacob's line. And why so? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I know what I am doing. I Myself counseled that it should be thus; as it is said: "Who hath devised this against the adversary (tzor)³²..." (Isaiah 23:8). I am He who devised against them: The Lord of hosts hath devised it" (Isaiah 23:9).

Though we are still dealing specifically with the offspring of Rachel, the preceding two statements merit Joseph and Benjamin for their own qualities, quite separate from their yihus. The emphasis and reasoning changes; the basic requirement for vanquishing the line of Esau (of which Amalek is an integral link) remains constant: the vanquisher must proceed from Rachel's stock.

The opposition between Esau's line and the stock of Rachel extends beyond earthy combat, according to the aggadic schema. Both Esau and the heads of the tribes have "heavenly counterparts":

Rabbi Jochanan said: All the (heavenly) chiefs stand (in readiness) to come into conflict with³³ Esau's chieftain but he does not fall into their hands, for he (Esau's chief) can dismiss each of them with a retort (about their moral deficiencies)... When Joseph's officer comes to take him in he (i.e. Esau's chief) immediately falls before him, for he (Esau's chieftain) has nothing with which to accuse him. That is the meaning of the text: "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble..." (Obadiah 1:18).³⁴

That this matter of "chieftains" is in fact dealing with an eschatological line of thought comes to light in other passages:

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: Even in the Messianic future (le-'atid la-vo), the heads of the tribes will meet in debate with Esau's chieftain; yet he will not fall into their hands. But when Joseph's chieftain comes and enters into the debate with him, he (i.e. Esau's chieftain) will immediately fall before him.³⁵

The introduction of the eschatological dimension casts the entire issue of yihus into a different light, for when we enter the realm of messianic time, biological succession assumes a new aspect. Indeed, a third passage³⁶ considers the entire Joseph (Rachel) - Esau (Amalek) antithesis as an issue to be relegated to the eschatological future:

Said the Holy One, blessed be He, in this world I told you to blot out the name of Amalek, but in the messianic future (le-'atid la-vo) the tribe which I have prepared for him will requite him and root out his stock (m'sha-resh be-tsa-to) from the world: "It is of me that Ephraim pluck them up - them of Amalek - by the roots; after thee Benjamin" (Judges 5:14).

Not only does the above passage shift the whole issue of yihus out of the realm of world time, but also does it not even mention the specific tribe (except subtly by means of the verse citation). A further ramification is that God Himself assumes ultimate responsibility for the extermination of Amalek, leaving to Israel the responsibility only of blotting out Amalek's name in this world.³⁷

It has so far become clear to us that, though the thread of lineage from the Matriarch Rachel, twines consistently through the above-quoted aggadic excerpts, the importance assigned to that factor varies greatly from passage to passage, assuming greater or lesser significance in terms of the vanquisher of Amalek, his character, and his mode of conquest. It now would be well to turn our attention to the enemy himself: Amalek. We must see what heinous qualities he possesses that make his eradication of such unflagging concern to the aggadists.

D. The Particular Character of Amalek

The aggadists attributed to Amalek a plethora of heinous characteristics, which characteristics fall into several more or less distinct categories. It will here best serve our purposes first to enumerate Amalek's less serious character blemishes and then to proceed to the more vicious, criminal traits attributed to him.

We must inquire at the outset, however, whether "Amalek" in the Rabbinic typological schema, exists as an actual human personality, or whether the term "Amalek" does in fact represent the Amalekite nation, the prototypical enemy of the Jewish people. Still a third possibility would be that "Amalek," like "Jacob - Israel," is a term denoting concomitantly a personality and a nation.

In a significant passage from the Mekhilta,³⁸ both R.

Joshua and R. Eliezer Ha-Moda'i clearly intimate that Amalek the personality was present at the battle with Joshua at Rephidim:

"And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people..." (Ex. 17:13). R. Joshua says: He (Joshua) descended and cut off the heads of the mighty men who were with him (i.e. with Amalek), those who were standing in the battle lines. R. Eliezer Ha-Moda'i interpreted the word (vayahalosh) as an acrostic: He made Amalek to be sick, to tremble, and crushed him. Meaning Amalek himself literally...³⁹

Here we see that Amalek, though closely identified with the collectivity, nevertheless remains a distinct personage.

As a descendant of the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac - even though corrupted by Esau's baneful influence - the aggadists hold Amalek responsible for infringements upon Rabbinic values. Among the most dominant values of Rabbinic thought, is the praiseworthiness of hospitality (hakhnasat orhim).⁴⁰ In the Birkat Ha-Shahar of the daily prayers, among the Rabbinic passages one finds hakhnasat orhim listed as a primary duty.⁴¹ And in the Pirke Avot⁴² we receive the admonition:

Yosi Ben Yohanan, a Jerusalemite, says: Let your house be wide open, and let the poor be like your own family...

We shall consider Amalek's breach of hospitality according to two passages. The first, from the Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer,⁴³ clearly enunciates the halakhah concerning the receiving of

guests, and describes Amalek's infringement of that halakhah:

"Then Amalek came..." (Ex. 17:8). He came to requite them (i.e. Israel, for their murmurings at Massah and Meribah). But one is required to greet the traveler with food and drink. Now he (Amalek) saw them exhausted from their slavery in Egypt and the hardships of the journey but paid no attention. Rather he blocked the road, (vicious as) a bear bereaved of its cub, to slaughter women and children; as it is written: "how he met thee by the way..." (Deut. 25:18).

R. Joshua b. Korhah, the sage to whom the above passage is ascribed, here maintains that even though Israel "had it coming to them,"⁴⁴ Amalek's ignoring of the rules of hospitality constituted a grave sin. Rabbi David Luria, a commentator on the Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer, points out⁴⁵ that

"...it was not enough that they refrained from greeting Israel with food and water, for which sin of omission the Amonites and Moabites were banished from entrance into the congregation (of Israel), but he in fact received the Israelites with swords!"

A complex passage from the Seder Eliahu Rabbah further ramifies the issue of Amalek's inhospitality. According to this second passage, Amalek could have utterly transformed his own character and would have inherited the world to come had he only performed the mitsvah of hakhnasat orhim properly:

Eliphaz the Temani had a son. He asked him: Amalek, my son, who is it who will inherit this world and the world to come? He should have answered: Israel are the inheritors of this world and the world to come. Now, (said

Eliphaz), dig (water) pits for them, and prepare roads for them. What will it profit you if you do this? You will have the merit of inheriting the world to come. But he (Amalek) did not act according to Eliphaz' request. Rather when he (Eliphaz) told him the hidden meaning of the matter he (Amalek) remained silent. Immediately, Amalek went out to destroy the whole world, as it is written: "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (Ex. 17:8).

Here Amalek acts willfully to his own detriment. He has been clearly informed in advance of what is expected of him, yet his desire to perform evil is so great that he forfeits the world to come purposefully. It is interesting to note that when the author of Seder Eliahu says that "Amalek went out to destroy the whole world" he affirms the cosmic centrality of the People Israel, for whose sake the world exists on account of their possession of the Torah. According to this conceptualization, Amalek as enemy of Israel becomes the enemy of the entire world.

The aggadists also portray Amalek as ungrateful. This motif reappears in many sources:⁴⁶ "Let the ungrateful Amalek come and requite the ungrateful people." In what does Amalek's ingratitude consist? He had received the inheritance of his ancestor Esau, the region of Seir (Deut. 2:5), a divine favor of the first order.⁴⁷ As for Israel, that they had forgotten God's kindnesses is quite clear from Ex. 17:1-7, but the issue of Amalek as "chastening rod" will be dealt with at length elsewhere.⁴⁸

A quality, which the Rabbis attributed to Amalek, which

indicates to us that they considered him an enemy par excellence, is extraordinary enthusiasm for warfare and the tendency to violate the "international law" of his day:

"Until the going down of the sun" (Ex. 17:12). Because we have learned about all other kingdoms that they engage in battle only during the first six hours of the day, this wicked kingdom, engaged in battle from morning to evening.⁴⁹

This is one indication of an almost magical quality which the aggadists impute to Amalek. We shall see that Amalek's supernatural powers influence his entire character as portrayed in this literature.

That informers were hated and feared among Jews during various periods of history is expressed clearly in the establishment and retention of the twelfth benediction of the Amidah, the malediction against informers (malshinim).⁵⁰

Some of the Rabbis charge Amalek as an informer:

"And it was told to the king of Egypt..." (Ex. 14:5). Who told him? The guards whom he sent with them. Some say he had regular post-guards. And some say: Amalek told him.⁵¹

We are informed furthermore that Amalek acts like a robber, his host like a band of highwaymen:

"...by the way as ye came forth out of Egypt" (Deut. 25:17). R. Levi said: He (Amalek) pounced upon them like a hoard of robbers.⁵²

His character is fundamentally inauthentic and deceptive,

like the rest of his antecedents and descendants:

To what could we liken Esau the wicked, Eliphaz the Temani, Amalek his son, Jereboam ben Nabat, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon and Haman the Aggagite? To one who found an article of clothing on the road close to a city. He grabbed it and brought it into the city. He would then announce: "Who lost this? Who lost this?" All the denizens of the city gathered round him and said: "Did you see so-and-so? How righteous he is! How fit he is! Thereupon they appointed him as municipal head. In the course of one, two, three years he laid waste all the countries; in fact, the whole world..."⁵³

It would seem, then, that according to the parable, Amalek assumed leadership over his host deceptively, that he is more culpable than they, for they chose him out of foolishness and lack of discernment.

According to several sources, Amalek is not only shifty, but also perverse. He is guilty of pederasty. Sodomy is expressly forbidden in the Torah (Lev. 20:13) and is punishable by death. The Rabbis prescribed death by stoning in the case of a Jew guilty of sodomy.⁵⁴ In the case of a Noahide, slaying with the sword is the prescribed punishment.⁵⁵ That Amalek was guilty of perverse acts is adduced by the aggadist, here specifically R. Nehemiah, by exegetical manipulation:

"How he met thee (kare-kha) by the way" (Deut. 25:18)...R. Nehemiah read the verse: How he took advantage of the mischance which befell thee (kere-kha). The mischance of thy nocturnal emission of semen which required thee

to leave the camp - "Any man that is not clean by reason of that which mischanceth him (mik-re) by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp..." (Deut. 23:11) - and this gave Amalek the opportunity to seize thee and pollute by pederasty.⁵⁶

The character description of Amalek continues with plays on the name "Amalek" itself: "Amalek (Deut. 25:17) - a people of locusts (am yelek) quick like the zahla (species of locust born without legs)⁵⁷ Another play on the name, this time emphasizing the perverse, vicious personality element: "Amalek" - that is a "licking people" ('am lak) - a nation which came to lick the blood of Israel like a dog.⁵⁸ The enemy nation is further compared to a fly:

R. Levi in the name of R. Simon b. Halafta: What was Amalek like? This is a fly with a passion for (an open) wound, so anxious was Amalek to war with Israel.⁵⁹

Elsewhere,⁶⁰ as we shall see, Amalek acts also as a murderer in his dealings with Israel.

The aggadists thought that Amalek in fact exploited every possibility to torment Israel. Amalek is not only vicious but also intelligent. The following passage will introduce themes, which we shall need to develop in depth.

(King) David said to the master of the universe: They (the Amalekites) perpetrated against us everything that was possible; They desecrated the sign of brit milah which was of your choosing. They turned your House and your Torah. So You dictated that it be written in the Torah: "Remember what Amalek did to you..." (Deut. 25:17).^{60a}

D. I. Amalek's Wily Tactics

Amalek, the enemy par excellence, is marked by a high degree of cunning and intelligence. His cruelty, one might say, was analogous to the special kind of political evil which marks twentieth century demagogues. For Amalek knew how to use the resources at hand and formulated his plans systematically. The first step in his plan was to cleverly enlist the aid of other nation groups:

R. Jose b. Halafta says: "Then came Amalek..." (Ex. 17:8). That is, he came with a plan. Amalek assembled all the nations and said to them: Come and aid me (to war upon) Israel! They replied to him: We could not stand against them. Pharaoh did not stand up against them. Why the Holy One, blessed be He, drowned him in the Reed Sea, as it is said: "And he overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Reed Sea" (Ps. 136:15). As for us, how could we stand against them? He replied to them: Come and I shall counsel you about how you should act. If they should vanquish me, then go ahead and flee. But if not, come and aid me (in warring) against Israel. And so it is written: "And Amalek came..." He came with a plan.⁶¹

One may ask: How could Amalek be so cock-sure that he had the ability to vanquish Israel, when the past evidence seemed to indicate that Israel was well-protected by God. Here the heathen prophet Balaam comes into the picture. Balaam, according to the Rabbis, acquired a position among the heathen as exalted as that of Moses among the chosen people.⁶² That heathen kings allegedly consulted with him when affrighted by the tremors precipitated by the Sinaitic

revelation is recorded in the Talmud Babli (Zeb. 116a). Furthermore, Balaam most often receives the epithet "ra-sha" (wicked one) in the Rabbinic sources.⁶³ It is therefore not surprising that Amalek would be likely to consult with Balaam in planning his stratagem against Israel, which is, in fact related in one source:⁶⁴

R. Kruspedai in the name of R. Johanan said: He (Amalek) came up to Balaam the Wicked. He came to receive advice from him. He (Amalek) said to him: I know that you are a competent counselor, also that you specialize in wicked thoughts; anyone who takes your advice will not fail. He (Amalek) continued: Look what this nation did to the Egyptians who had (from time to time) done them some favors. Now if they dealt thus with the Egyptians who had done them favors, how much the worse would the other nations fare. How do you advise me? Balaam said to him: Go and make war with them, for if you do not you will never vanquish them, because they are sustained by the merit of Abraham their Patriarch. But you too are a descendant of Abraham and strengthened by his merit. Immediately he began to wage war upon them.

Amalek thus took preliminary steps to make certain that his enlistment of other nations was in fact a viable act. The special merit of Abraham, according to the disclosure of Balaam, would give Israel no special military advantage over Amalek.

Among the list of Amalek's crimes is kidnapping or abduction (genevat nefesh). In Talmudic jurisprudence abduction falls into the category of capital offenses; the eighth commandment is read by the Rabbis as: Thou shalt not

steal (a human being).⁶⁵ That Amalek was a murderous kidnapper is asserted in the Mekhilta:⁶⁶

R. Elazar Ha-Moda-i says: "Then Amalek came..."
(Ex. 17:8). For he entered underneath the borders of the cloud, abducting Israelites and killing them, as it is written: "how he met thee by the way, and (smote the hindmost of thee all that were enfeebled in thy rear, when thou wast faint and weary;) and he feared not God" (Deut. 25:18).

We must now expatiate momentarily in the notion of "the cloud." From Exodus 13:21f and elsewhere the Rabbis developed the image of "clouds of glory" considerably beyond its description in the Biblical literature.⁶⁷ These clouds were conceived, by juxtaposition with the image of the sukkot (booths) found in Lev. 23:43 and the geographical location Sukkot (Ex. 12:37 and 13:20), as a divine protection. As we shall see,⁶⁸ these clouds receded from Israel when they committed sins.

The characterization of Amalek as murderous kidnapper develops far beyond the above-quoted Mekhilta passage, the "how" of the abduction becoming of increasingly greater interest. In Tanhuma (Buber)⁶⁹ we encounter the most developed description of Amalek's kidnapping stratagem, a description which emphasizes both his intelligence and his wiliness:

("How he met you (kare-kha) by the way..." (Deut. 25:18).) R. Nehemiah said: He literally called to you (kera-akha mamash). So what did Amalek do? He went down to the archives of Egypt, and lifted out the rosters of the tribes, on which was recorded the daily task of bricks. Then he stood outside the cloud and called them (by name): "Reuben, Simeon, Levi:"⁷⁰ Come out for I

am your brother and I wish to do business with you. When they then came out he killed them.

The Pesikta Rabbati⁷¹ describes another incident in which Amalek exploited the weakness of the Israelites while they were mourning for Aaron, and when, as a result of Aaron's passing, the protective "clouds of glory" dissipated.⁷²

"...But when I halt they rejoice, and gather themselves together" (Ps. 35:15). This refers to Aaron: "And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead..." (Num. 20:29). Now what is written after (the preceding) verse? "And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the south, heard tell (that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive") (Num. 21:1).

Friedmann adds the explanation: "Now he (the king of Arad) was Amalek, and when he heard that Aaron had died and that the clouds of glory had dissipated, he immediately engaged them in battle."⁷³ This identification of Amalek as the Canaanite king of Arad has far-ranging importance and will subsequently be examined at length.⁷⁴

In short, because of his cleverness and ability to adapt his stratagem to emergent situations, Amalek is a formidable enemy indeed. This latter quality of adaptability to the specific situation of the prey-people-Israel, is reflected clearly in a Mekhilta passage:⁷⁵

"Then Amalek came..." (Ex. 17:8). He then came openly. But every other time he came, he came stealthily; as it is written: "Who met you by the way..." (Deut. 25:18). But this entrance was made openly...

The wily Amalek enjoys the fanfare of an open attack, when he thinks it is safe to do so, and when he thinks he can get away with it. Indeed, in this battle, his stratagem almost proved effective; only after a great struggle did Joshua vanquish his clever enemy.

D. II. Amalek's Desecration of Brit Milah

One of the key mitswot of Rabbinic Judaism is the rite of brit milah -- the entering of a male child into the covenant of Abraham. In the second paragraph of the Birkat Ha-Mazon (blessings after the meal), the halakhically-oriented Jew thanks God "for the covenant which you have sealed in our flesh."⁷⁶ It seems that the rite acquired special sanctity during the Syrian persecution, at which time pious mothers "faced martyrdom willingly to preserve the rite of Abraham among their children."⁷⁷

Not only is there great reverence for the mitswah of milah in Rabbinic Judaism, but there is also great contempt for any kind of mutilation of the male organ. In a minority opinion, R. Johanan ben Baroka lists castration as one of the prohibitions which are binding upon gentiles (bene Noah).⁷⁸

The sources inform us that, after Isaac's passing, the line of Esau began to disregard the mitswah of brit milah, thus separating themselves from the Abrahamic covenant.⁷⁹ Amalek, Esau's grandson, not only repudiated circumcision, but also made the mockery of Israel's mark of the

covenant one of his central concerns:

Said R. Haninah ben Shallum and R. Joshua of Sikhnin in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi: What is the meaning of the verse: "And render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom (el he-kam). Their reproach wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord" (Ps. 79: 12). This teaches that they severed the circumcised male organ which is located in a man's middle (be-hek). Then, throwing it heavenward, they would blaspheme, shouting at God: Is this (the thing) that you desire? See! It is cast before You! What is the Toraitic basis for the foregoing interpretation? That which is recorded above the matter of Amalek: "And putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secret parts" (Deut. 25: 11). And what follows? "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" (Deut. 25:17).⁸⁰

It is most interesting to analyze the above-quoted passage in the light of Bettelheim's theory of the relation between circumcision and the "castration complex" and "castration anxiety."⁸¹ That cultic themes also enter into the picture seems clear from the following expansion of the matter:⁸²

For Israel did not know the meaning of the zemorah (phallic rite),⁸³ for we read: ("Then he said unto me: 'Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit abominations which they commit here in that they fill the land with violence and provoke me still more,) and, lo, they put the branch (zemorah) to their nose?" (Ez. 8:17). When Amalek came, they taught them (i.e. Israel)(this cultic practice), from what he had learned from his wicked grandfather Esau, who said: "Hakhi kara shemo" (Gen. 27:36); this is, he hawked (hikekh) in his throat (to show contempt), and produced the zemorah (here: phallus).

It is clear throughout these passages that the main point is that the Rabbinic conception of Amalek is marked by a salient perverse obscene element. The whole matter begins with the difficult word "way-zaney bekhka" - "and smote the hindmost of thee" (Deut. 25:18), such as we find it interpreted in the Pesikta De-Rav Kahana:⁸⁴

"And smote the hindmost of thee" (way-zaney be-kha) (Deut. 25:18). (Amalek) mutilated them by smiting the zanav (euphemism for membrum virile).

Since the act of brit milah constitutes submission to the will of a commanding Deity⁸⁵ who demands this special surgery of His covenanted people, any action that would in any way degrade this mitswah, would therefore be considered a willful act of rebellion and pride:

"A man's pride shall bring him low..." (Prov. 29:23). This is Amalek who exalted himself above the Holy One, by his blaspheming and reviling, (but especially by his (shameful violation) of the male organ..."⁸⁶

In regard to Amalek's desecration of milah, we perceive more directly than anywhere else, the depth of the Rabbinic obsession with the evil figure Amalek. The Rabbis were here, as it were, laying bare their psyches to the scrutiny of later generations, and revealed much to us about their personality make-up. The figure of Amalek reaches down to the libidinal aspect of the Rabbinic mind, calling up responses of fear and

hatred. The foregoing passages, in the last analysis, tell us much that can be universalized about how a man views his enemy to this very day.

D. III. Amalek as Degradator of Israel's Stature Among the Nations

Since Israel's security depended largely on the reputation they had gained as a result of the wonders at the Reed Sea, any blemish in their reputation would render them more vulnerable to the attacks of hostile nations. Though Joshua in fact vanquished Amalek, the Biblical account (Ex. 17:8-16), describes the battle as a nip and tuck struggle, so that Israel's supernatural image suffers considerably:

"How he met thee (asher kare-kha) by the way..." (Deut. 25:18). Our Rabbis render the verse: "cooled them (he-kire-kha) before the nations of the world." R. Hannaniah said: (The matter is like) a pool of boiling water, into which no one dared to enter. But then this worthless fellow came along and jumped into it. Even though he was severely burned, he cooled it (the pool) for others. So it was that when Israel went forth from Egypt, the dread of them fell upon all the nations of the world; as it is written: "Then were the chiefs of Edom affrighted...Terror and dread falleth upon them" (Ex. 15:15f). When Amalek came and joined in battle against them (i.e. Israel), even though (Joshua) snatched victory from their hands, (Amalek) still managed to cool (Israel's reputation) in the opinion of the nations of the world.⁸⁷

Because Israel is God's covenanted people, according to the Rabbis, and since God's reputation is consequently

bound up with Israel's stature, the degradation of Israel's fame is tantamount to the abasement of God's dignity. Much of the early liturgy reflects this relation, especially the section in the Birkhot Ha-Shahar which concludes: "Blessed are You, Lord, that You sanctify Your Name in public."⁸⁸

D. IV. Magical and Astrological Elements Surrounding the Character of Amalek

It is not surprising that around the character of the primal enemy Amalek revolve many themes that would be in the category of what Joshua Trachtenberg terms "folk religion".⁸⁹ The inexplicable tenacity and meanness of the enemy nation invite speculation that passes beyond the realm of natural cause and effect into the world of magic and astrology. In several sources, Amalek the personality and Amalek the nation are described as sorcerers and necromancers. That, despite this fact, Israel was able to triumph is considered a great feat:

Now the Israelites entered the desert and Amalek, the son of Eliphaz, the son of Esau, came upon them for battle. With him were 178,000 men, all of whom were sorcerers, necromancers and soothsayers. Yet the Lord handed them over to Moses His servant and Joshua his (Moses') disciple, and they smote them by the edge of the sword.⁹⁰

But the magical power seems to reside not only in the enemy's hands, as the following late Midrash testifies:

"Choose men for us" (Ex. 17:9). For Amalek was a sorcerer and chose as warriors men who could not die in that year. Therefore Moses said: "Choose men for us"--like them; Thus it is said "Joshua weakened Amalek" (Ex. 17:13). But he could not kill them.⁹¹

The astrological underpinnings of this mystifying passage appear more clearly in the Talmud Yerushalmi,⁹² where Moses too manipulates heavenly bodies in the cosmological struggle against the arch-fiend:

R. Joshua ben Levi said: Amalek was a believer in sorcery and omens (kosh'fan). Now what did he do? He set up men on their birthdays, for a person does not fall easily on his birthday. So what did Moses do? He confounded the order of the planets. Thus Scripture says: "The sun and moon stand still in their habitation" (Hab. 3:11).

We note, therefore, that both Amalek and Israel employ magical and astrological means. The former receives censure for the illegitimate use of such methods, while the latter (Israel) remains blameless for such procedures. In several sources, we learn that the dastardly Amalek magically traversed an uncanny distance to make war on Israel:

R. Nathan says: He (Amalek) came from the mountains of Seir, traversing four hundred parasangs until he reached Rephidim. There he made war on Israel.⁹³

Commenting on the above-quoted passage, the 'Etz Yosef⁹⁴ notes that according to the Targum Jonathan⁹⁵ the distance was traversed in a single night. In addition, the commentary goes

on to say, this was an unnatural deed, accomplished by witchcraft and sorcerers.

Not only did Amalek traverse an uncanny distance to wage war on Israel, but he also needed to pass through the territory of five nations, all of whom, it would seem, would have been hostile to intruders:

R. Judah Ha-Nasi says: Amalek had to make his way through five nations and came to make war with Israel; as it is written: "Amalek dwelleth in the land of the south; (and the Hittite and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan)" (Num. 13:29).-- he (Amalek) was in the interior beyond all of them.⁹⁶

Yet the most clearly described use of magical devices relates to Moses. The Midrash⁹⁷ describes Moses' usage of the Shem Ha-Meforash (Tetragrammaton):

Before Israel left Egypt Amalek heard that they were redeemed and came upon them at the sea. Then he (Moses) pronounced the Shem Ha-Meforash (Tetragrammaton) over him (Amalek) and he immediately panicked; as it is said: "Then the chiefs of Edom panicked;..." (Ex. 15:15).

We assume that it was Moses who pronounced the ineffable name for a number of reasons. First of all, it was to Moses that the knowledge of the Divine Name was vouchsafed, as we learn in Exodus 3:14. Secondly, the Tannaim took many precautions to preclude the arbitrary utterance of the name; one statement

in the Gemara excludes those who pronounce the Divine Name from the world to come.⁹⁸ It therefore seems reasonable that it was here Moses, who, by virtue of his special merit, employed the Ineffable Name to vanquish the enemy.

In Esther Rabbah⁹⁹ we encounter a passage which indicates that the enemies of Israel mistook what were actually acts of God for magical practices. At Haman's behest the wise men and magicians of Ahasuerus promulgated epistles against Israel, in one of which was included the following statement:

What did Moses their chief do? Well, he had a certain pupil named Joshua bin Nun who was exceedingly cruel and had no mercy. That Moses said to him: "Choose men for us and go out to fight Amalek" (Ex. 17:9). I don't know whether those men that he chose were sorcerers or warriors. What did that Moses do? He took a rod in his hand. Now I don't know what he did with it. And when (Amalek) attacked them, I don't know what (incantation) he whispered against them, but they became powerless and fell before them; this is the intention of Scripture: "Joshua vanquished Amalek with the edge of the sword" (Ex. 17:13).

The intention of this simulated propaganda piece is clearly to besmirch Israel's reputation, inasmuch as they had used illegitimate tactics of warfare, i.e. magic and sorcery. What interests us here, however, is the phenomenon that discussion about Amalek attracts discussion about magic and sorcery. Inasmuch as these elements are an integral component of Jewish folk religion from the Tanakh onward, we may assume that the figure of Amalek was ingrained in the psyche of the

ordinary Jew of the Rabbinic Period, just as he was a topic for learned discussion.

D. V. Amalek as Rome

So far we have been speaking of "Amalek" as equivalent to the proto-typical enemy of the People Israel. "Amalek," however, also seems to function as a specific metaphor for the Roman Empire. Schechter expressed the identification succinctly when he wrote: "...Amalek is only another name for his ancestor Esau, who is the father of Edom, who is but a prototype for Rome."¹⁰⁰ Developing the metaphor further, he remarks: "The contest over birthright is indicative of the struggle for supremacy between Israel and Rome."¹⁰¹

Bacher also identified Amalek with Rome in his explanation of texts put forth in the name of Eliezer b. Hyrkanos and Joshua b. Hananiah:¹⁰²

This entire section relating to Amalek with its intertwining meanings is set in its proper perspective, when one recognizes in the hated name of the old extinct people an aggadic equivalent for Rome, just as later on the denotation generally became "Edom." The aggadic metaphor of Amalek=Rome also shines through in the comment of the Mekhilta to Exodus 17:12: "But this ~~guilt~~-laden kingdom makes war from morning to evening" - where "the ~~guilt~~-laden kingdom corresponds to Rome.

William Braude¹⁰³ connects the following passage with the Hadrianic persecutions which followed the Bar Kokhba rebellion (135 C.E.):

("But when I halt they rejoice,) they who are degraded gather themselves together - something which I do not understand" (Ps. 35:15). At the time the Sages met in Lydda in the upper chamber of the house of Nithzah, they had to decree (that the Jews, except when they were called upon to commit the sins of idolatry, unchastity, and bloodshed, were to submit to the demands of the heathen nations). Thus, whenever I slip and fall into heretical ways, the heathen rejoice as they gather to attack - heathen nations who are themselves degraded and who are (spiritual) cripples. Whenever Israel slips and falls into heretical ways, those nations who are degraded are always at hand for executing judgment. As the verse goes on to say, "When I fall...they tear and cease not" - they tear and tear. Whereupon Israel say: Master of the universe, shall the degraded execute judgment upon those who merely slip and fall? Shall the degraded forever be given permission to sit and wait for me to stumble into a fall so that they can set upon me?¹⁰⁴

The relation of the foregoing passage to Amalek becomes clear when one considers it in its proper context, i.e. the verse from the Song of Deborah which generates the entire discussion: "Mini Efrayim shor-sham be-Amalek" (Judges 5:14a) which Braude here renders "Out of Ephraim itself come those whose root is Amalek,"¹⁰⁵ for which he gives an alternate translation suggested by Prof. Mordecai Margulies:¹⁰⁶ "Because of heresy, O Ephraim, your roots are to be plucked up by Amalek." The issue of Amalek as an instrument of Divine retribution will be considered elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ Of importance for us here is the likelihood pointed out by Braude that the term "Amalek" may have designated Rome at the time of the Hadrianic persecutions.

Given the assumption that "Amalek," at least in an early Tannaitic stratum, functioned as a metaphor for the "wicked kingdom" - Rome - it follows consistently that "Amalek" would be the destroyer of Jerusalem:

Another interpretation of "For there is a hand against the Lord's throne" (Ex. 17:16).¹⁰⁸ R. Joshua b. Levi in the name of R. Alexanderos: When Amalek's hands stretched forth against the throne of the Holy One, blessed be He (now "Jerusalem will be the Lord's throne" (Jer. 3:17).)¹⁰⁹, he (Amalek) immediately became uprooted from the world. One phrase from the Torah says: "the Lord's war against Amalek" (Ex. 17:16b). But another verse reads: "Blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19). Before he stretched forth his hand against Jerusalem "(you) blot out the remembrance of Amalek" but after he (Amalek) had stretched forth his hand - "the Lord's war against Amalek."¹¹⁰

As we would expect, "Amalek" is furthermore identified as the destroyer of the Temple:

"Remember (what Amalek did to you)" (Deut. 25:17)...Did to us? Did he not do it to You?
 "Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem; Who said: Rase it, Rase it / Even to the foundation thereof" (Ps. 137:7).

In the Rabbinic schema, it would seem that the Romans' crime consisted in an attack on Divine property. That is to say that, inasmuch as the Romans oppressed the People Israel, they diminished God's chosen possession. (The Rabbis knew well that this was so from Ex. 15:16, where it states: "the people whom You have acquired"). Secondly, the Romans de-

stroyed Divine property in the form of the Temple, God's chosen house. With reference to the above-quoted text we ought here to note that "Amalek" and "Edom" function as interchangeable metaphors for Rome.

According to certain sources,¹¹¹ the study of Torah was interdicted during the Hadrianic persecutions which followed the Bar Kokhba rebellion. Given this fact, the Rabbis add to their list of accusations against Amalek-Rome the charge of desecration of the Divine Torah:

"And render unto our neighbors sevenfold (shiv'a-tayim) into their bosom, wherewith they have reproached Thee, O Lord" (Ps. 79:12)... Said R. Joshua b. Levi: May they (Amalek) be recalled for what they did to us against the Torah, of which it is written: ("The words of the Lord are pure words,) as silver tried on a crucible on the earth, refined seven times (shiv'a-tayim)" (Ps. 12:7). So should you requite them sevenfold (shiv'a-tayim) into their bosom...¹¹²

The foregoing passages precisely correspond with Mid-rashic attributions of sins to Esau, who, Friedmann noted¹¹³ is none other than "Edom," the most common metaphor for Rome:

He (Esau) sinned against the Holy One, blessed be He, in that he burned the Torah and burned the Temple.¹¹⁴

One notes that the sin against the Torah here consists in burning (s.r.f.), which would appear not to be precisely equivalent to interdiction of Torah study, such as was reported during the Hadrianic persecutions.

As we have seen, "Amalek" and "Edom" are frequently employed in the Midrashic literature as synonymous metaphors for Rome. There is, however, some basis for the conjecture that in later Midrashic literature, the two appellations became separate in designation, and that at this later stage only "Edom" functioned as the accepted metaphor for Rome:

"Upon Edom do I cast my shoe..." (Ps. 60:10). What do I do? I draw off my shoe and trample them with my heel; as the text reads: "I have trodden the winepress (i.e. Edom) alone..." (Is. 63:3a). There is a well-known parable: The matter is like an earthly king who built four palaces in four districts. He entered the first, ate and drank, but did not draw off (his shoes). And so it was with the second and third palaces. When he arrived at the fourth, he ate, drank, and drew off his shoes. He said to them (his courtiers): "Go forth and fetch all the great men who reside in this district, that they may arrange a meal before me. They (the courtiers) asked him: "Why are you doing this?" When you entered the first palace you ate and drank but did not remove your shoes, but in this palace you drew off your shoes, ate, and drank. He (the king) replied to them: "When I entered the first my mind was not at ease." - So it is with the Holy One, blessed be He. He made war on Pharaoh, on Amalek, on Sisera, on Sanecherib, on Nebuchadnezzar, upon the Greek kings - yet He was not pacified until He Himself wreaked vengeance upon Edom. This is the meaning of "Upon Edom do I cast my shoe; Philistia, cry aloud because of me!"¹¹⁵

The source of the foregoing passage, Ba-Midbar Rabbah, is generally considered late in origin, especially the parashah Naso where the passage is located, which, according to Strack, "is probably not older than the twelfth century."¹¹⁶ This

gives credence to the hypothesis that, though "Amalek" was a common term for Rome in the earlier literature, it was supplanted by the appellation "Edom" with which it had been formerly interchangeable.

E. Summary

We have so far attempted to subsume the identity characteristics of "Amalek" under several more or less distinct categories: his lineage, his/their specific character traits, his/their insidious actions, the brazen desecration of Brit Milah, the harm he caused Israel's reputation, Amalek's tendency to use the "off-limits" powers of magic and astral manipulation, and the concrete designation of Amalek as Rome. Our analysis so far bears out Louis Ginzberg's observation that "...most frequently ^hsc~~o~~lastic ingenuity and popular fancy both contributed toward the production of these legends." 117 For we have seen that the most fanciful folk-like themes and notions have been cleverly and concretely anchored to the Biblical text. All these observations should be borne in mind in regard to the material subsequently to be presented. Each topic relating to Amalek takes into account his identity as explicated in the Pharisaic-Rabbinic aggadah.

CHAPTER TWO

Amalek and the Book of Esther

That the association of Amalek with Purim and the recital of the Scroll of Esther derives from a quite early date is clear from the fact that Shabbat Zakhor¹ - already prescribed by the Mishnah² - is observed on the Sabbath immediately preceding the Purim festival. Furthermore, it is clear from the very designation of Haman as "the Agagite",³ that the author of the Book of Esther already consciously traced Haman's ancestry to the King of the Amalekites.⁴

A Boraitha (B. Megillah 7a) considered the Scroll of Esther to be the fourth recital of Amalek's deed, the others being in Exodus 17, Deuteronomy 25, and I Samuel 15; Rabbi Eliezer Ha-Moda'i considers Esther to be the third recounting, inasmuch as the two verses from the Torah are accounted as one unit.⁵ The same notion is succinctly expressed in the Mekhilta:⁶

"Write this for a memorial in the book..." (Ex. 17:14). "This" refers to what is written in this book. "For a memorial" refers to what is written in the prophets. "In the book" refers to what is written in the Scroll of Esther.

There appear to be two major reasons why the final remembrance of Amalek's deed to be found in the Tanakh occurs in the Scroll of Esther. The first reason consists in the principle that God punishes by means of lowly things:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: He (Haman) has made his attack against heavenly beings, (and God) will send against them insignificant things, to teach them that the power of their might is nought.⁷

The second factor would seem to be that women have certain powers and abilities, which make them effective instruments against an enemy.⁸

Then Samuel said(to Agag): "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women...(I Samuel 15:33). As the sword of Amalek, your (Haman's) grandfather, consumed the young men of the Israelites (after they had been drawn from) the protection of the cloud, and their women remained childless and widowed, so by means of the prayer of Esther and her attendants is every last Amalekite to be killed, so that their women will be left widowed and childless, as it is said: "Then Samuel said: Just as thy sword made women childless (so shall thy mother be made childless by women") (Ibid.).⁹

As we shall see, Haman receives nearly all the typological characteristics of his ancestor Amalek which we have delineated. According to one aggadic tradition¹⁰ God Himself planned that this would be the case, or at least foresaw the succession of ancestors that would proceed from Amalek:

R. Pinhas says: The Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that (from the line of) Agag was to arise a man who would be a great enemy of the Jews. Now who would this be? Haman, the wicked; as it is written: "Because Haman the son of Hamdatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them..." (Esther 9:24).

The descent from Agag is cast teleologically in another passage,¹¹ where Haman appears specifically on account of Agag:

The Holy One, blessed be He, brought Haman into the world only on account of¹² Agag, who cried and sighed while he was interred in prison. He said: Woe is me! My seed will perhaps become extinct!

We seem here to have the attribute of Divine Mercy¹³ operating to Israel's disadvantage, though the real intent of the passage is obscure.

In Esther Rabbah¹⁴ is given the contents of certain fictional letters that were sent out for Haman's sake; among the contents is a telescoped genealogy from Amalek to Haman:

Great peace to you without limit! It is known to you that among us resides a certain man, who is not of local origin (i.e. Persian) but of royal Amalekite descent - one of the great men of the generation - and Haman is his name...(quoting Haman) Furthermore what did they (Israel) do to Amalek my Father's Father¹⁵ when he came to war upon them?!... Furthermore what did they do to Agag my Grandfather...

In certain contexts the name "Haman" is a veritable equivalent for the name "Amalek," as in the following passage from the Pesikta Rabbati.¹⁶

Another comment: "Remember" (Deut. 25:17). Our masters from the south, citing R. Samuel, began their discourse with the portion, "Knewest thou not, heardest thou not? Yea from of old was not thine ear opened? For I know that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, O transgressor from the womb, for

thee a beam of the gallows" (Is. 48:8). These words are addressed to Amalek as well as to Haman who came from the loins of Amalek...

Inasmuch as Haman's identity is firmly established within the aggadic tradition as Amalekite, he is included within the promised "blotting out" that is to befall the entire nation:

"For blot out, Blot out will I" (Ex. 17:14). "Blot out," that is, in this world. "Blot out will I," that is, in the world to come; "the remembrance," that is, Haman; "Amalek," that is, himself, taken literally.¹⁷

Haman is considered a last remnant of Amalek's stock in some strata, who remains even after most of the enemy nation has perished:

"Thou hast destroyed the wicked" (Ps. 9:6). This refers to the wicked Haman who was left over from the seed of Amalek and sought to exterminate Israel.¹⁸

From some sources¹⁹ we also receive the opinion that Haman was the final rung on the Amalekite ladder, but the "final end" of Amalek is a matter we shall need to treat fully elsewhere.²⁰

Just as Haman was a descendant of Amalek - and consequently of Esau - Mordecai, Haman's vanquisher, is a Benjamite and therefore a descendant of Rachel.²¹ Saul, we should remember, was also a Benjamite (I Sam. 9:1) and

constitutes a kind of prototype - along with Joshua - for Mordecai;²²

Now from the seed of Saul (proceeded) a redeemer for the Jews (who saved them) from Haman. Who was this? Mordecai. As it is written: "There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a Benjamite" (Esther 2:5).²³

Another passage²⁴ emphasizes Mordecai's Benjamite roots still more directly:

"Out of Ephraim came (Joshua), one who would pluck them up - them of Amalek - by the roots; after thee, (O Joshua, Saul man of) Benjamin, with thy many soldiers (Judges 5:14)." What is meant by "after thee, Benjamin"? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: For war, "after thee" (O Joshua, it is to be a man of) Benjamin" who will demand satisfaction from the seed of Amalek. You can see so for yourself: a man of the seed of Amalek rose up and waged war against Israel; and against him none other than on (of the seed of) Benjamin. And who was this man of the seed of Amalek? The wicked Haman...to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, said: As thou livest, a man of the seed of Benjamin is held in readiness to come against thee and crush thy roots, and who was this man? Mordecai, of whom it was said: "There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle...(Esther 2:5).

In the foregoing Aggada the entire continuum with which we have been dealing is manifest, so that the typology is organically structured from the Rabbinic legends bearing on Genesis through those relating to Esther.

Haman, as Amalek, serves as a "reminder" to all generations that Jews have struggled against great enemies and

have prevailed:

R. Nathan says: Haman came as a memorial for generations, as it is said: "And that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews" (Esther 9:28).²⁵

Another passage²⁶ tells us that the causal factor which precipitated Haman's appearance was, in fact, Saul's disobedience, in that he spared Agag against the clear instructions enunciated by Samuel. In our next section we shall carefully develop the idea of Amalek as "chastening rod," a concept which should cast light on much material heretofore presented.

CHAPTER THREE

Amalek as an Instrument of Divine Discipline

From the literary characterization of Amalek and his descendants, we shall now pass to the broad theological conceptions which bear upon the Rabbinic understanding of the perennial enemy. Our discussion will focus primarily upon the Rabbinic notions of sin and divine retribution.

The major content of the Rabbinic doctrine of sin is encountered in embryonic form already in the Tanakh, and is most clearly developed in the prophetic books. Norman H. Snaith noted:¹

The world of 'sin' can be used either in an ethical sense of transgressing a moral code, or as a religious term in the sense of a rebellion against God, and so being alien to Him. From the latter point of view, sin is 'theofugal'; it leads away from God. The eighth-century prophets thought of sin in this way. Primarily, it was rebellion against God.

Snaith followed this assertion with numerous examples from the literary prophets which amply justify the statement.² Many interpreters of Rabbinic Judaism, among them Yitzhak Heinemann, have asserted that "the religion of the Sages is not a new religion like that of Paul, which came to nullify rather than to uphold: it is nothing other than an organic continuation of Biblical religion."³

If it is indeed the case that Rabbinic Judaism is organically related to the Biblical doctrines, it follows that

the core of the Rabbinic notion of sin is also the notion of rebellion. Schechter held this view and explained that "the root pe-shin-'ayin, used in the confession of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, denoting, according to the Rabbis, the highest degree of sin, is explained by them to mean rebellion..." The notion of sin is integrally related with the Rabbinic understanding of Torah. As Schechter wrote:⁵

It is evident...that the Rabbis thought that each mitswah, that is, the fulfillment of a commandment, had also a certain doctrinal value, bearing evidence to God's relation to man in general and his historic relation to Israel in particular.

Thus, in the Rabbinic schema, "sin" is a notion of the utmost consequence which "is conceived as an act of rebellion, denying the root, that is, the existence of God, or His providence, or His authority, indeed, excluding Him from the world."⁶

When we begin to touch upon the consequences of sin, the concept of divine retribution necessarily intrudes. Schechter distinguished between two major directions in the Rabbinic literature regarding the notion of divine retribution.⁷ The first trend, associated with the name of R. Ammi, is, generally speaking, the idea that "there is no death without (preceding) sin, nor affliction without (preceding) transgression."⁸ Implicit in this idea is the corresponding notion that "there is no happiness without some preceding

merit."⁹ In short, R. Ammi teaches the doctrine of "measure for measure."

The second, more subtle approach, is that associated with R. Meir; the substance of this approach is "that there is suffering as well as death without sin and transgression."¹⁰ Closely associated with this notion is the belief that "God almost suffers Himself when He has to inflict punishment either on the individual or on whole communities."¹¹ The consequence of this belief is that "if now, man is equal to God, he has nevertheless, or rather, on that account, to submit to the law of God without any outlook for reward or punishment."¹²

We shall find both concepts of divine retribution at work in the following Amalek passages, though we shall find that the former - the notion of "measure for measure" - is by far the more common approach.

A. Amalek as "Chastening Strap"

The measure for measure doctrine of divine retribution finds clear expression in a well-known parable, which will serve as a reference point in our discussion:

R. Levi said: To what are the Israelites similar? To a man who had a son and who let him ride on his shoulder. He walked about with him in the marketplace, and whenever his son saw something that he wanted he said to his father: "Buy me this!" So he purchased (these things) for him a first, second, and third time.

The son spotted someone and called to him: "Have you seen my father?" He (the father) said to him: "Fool! You are riding on my shoulder, and whatever you wish I buy for you! And you ask this (fellow) - 'Have you seen my father?'" What did his father do? He cast him (the son) from his shoulder. (Then) a dog came and bit him. Thus it was when Israel departed from Egypt. The Holy One, blessed be He, surrounded them with seven clouds of glory; as it is written: "He engirded him, watched over him" (Deut. 32:10). They requested Manna - He gave it to them. When He had supplied all their needs they began to grumble, saying: "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: "Have you murmured against Me? By your life, I am informing you: the dog is coming to bite you." Now who is this? It is Amalek; as it is written: "Amalek came and battled with Israel" (Ex. 17:8).¹³

There are several ramifications of the passage which bear upon the function of Amalek within it. That Amalek is characterized as a "biting dog" is consistent with what we have learned about him heretofore.¹⁴ That he bites as a punishment for the son's foolish impudence is a new factor. R. Levi's understanding of the relationship between God and Israel seems to be that the bond between them is, in the last analysis, conditional. God is long-suffering, but there are limits to His patience. Israel is thoroughly guileful in that they disregard direct evidence of God's presence and care; they are spoiled children in need of severe chastisement. The chastisement comes in the form of the dog - Amalek - who would have bitten all along had it not been for the protecting care of the Father.

An exegetical mechanism, already implicit in our first passage, namely that of "proximity," manifests itself much more clearly in a section of the Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer:¹⁵

R. Yohanan ben Nuri says: ...Moreover they (Israel) slandered the Holy One, blessed be He, when they said: 'The Lord forsook us in this wilderness and His shekhinah (in-dwelling presence) is not among us; as it is written: "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7). R. Joshua b. Korhah says: after that section what is written? - "Then Amalek came" (Ibid. vs.8) - he came to punish (lit. "to collect payment from") them (Israel).

From the juxtaposition of the story of Israel's trying the Lord at Massah and Meribah to the account of Israel's battle with Amalek, R. Joshua b. Korhah infers causation: Israel's impudence directly "caused" the onslaught of the punisher - the enemy Amalek. The same juxtaposition is made in a passage in Shemot Rabbah,¹⁶ but the nature of Israel's sin there becomes clear as does the "tit for tat" correspondence between sin and punishment:

"The place was named Massah (trial) and Meribah (quarrel)" (Ex. 17:7). Now what quarrel (or "strife") occurred there? (The opinions of) R. Judah, R. Nehemiah and the Rabbis: R. Judah says: They said if He (God) is Master of all creation we shall serve Him, but if not we will rebel against Him. And R. Nehemiah says: If He supply us with food like a king who dwells in a state - so that all the citizens want for nothing - we shall serve Him, but if not we shall rebel against Him. And our Rabbis said: If we think critical thoughts and He know what we are thinking we shall

serve Him, but if not we will rebel against Him. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If you have sought to try Me, let the evil one come and try you. Immediately: "Then came Amalek" (Ex. 17:8).

Our last passage confirms Schechter's analysis of the Rabbinic doctrine of sin,¹⁷ in that the sin of pride is tantamount to idolatry and brings about the removal of the shekhinah and consequently the divine protection which warded off the enemy up to that time.

But not only does the defending shekhinah depart. In many passages God Himself brings on the enemy nation, exploiting it as a "chastising strap".¹⁸ We hear echoes of the Father-son parable with which we began in the following terse statement from Ba-Midbar Rabbah:¹⁹

"Amalek dwells in the Negev region" (Num. 13:29). Why did they (i.e. the spies when they presented their description of the nations of Canaan) begin with Amalek? It is similar to the case of a child who has misbehaved (lit. "has stunk") and was beaten with a strap. When they wish to frighten him, they mention the strap with which he was struck. Thus was Amalek an evil strap to Israel.

Though this passage presents God in an even harsher role vis-a-vis Israel than we found to be the case in the Father-son parable (in that God Himself smites with Amalek), we note that the covenant relationship between God and Israel here remains essentially unimpaired, since Israel survives the thrashing by the "chastising strap" and need only be

reminded in the future of the punishment which had been wrought upon them in the past.

Still other passages,²⁰ however, depict Amalek as a perpetual "chastising strap" which beats Israel again and again when they do not learn their lesson the first time:

Amalek always functioned as chastising straps to Israel. You find that when they (Israel) said: "Is the Lord among us" (Ex. 17:7), the immediate consequent was: "Then Amalek came" (Ibid. vs.8)... Furthermore you find that when Aaron died, Amalek set out against them (Israel), so that they had to retreat seven stages in their journey...

The point here is that at several stages of the wilderness period, Amalek functioned as the chastener, the instrument of divine wrath. It is interesting to note that in the Tanhuma Buber²¹ we encounter the same word for "chastisement" (mardut), and with regard to punishments administered to those who practice intercourse during the wife's period, the Midrash warns: "these punishments do not come upon you by mistake." According to this trend of thought, punishments fit the crime and correspond to the specific trespass committed. That concept is briefly formulated in a Sifre passage²² bearing upon Amalek's chastisement of Israel:

"Now you were tired and weary and did not fear God" (Deut. 25:18). Just as you measured out, so they measured out to you. Just as you were tired and weary (of practicing the ordinances of the Torah) and did not fear God, so he (Amalek) was tired and weary (with regard to elementary norms of human conduct) and did not fear God.

Amalek the chastiser here mirrors Israel's degeneracy, and is consequently the chosen device by which God smites Israel.

Before proceeding, it remains to be mentioned that the "chastising blow" (makat mardut) is also a halakhic category referring to stripes meted out in certain cases of transgression upon Biblical and Rabbinic law.²³ The Aggadic denotations of the term with which we have been dealing, manifest the theological underpinnings of the concept of chastisement and give concrete illustrations for the measure for measure doctrine of Divine retribution.

B. Amalek and the Torah

The measure for measure concept of Divine retribution will continue to occupy our attention as we consider a large number of passages which deal with Amalek's function in disciplining Israel to recognize the central role and binding force of the Torah. We shall develop this theme from the general to the particular, considering first broad concepts enunciated in the Aggada and proceeding to more specialized concerns.

The following Sifre passage will serve to initiate the discussion:

"and smote the hindmost of thee" (Deut. 25:18). (This verse) teaches that (Amalek) killed no one except those persons who had withdrawn themselves from the ways of the Omnipresent and thus rendered themselves too weak to remain under the

protection of the clouds of glory.²⁴

We note immediately that the blame is shifted off Amalek altogether. Laxness in the "ways of the Omnipresent" is the causal factor in the harm wrought upon Israel. Just what the "ways of the Omnipresent" are becomes clearer in other passages;²⁵

"Then came Amalek" (Ex. 17:8). R. Joshua and R. Eleazar Hisma say: This verse is to be taken in an allegorical sense and explained in connection with the passage in Job where it is said: "Can the rush shoot up without mire? Can the reed-grass grow without water?" (Job 8:11). Is it possible for the rush to grow without mire and without water, or is it possible for the reed-grass to exist without water? So also is it impossible for Israel to exist unless they busy themselves with the words of Torah. And because they separated themselves from the Torah, the enemy came upon them. For the enemy comes only because of sin and transgression. In this sense it is said: "Then came Amalek."

It here becomes clear to us that the "ways of the Omnipresent" are none other than the "words of Torah." It is Israel's ineluctable fate to perish at any time that the words of Torah are neglected; Torah is the sine qua non of Israel's existence.

We note parenthetically that in the foregoing Me-khilta passage, Rabbis Joshua and Hisma quote from the book of Job which concerns itself entirely with the problems of Divine retribution and theodicy. The quoted passage (Job 8:11) is extracted from the speech of Bildad the

Shuhite, one of Job's comforters. The Rabbis of the Aggadic literature never really came to terms with the enormity of Job's question, and accorded the words of the comforters equal weight with those of Job himself.^{25a} We notice a similar glossing over of the issue of Israel's suffering at the hands of Amalek in this and similar passages, which parallels the Rabbinic treatment of the book of Job.

An allegorical interpretation of the text in parashat Be-shallah introduces an additional element into the discussion:

("Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in) Rephidim" (Ex. 17:8)... Those who interpret the law metaphorically say: There is no (mention) of "Rephidim" except in a case of "feebleness of hands" (Rip'yon ya-dayvim), for they weakened their grasp upon the Torah. Consequently the enemy (lit.: "Hater") came upon them, for no enemy comes except when there has been sin and transgression.²⁶

The notion introduced here is that of laxity in the performance of the Torah's commands. That laxity results in a general state of national weakness, which renders Israel vulnerable to Amalek's attack.

In another passage²⁷ the whole battle with Amalek is conceived as one allegory depicting Israel's ongoing relationship with the Torah:

R. Eleazar says: For what purpose does it say: "Israel prevailed," or what is the purpose of saying: "Amalek prevailed?" (Ex.

17:11). Merely to tell that when Moses raised his hands towards heaven, it meant that Israel would be strong in the words of Torah, to be given through Moses' hands. And when he lowered his hands, it meant that Israel would lower their zeal for the words of the Torah to be given through his hands.

Another parallel passage²⁸ formulates the same thought in the future tense; that is, the battle with Amalek portended the future conduct of Israel with regard to the Torah and Mitswot.

According to one aggadic strand, the tribe of Dan was especially vulnerable to Amalek's attack, because they had been the most culpable with respect to the neglecting of the Torah:

Keep in mind what the house of Amalek did unto you in the way, on your coming up out of Mizraim, how they overtook you in the way, and slew every one of those among you who were thinking to go aside from My Word; the men of the tribe of Dan, in whose hands were idols (or things of strange worship), and the clouds overcast them, and they of the house of Amalek took them and mutilated them, and they were cast up...²⁹

There are a number of reasons why Dan is singled out for punishment in the Rabbinic literature. Wrote Kaufmann Kohler:

Dan plays a peculiar role in rabbinical tradition. Owing to the fact that his name, as the name of a tribe, is connected with the blasphemer (Lev. 24:11), and with the idolatry of northern Israel (Judges 18:30)... Dan came to be regarded as the

black sheep of the house of Jacob.³⁰

Dan's transgression had consisted in their practice of "strange worship" or idolatry. But all Israel stand accused of bringing on the enemy by several specific transgressions against the Toraitic legislation; among these transgressions is violation of the Sabbath:

If only Israel had kept the first Sabbath, no people or nation would have been able to have power over them; as it is written: "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that (some) of the people went forth to gather (manna)" (Ex. 16:27). And after that is written: "Then Amalek came" (Ex. 17:8).³¹

Israel furthermore invites the enemy's attack by practicing social injustice in trade:

R. Banai in the name of R. Huna opened (the discussion): "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 11:1). Said Rabbi Banai in the name of R. Huna: If you have seen a generation whose character traits are marked by falsehood, know that the (enemy) kingdom will come to engage that generation in battle. Now, what is the reason? "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord." What is written directly afterward? "When pride cometh, then comes shame..." (Ibid. vs.2). R. Berekhiah in the name of R. Aba bar Kahana: "Can I be meritorious with wicked balances, while in the bag are deceitful weights?" (Micah 6:11). Is it possible that one whose character traits are marked by falsehood would merit (divine protection)? Rather: "in the bag are deceitful weights." Said R. Levi: Moses also hinted about this matter to Israel in the Torah: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag diverse weights, a great and a small" (Deut. 25:13f). Should you have done so, know that the (enemy) kingdom will come and war with your (lit. "that")

generation. What is the reasoning (behind the last statement)? "For all that do such things, even all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Ibid. vs.16). And what is written immediately afterward? "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Ibid. vs.17).³²

Here, we ought to note, we are obliged to remember Amalek in order that we not again engage in shady business practices. To wreak vengeance upon Amalek would be fatuous, since he automatically entered the scene as a result of Israel's iniquitous practices. A variant reading of the above-quoted passage adds: "(this is) to teach you that the enemy only comes as a result of the iniquitous use of weights and measures."³³

It remains to be said that infractions against the Torah include infractions against the Oral Torah. Minut--heresy -- "religious divisions due to an unlawful spirit",³⁴ also renders Israel vulnerable to the enemy's attack:

"Because of heresy, O Ephraim, your roots are to be plucked up by Amalek" (Judges 5:14). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse "Then, when I fall, they rejoice, and gather themselves together" (Ps. 35:15). Whenever Israel slip and fall into heretical ways, forthwith the heathen nations of the world rejoice and gather themselves together to slay the people of Israel. Hence, "when I fall, they rejoice and gather themselves together."³⁵

Minut is specifically an infringement upon the Rabbinic norm system, since no direct prohibition of deviant belief is to

be found in the written Torah.³⁶ Thus the enemy stands ready to attack when Israel neglects any major part of the Torah heritage, which, according to the Tannaim, would certainly include the Oral Law.

C. God and Israel as Co-sufferers

We have noted before that, even though the tit for tat doctrine of divine retribution pre-dominates, there is a second doctrine according to which "there is suffering as well as death without sin and transgression." According to Schechter³⁷ several other notions cluster around this doctrine. One of these is "that even God's omnipotence is submitted to a certain law - though designed by His own holy will - which He could not alter without detriment to the whole creation." From this follows the concept that "God almost suffers Himself when He has to inflict punishment either on the individual or on whole communities." Consequently:

every complaint about suffering must cease. Not only is affliction no direct chastisement by God in the way of revenge; but even when it would seem to us that we suffer innocently, we have no right to murmur, as God Himself is also suffering.

As a result, "this thought of compassion - in its strictest sense of fellow-suffering - of God with His creatures becomes a new motive for avoiding sin."

It is in the spirit of this trend of thought that Is-

rael, according to one fragment, immediately receives the divine judgment and commences fasting:

"But the hands of Moses were heavy" (Ex. 17:12). At that time Moses' arms were weighed down like a person from whose arms hang three water-jugs. "And they (Aaron and Hur) took a stone, and put it under him" (Ibid.). Now, didn't they have a pillow or cushion for his arms to rest upon?! (This is) rather to teach you that they (Israel) were engaged in a public fast.³⁸

This passage, which in other versions merely comes to record that Moses commiserated with the rest of the community in its terror of the enemy nation, here emphasizes the fact that the community recognizes Amalek as the instrument of God. The community does not here murmur, but makes an act in faith.

As a nehemta to the section dealing with Amalek, the Tanhuma (ha-nidpas) presents the following formula:

When Israel is in distress, He is in distress; as it is written: "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Is. 63:9).³⁹

In its context, the passage tells us that though Amalek is in fact an instrument of divine chastisement, God nonetheless suffers when Israel receives its blow. Israel does not simply get what he deserves.

The theme of co-suffering is framed ironically in yet another passage:

"Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut. 25:17)... (replies Israel:) did to us, (but also) did to You! "Remember O Lord against the children of Edom / The day of Jerusalem; / Who said: 'Rase it, rase it, / Even to the foundation thereof.'" (Ps. 137:7).⁴⁰

In the foregoing statement Israel and God stand together as equal victims of the enemy nation. Even as Israel must bear the onslaughts of the treacherous people, so God must bear the destruction of His chosen house. Israel has received their punishment, but the covenant relationship with the Lord of history remains intact and assumes a new mutuality.

CHAPTER FOUR

Israel's Victory Over Amalek at Rephidim

In our previous discussion we were concerned primarily with various doctrines of divine retribution and noted how the enemy nation Amalek functioned in Rabbinic thought as a chastising strap. We shall now concentrate on the other side of the coin and consider the various merits by which Israel ultimately emerged victorious after the battle at Rephidim: "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Ex. 17:13).

Before proceeding it would be well to review the cluster of ideas surrounding the Rabbinic notion of merits as formulated by Solomon Schechter.¹ We are here dealing with the Hebrew noun Zakhut which "is used here in the sense of merit, virtue, which under certain conditions have a protective or an atoning influence." Schechter distinguishes among three types of Zakhut: (1) The Zakhut of pious ancestry; (2) The Zakhut of a pious contemporary, and (3) the Zakhut of pious posterity. In our present discussion we shall be concerned primarily with the first two categories.

Wrote Schechter:

The Zakhut of the pious ancestry may generally be described as the zekhut avot (the Zakhut of the Fathers), but the term Fathers is largely limited in rabbinic literature to the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God's covenant with whom is so often appealed to already in the Bible.

In our analysis so far² we have noticed that the notion of zakhut ima-hot-(the merit of the Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah) also plays a strong role in the Aggadic literature.

Many of the passages dealing with the notion of zakhut avot derive from Lev. 26:42, which states: "then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." Basing themselves on this verse

the Rabbis speak also of the covenant with the Tribes ("the servant of the Lord"), to whom God has also sworn as He did to the patriarchs, and whose Zakhut Moses is also supposed to have invoked, as He did that of the Fathers.

We shall note presently that Moses, too, is a source of special merit, though in the Rabbinic literature taken as a whole, he functions less as a source of Zakhut than do the Patriarchs.³ Schechter developed the above-mentioned notions at considerable length, and we shall have cause to return to his treatment from time to time.

With respect to the battle between Israel and Amalek a Mekhilta passage sets forth the concept of Zakhut as follows:

"Tomorrow I will stand" (Ex. 17:9). Tomorrow we shall be prepared to take our stand.
"Upon the top of the hill" (Ibid.), to be

taken literally - these are the words of R. Joshua. R. Eleazar of Modi'im says: Let us declare tomorrow a fast day and be ready, relying upon the deeds of the forefathers. For "the top" (rosh), refers to the deeds of the fathers; "the hill," refers to the deeds of the mothers.⁴

This utterance of R. Eleazar of Modi'im, in which are invoked the notions of the merit of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, is greatly amplified in a section of the Pesikta Rabbati,⁵ wherein many other kinds of merits come into play as well:

Another comment (on the verse) "And Moses said unto Joshua: 'Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand" (Ex. 17:9): (the last words are construed not as having been spoken by Moses but rather as Israel's prayer to God in which Israel, during the fight against Amalek, invoked the merits which were theirs. And so) the words are read literally "And I myself stand up." Note that Scripture does not here use the word 'ny (I), but 'nky (I myself), intimating therefore that Israel invoked the merit of the Torah, the merit of the first word of the Ten Commandments which is 'nky. The phrase "stand up" which follows, intimates that Israel invoked the merit of the judges, for the Lord Himself as judge is described as standing up: "The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people" (Isa. 3:13). The next term, "top," intimated that Israel invoked the merit of the Patriarchs: "From the peaks of the rocks I see him" (Num. 23:9), (for the merit of the Patriarchs is topmost in Israel). The following term, "hill," intimates that Israel invoked the merit of the Matriarchs: "And from the hills I behold him" (Ibid.), (for the merit of the Matriarchs towers only a little less high than that of the Patriarchs.) The phrase "with

the rod" is an allusion to Moses' own merit, for the verse goes on to describe the rod as the one "of God, that was given because of me (-- Moses)". Thus Israel finally prayed: Oh that we stand our ground through the merit of Moses! Why (did Israel deem it necessary in the battle against Amalek to invoke the merit of Moses, as well as the other merits?) Because they said: As we come before God pleading the merit of the Fathers, so Amalek, of the progeny of Esau, may also come (pleading) the merit of the Fathers.

We thus have added to our inventory of merits the Torah and the Judges ("who are the very root of Israel"⁶), and Moses. Moses' Zakhut is here considered essential, for Amalek, too, enjoys the merit of Abraham and Isaac, his forebears. The battle with Amalek here is a veritable contest of merits, with Israel winning out on account of Moses' special position, which we could class under the rubric "the Zakhut of a pious contemporary."

A. Moses' Role in the Victory

Several Amalek passages show a primary concern with the figure of Moses. One passage goes so far as to say that Moses was totally responsible for the victory:

("And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it) Adonai-nissi (the Lord - my Miracle") (Ex. 17:15). That is, Who performed a miracle for my sake, for Israel were saved only on account of Moses. (This is because) they had already become lax in performing Mitsvot.⁷

We noted in a previous section⁸ that laxity in the performance of the precepts of the Torah rendered Israel vulnerable to the enemy's blow. The view here given is that Moses' Zakhut was of such potency that it saved a people whose cause was already lost. The notion is extended so far in certain strata of Rabbinic literature, that we learn from one source that one is obliged to utter praise and thanksgiving upon seeing "the rock upon which Moses sat while Joshua battled against Amalek."⁹

Certain aggadists concentrated especially on the role Moses' arms played in the battle process:

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy..." (Ex. 17: 11f).

A well-known Mekhilta sounds the dominant theme concerning Moses' arms:

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand," etc. Now, could Moses' hands make Israel victorious or could his hands break Amalek? It merely means this: When Moses raised his hands toward heaven, the Israelites would look at him and believe in Him who commanded Moses to do so; then God would perform for them miracles and mighty deeds."¹⁰

Moses' dramatic gesture here serves to redirect the attention of Israel to the Source of commands, so that their own strength would increase. But the passage also hints that

Moses possessed a certain intervening merit which was instrumental in bringing about the victory. In one source the idea is put forth that Moses' arms themselves possessed a special merit:

"and his hands were steady (emunah)" (Ex. 17:12). By the merit of Moses' arms and because of the pain which they endured, Amalek falls before Israel.¹¹

Of course the statement merely emphasizes Moses' merit by calling attention to the pain he endured on Israel's behalf. The motif of vicarious suffering also seems to echo within the passage to a certain degree.

Moses receives criticism as well as praise for his conduct during the battle with Amalek.¹² His arms also become symbolic of sluggishness:

"And Moses' arms became heavy" (Ex. 17:12) ... R. Eleazar Ha-modai says: From here one learns that it is impermissible to be sluggish in regard to the performance of a mitsvah. For if Moses had said to Joshua "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek..." (Ex. 17:9) immediately, he (Moses) would not have suffered that pain. But rather he said "Tomorrow" (Ibid.).¹³

The passage is interesting not only because Moses is portrayed as a bearer of negative credit, but also because it is the first example in our analysis in which the war against Amalek is considered mitsvah. We shall have much to say concerning this topic subsequently.¹⁴

In other texts, however, the tardiness of the victory over Amalek is ascribed not to Moses but to divine providence:

And the hands of Mosheh were heavy, because the conflict was prolonged till the morrow, and the deliverance of Israel was not prepared on that day; and he could not hold them up in prayer; on which account he would have afflicted his soul.¹⁵

Moses here acts as the very human leader of a people, whose strength languishes as he waits for the divinely ordained outset of the battle. He has neither merit enough to change the course of events, nor is he blamed for the prolongation of the hostilities.

B. Joshua's Role in the Battle

In a previous section¹⁶ we discussed the connection between Joshua's lineage and his designation as the vanquisher of Amalek. We shall now concern ourselves with his specific acts during the conflict with the enemy nation.

A certain hesitancy seems to characterize Joshua before he goes forth to battle Amalek:

"And go out, fight with Amalek" (Ex. 17:9). R. Joshua says: Moses said to him: Joshua, go out from under the protection of the cloud and fight with Amalek. R. Eleazar of Modi'im says: Moses said to him: Joshua, what do you wish to keep your head for? Is it not for a crown? Then go out from under the protection of the cloud and fight with Amalek.¹⁷

We here learn again that the clouds were a sign of divine protection, from which security Joshua is compelled to go forth. Moses fully comprehends the process of Heilsgeschichte operating in the confrontation with Amalek and must remind Joshua of his role in the order of events.

The query "Is it not for the crown" becomes clearer when we consider an additional passage:

...Why did Moses say this to Joshua?...
 From the outset you interpret that he
 (Moses) wished to train him (Joshua) for
 war, for he would be the one who would lead
 Israel into the Land.¹⁸

Joshua is therefore to receive the diadem of leadership from Moses, and in order that he be properly trained for his future task, Moses delegates the responsibility for the battle to him.

Even though Joshua possesses the Zakhut of lineage from Rachel and is the chosen successor of Moses, he still requires the aid of carefully selected warriors:

Moses said to Joshua: "Choose us out men"
 (Ex. 17:9). - men who are (true) sons of the
 Patriarchs, men of heroic strength, fearers
 of Heaven - "and go out, fight with Amalek"
 (Ibid.).¹⁹

Joshua still depends upon the merits of the Patriarchs and the piety of the Israelites to gain his victory over Amalek. But more important, one notices that with the character of Joshua the emphasis upon merit becomes more

muted, and other elements emerge more important as causal factors in vanquishing the enemy. The above-quoted passages give credence to Schechter's assertion that "the Zakhut...to have a more lasting effect, has to be acquired by the highest degree of perfection in the service of God, which is accomplished through the motive of love."²⁰

We must furthermore note that according to several sources, Joshua's victory over Amalek at Rephidim was not total:

"And Joshua prostrated Amalek and his people" (Ex. 17:13). The text does not say that Joshua went so far as to root them up entirely, but "Joshua prostrated Amalek," so that he was like one who, though prostrated by feebleness, nevertheless remains alive.²¹

This corresponds with what we noted earlier²² in regard to the role of Amalek in the books of Samuel and Esther. We shall need subsequently to ascertain how the final obliteration of the stock of Amalek is to be accomplished.²³

C. Jethro and Amalek

Jethro was a character of considerable interest to the Rabbis, and the general concensus among them in the agadic literature is that he ultimately converted to Judaism.²⁴ What concerns us essentially here is the relation between Israel's victory over Amalek at Rephidim and Jethro's conversion.

This conversion becomes all the more remarkable when we consider one rather radical opinion put forth in a mid-rashic source:

Said R. Judah bar Simon: Jethro was (formerly) enlisted among the court officers of Amalek, but when he (Amalek) fell, he became a Jew. This is the meaning of the verse: "Then Jethro the priest of Midian heard" (Ex. 18:1).²⁵

We find a similar, yet more developed characterization in Shemot Rabbah:

Another view of "Then Jethro heard" (Ex. 18:1): This relates to the verse: "When thou smitest a scorner, the simple will become prudent" (Prov. 19:25), and also to the similar verse: "When the scorner is punished, the thoughtless is made wise" (Prov. 21:11). Amalek and Jethro were both (formerly) in league with Pharoah (to smite Israel after their exodus from Egypt). But when Jethro saw that the Holy One, blessed be He, destroyed Amalek both from this world and the world to come, he regretted (his former actions), and did teshuvah. For it is written above: "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. 17:14), and then afterward: "Then Jethro heard" (Ex. 18:1). He (jethro) said: I have no choice but to go to the God of Israel.²⁶

The theme of Jethro's conversion continues with a charming parable:

From what Scriptural basis do you adduce that both Amalek and the Midianites were enemies of Israel? From the verse: "And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed (with the rewards of divination in

their hand") (Num. 22:7), and also from the verse: "Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east (lay along the valley like locusts for multitude)" (Jud. 7:12).

So it was said of the wicked Balaam: "Then he saw Amalek" (Num. 24:20) - that he was impenitent. But when he (Balaam) saw that Jethro had done teshuvah, what did he say? - "And he looked on the Kenite (one of the names for Jethro), and took up his parable, and said: Firm is your dwelling place, in the rock is thy nest set" (Ibid. vs.21).

It is like a huntsman who was wont to hunt birds. He successfully bagged a first (bird) but as he closed in on the second, she flitted away and perched on the statue of the king. The huntsman stood and gazed at her, then said: 'If I should cast a stone at her, I shall incur the death penalty. Likewise I fear to strike at her with a stick, for it is impermissible to touch the statue of the king. I don't know what I could say to you, but that you have been rescued by fleeing to a fine spot.

So it was that Balaam noticed Jethro and Amalek taking counsel. He stood against Amalek and wiped out his name. But when he came to see Jethro, he noticed that he had done teshuvah. He consequently said to him: 'You have fled to a fine place'. So the meaning of "firm is your dwelling" is (firm like) Abraham. And thus "When thou smitest a scorner" refers to Amalek, and "the simple will become prudent" to Jethro.²⁷

This passage is a fine example of the "attribute of mercy" operating within the Rabbinic literature, but yet more remarkable is a brief description of Jethro's reward for his change of heart and religion, which was, after all, motivated by fear:

Now what was Jethro's reward (for his conversion)? His sons merited to sit in the chamber of hewn stones (in the Temple precincts where the Great Sanhedrin sat). As it is written: "And the families of scribes that dwelt in Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, the Sucathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hamath, the father of the house of Rechab" (I Chron. 2:55).²⁸

D. The Purpose of Victory over Amalek

We have so far been concerned with the question of how the victory over Amalek was gained, but with the consideration of Jethro's conversion we have begun already to treat an additional question: What was the teleological end of the victory? The answer seems to be that the victory serves to manifest God's grace in several aspects.

Even before the conflict with Amalek, we learn that God protected His people by a purely gratuitous act:

What is the meaning of "And He led them about?" (Ex. 13:18). God encompassed them (with a protecting wall of fire and cloud), as it is written: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zech. 2:9). Just as, when a shepherd tending his flock beholds wolves descending on his flock, he surrounds them that they be not harmed. So when Israel departed from Egypt, the chiefs of Edom and Moab, Canaan and Amalek were offering advice how best to attack Israel, and when God beheld this He surrounded them so that they should not be attacked; as it is written: "But God surrounded the people."²⁹

We have noticed earlier that subsequent to the stage described above, the Israelites turned aside from God's ways

and thus rendered themselves vulnerable to the enemy's attack.

The entire course of the battle proceeded according to divine will:

R. Eliezer says: "With the edge of the sword (le-fi harev)" (Ex. 17:13). Why is this said? We can learn from this that this war was only by the order of the Almighty.³⁰

Though R. Joshua holds the opinion that the victory occurred for Moses' sake, R. Eleazar of Modi'im asserts that God brought about the event for His own sake:

"And Moses built an altar and called the name of it Adonai-nissi" (Ex. 17:15). R. Joshua says: Moses called its name Nissi (the miracle wrought in my behalf). R. Eleazar of Modi'im says: God called its name Nissi, for it is said: "And He, Adonai, called its name Nissi." - Said Moses: This miracle which God has performed, He performed for His own sake. And so you find that whenever Israel benefits by a miracle, the miracle is as it were, before Him also, as it is said: "The Lord, my miracle."³¹

A parallel passage³² remarks that the miracle must have been on God's behalf alone, because Israel were not worthy at that time for such an act of divine favor. We must note then that in this instance the portrayal of divine grace is markedly qualified.

In another passage, however, the victory is construed as a special divine favor to encourage Israel to receive the kingship of Heaven upon themselves:

"I am the Lord Thy God" (Ex. 20:2). Why were the Ten Commandments not said at the beginning of the Torah? They give a parable. To what may this be compared? To the following: A king who entered a province said to the people: May I be your king? But the people said to him: Have you done anything good for us that you should rule over us? What did he do to them? He built the city wall for them, he brought in the water supply for them, and he fought their battles. Then when he asked them: May I be your king? They said to him: Yes, yes. Likewise, God. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, sent down the manna for them, brought up the well for them, drove up the quails for them. He fought for them the battle with Amalek. Then He said to them: I am to be your king. And they said to Him: Yes, yes.³³

A similar parable, yet more tenderly formulated, appears in a midrash of later dating:

"In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai." (Ex. 19:1). - to receive the Torah. And there the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel. But why did He not give it to them at the time of their leaving Egypt? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, thought: I shall do some favors for them first in order to manifest My might, and afterward they will receive My Torah and Mitswot. I shall relate a parable: To what may the matter be compared? To the king who wished to marry a (certain) woman. The king said: I shall grant her a favor, then wed her. Such was also the case with the Holy One, blessed be He, He saw the congregation of Israel naked and dressed her; as it is said: "I clothed thee also with richly woven work" (Ez. 16:10). He saw her barefoot and put shoes on her; as it is said: "and shod thee with sealskin" (Ibid.)

When she came upon the sea, He passed her through. When He saw Amalek attacking her, He rescued her. Then when Israel recognized the favors and mighty deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He, they all cried: "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey" (Ex. 24:7).³⁴

The matter can also be viewed in retrospect; that is, given the fact that the Torah was addressed to Israel alone, its existence would be vain were Israel not to pull through the battle with Amalek:

Rabbi Joshua says: When Amalek came to harm Israel, removing them from under the wings of their king father in heaven, Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Ruler of the world, this wicked one is coming to destroy Thy children from under Thy wings. Who then will read that book of the Torah which Thou hast given them?³⁵

Furthermore, it is written in the Prophets that Israel is to have a future:

R. Eleazar of Modi'im says: When Amalek came to harm Israel, removing them from under the wings of their Father in heaven, Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Ruler of the world, Thy children whom thou wilt in the future scatter to the four winds of heaven - as it is said: "For I have spread you abroad to the four winds of heaven," etc. (Zech. 2: 10) - this wicked one is coming to destroy them from under thy wings. Who then will read the book of the Torah which Thou hast given them?³⁶

Moses, it would seem, is here appealing to a kind of "reasoned grace." That is, Israel may have deserved destruction

at Rephidim, yet in the long run, their destruction would prove a great sorrow and embarrassment to God, so that it is in His best interest that Israel survive.

Yet the element of "freely-flowing grace" is hardly absent from the Aggadic literature taken as a whole, as the following will demonstrate:

Another interpretation of "Adonai nissi" ("The Lord - miracle for me") (Ex. 17:15). R. Joshua the Priest, son of R. Nehemiah, said: This reading may be explained by the parable of a king whose wife provoked him, so that he became angry at her. Whereupon he went down to the marketplace, entered a goldsmith's shop, and had a piece of jewelry made for her. Now if he had jewelry made for her when she provoked him, how much more and more would he do for her if she did his will! So, too, if He performed miracles for Israel - "Adonai nissi" ("The Lord - miracle for me") - at a time when they provoked Him ("Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7)), how much the more and more will He do for them if they do His will!³⁷

Our analysis of Israel's victory over Amalek at Rephidim thus lays bare multiple interlocking facets of Rabbinic theology and gives support to Schechter's assertion that

generally, it may be stated that the Zakhut of the Fathers still retained its hold on Jewish consciousness, at least in its aspect of the covenant, if not directly, as a fountain of grace on which the nation can rely at all times.³⁸

In terms of our discussion, Schechter's assertion means that a mechanical concept of merits in regard to the battle between Amalek and Israel can indeed be found in certain

sources. This is not the total picture, however, and other principles must be considered as well, most important of which is the unconditional nature of the covenant between God and Israel which can in no way be totally abrogated. We have seen that the doctrine of grace has both a rational, self-interested aspect as well as what we might term a "romantic" dimension, in which God's generosity is described as unbounded. Amalek languishes as a result of his defeat at Rephidim, but his light does not yet splutter out entirely. He remains a topic for further discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Act of Remembering Amalek

According to the classic mitswah formulation of Maimonides, there are three commandments - two positive and one negative - which bear upon Amalek's felony. The first of the positive commandments enjoins the extinction of Amalek:

By this injunction we are commanded that among the descendants of Esau we are to exterminate only the seed of Amalek, male and female, young and old. This injunction is contained in His words (exalted be He). "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek (Deut. 25:19).¹

We shall discuss the many ramifications of this commandment subsequently,² though it will also prove to be an important underpinning for our present discussion. The second positive commandment regards "Remembering the nefarious deeds of Amalek:"

By this injunction we are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us in attacking us unprovoked. We are to speak of this at all times, and to arouse the people to make war upon him and bid them hate him, to the end that hatred of him be not weakened or lessened with the passage of time. This injunction is contained in His words (exalted be He), "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" (Deut. 25:17)...³

The sixteenth-century Sefer Ha-Hinukh expatiates upon the

Rambam's formulation,⁴ explaining that the specific deed we are to remember is that Amalek attacked Israel first, before any other nation, therefore setting a bad example for the rest of Israel's enemies to follow. In justifying the mitswah, the author goes on to say that the remembrance of Amalek should make us realize that God hates those who torment Israel, and that God will in the end annihilate the enemy nation entirely.

The negative formulation of the same mitswah is stated as follows:

By this prohibition we are forbidden to forget what Amalek did to us and how he attacked us unprovoked...That is to say, we are not to relax our hatred of Amalek, nor are we to remove it from our hearts.⁵

A terse Sifre passage, quoted by the Rambam, serves to describe how Amalek's deeds are to be remembered:

"Remember" (Deut. 25:17) - by mouth (i.e. orally). "Do not forget" (Ibid vs.19) - in your heart. Such also is the intention of the verse: "The peoples have heard, they tremble" (Ex. 15:14).⁶

We find that the mitswah of extinction became binding when the Israelites entered into the Land:

R. Jehudah said: Three commandments became binding upon Israel when they entered the Land: to set up a monarch, to cut off the line of Amalek, and to build for themselves the Chosen House.⁷

The consequence of not "remembering" is that Israel will be forced back into slavery:

...the verse (Job 13:12) may be read "Your memories shall be like unto ashes," as a warning to Israel to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Two things I command you to remember: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee," and "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19) - remember, two! Know therefore, that (should your memory grow dead as ashes) and you do not remember these two commands, nor every year read the passage of Scripture containing them, I shall return you to servitude in another Egypt: "Your eminences to eminences of clay," "clay" in the sense of the verse, "And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in clay and in brick" (Ex. 1:14). Hence, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee."⁸

We here note that the mitswah of remembrance may be considered two-pronged, that the act of remembering implies "blotting out."

Since there are two commandments in the Torah which demand the act of remembrance, the Sabbath and Amalek, the reasonable question arises about what the one has to do with the other:

Israel said to him: Moses, our master! One verse reads: "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut. 25:17) and another verse says: "Remember to make holy the Sabbath day" (Ex. 20:8). How can both dicta exist, each utilizing the same word "Remember"!? Moses replied to them: Does a glass of fine spiced wine not appear similar to a glass of vinegar? Each is a glass. - "Remember" to guard and hallow the Sabbath day; as it is written: "Remember to make holy the Sabbath day." And as for this one (Amalek), remember him for punishment.⁹

A similar distinction is drawn between the two remembrances in the Tanhuma HaNidpas, wherein is employed a yet more elaborate parable:

"Remember what Amalek did to you," etc. Here it is written "Remember" and with regard to Shabbat also it is written "Remember." Are the two matters similar to one another?!

Said Solomon: "Then said I in my heart: 'As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise?' - But then I said: 'There is never remembrance of the wise person along with the fool'" (Eccles. 2:15f). Even though with reference to Shabbat it is written "Remember" just as it is written "Remember" in regard to Amalek. The two are not alike. Said Solomon: "Should the same happen to the fool as happens to me?!"

What is this matter like? It is similar to the case of a king who had a meal prepared and invited guests. When the platter filled with the finest delicacies was brought around he said: 'Remember So-and-so, my friend!' When he had wiped the platter clean, he said: 'Remember So-and-so, my enemy!' His friends said to him: You have mentioned both of them. He replied to them: 'the former I mentioned over a platter filled with the finest delicacies, but the other I mentioned over an empty platter.'

So we see with regard to the Shabbat it is written: "Remember to hallow the seventh day" - with food, drink, and a fresh garment. But in reference to Amalek it is written: "Remember what Amalek did to you." Over what do you mention him? Over an empty table. As it is said: "Wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Deut. 25:19).¹⁰

There is, however, another quite different reason for remembering Amalek. Not only does the act serve to keep alive hatred for the despicable enemy, but it also effects moral vigilance. Given the theory that Amalek came as a chastising strap, not he, but God was ultimately responsible for Israel's troubles. The act of remembrance therefore helps Israel to recall their presumption and rebelliousness at Rephidim, which brought the enemy on in the first place. But Israel are not to be reminded of their weakness in a harsh way:

R. Pinhas said: After forty years Moses wished to remind Israel by asking them: Do you remember what you said in the wilderness - "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7). But (thought Moses), if I say such a thing to Israel I shall put them to shame, and he who puts others to shame has no portion in the world to come. Rather, then, I shall recount the deed of Amalek, and they will remember what is written above that.

What is the matter like? It is like a prince who owned an orchard, and at its entrance was a dog. The prince would gaze and view from his upper chamber all that was in the orchard. The friend of the prince entered the orchard to take (fruit). He (the prince) then set the dog upon him, which ripped his friend's clothes. Thought the prince: If I ask my friend - "Why did you enter the orchard?" - I shall shame him. Therefore I shall ask him: "Did you see how that mad dog tore your clothes, not knowing that you were my friend?" Immediately he will understand what it is that he has done.

Thus, too, did Moses reason: I shall recount Amalek's deed and they will immediately know what is written above. That

is why Moses said: "Remember what Amalek did to you when you came forth from Egypt" (Deut. 25:17).¹¹

The elements of hatred and vengeance connected with the commandments of "remember" and "blot out," seem to have bothered a number of the aggadists, and some of their interpretations virtually eliminate the vindictive character of the dicta:

Israel spoke right out to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, Thou commandest us, Remember (to blot out) the remembrance of Amalek. But we are no more than flesh-and-blood - here for a little while. Thou, Thou who livest and endurest for ever and ever, do Thou remember. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: My children, you need only read every year the passage concerning Amalek, and I shall reckon it for you as though you were blotting out his name from the world.¹²

The frame of mind reflected in the foregoing would tend to eliminate any Amalek-hunting on Israel's part, confining the mitswah to the realm of intellection. Numerous other passages, however, reflect an opposite tendency. That is, Amalek served as a real object of anger; true, the anger was to be confined to the ritual sphere but its presence was not on that account any the less actual:

...(says God:) You repay him (Amalek) for ill; I, too, will requite him for evil. You mention his name down below, and up here I shall blot out his name: "Let them be before the Lord continually"

(Ps. 109:15) - that is, all the evil deeds he perpetrated against me - "That He may cut off the memory of them from the earth" (Ibid.). That is the meaning of "Remember what Amalek did to you."¹³

The two tendencies reflected in the last passages manifest the complementary themes of strict justice and mercy which will be the topic for extensive development in the next chapter. What is of importance here is that the recital of and reflection upon Amalek's deed constitutes fulfillment of the commandment, though the attitudes and feelings toward the requirement may greatly differ from person to person. Furthermore, the act of reading the account of Amalek is judged to have great consequences in the divine realm, for it "causes" God to perform the blotting out.

It remains yet to be noted that when Israel properly upholds the mitswah of remembrance they are considered the true offspring of Abraham, through whom the original covenant was established.¹⁴ And according to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan¹⁵ the commandment will remain binding upon Israel "even until the days of the King Messiah."

CHAPTER SIX

Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim

In interpreting the Rabbinic approach to a hated enemy we may distinguish between two tendencies, which apply to many other topics as well: Midat Ha-Din (the quality of justice or God's justice) and Midat Rahamim (the quality of love-mercy or God's love-mercy). In its classic expression the later Aggadic literature understands the Tetragrammaton always to refer to the aspect of God's mercy and the term Elohim always to denote the attribute of strict justice.¹ Max Kadushin among others has pointed out that "Passages in the Bible which seem not to conform with this rule are interpreted by the Rabbis in such a fashion as to be in harmony with it, so firmly was the rule itself held."² In regard to Amalek, we shall observe a broad range of attitudes toward the hated enemy, ranging from the shockingly harsh to the almost absurdly lenient, though it will become clear that in regard to Amalek, the attitude will prove to be weighted onto the side of Midat Ha-Din.

The Rabbis seem to have been aware that Amalek's sentence was extraordinarily harsh in the Biblical writings, so they endeavored to justify this state of affairs:

Another comment: "Pluck them up - them of Amalek - by the roots" (Judges 5:14). These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere,

"Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way" (Prov. 1:31). Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, see fit to let cruelty (midat akhziyut) be the mode of His conduct toward Amalek, saying: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19); and "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling" (I Sam. 15:3)? Because, said the Holy One, blessed be He, I am anticipating something which Amalek is otherwise committed to do. It is revealed and known to Me how an Amalekite will decree death for "young and old, little children and women, in one day" (Esther 3:13). Hence have I commanded, "Slay both man and woman" (I Sam. 15:3), and "thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek," who therefore will have been made to "eat the fruit of their own way." With reference to God's fore-dooming of Amalek, Scripture says: "Because Haman the son of Hammedathah, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews...had cast pur, that is, the lot, to discomfit them and to destroy them;" then Scripture goes on to say, "When she came before the King" (Esther 9:24-25) - that is, before the King of Kings - the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "In accordance with the book, his wicked device... should return upon his own head" (Esther 9:25). In accordance with what book? The one of which it is said "In the book write this for a memorial...I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek (Ex. 17:14), who will have been made to "eat of the fruit of their own way, and are to be filled with their own devices" (Prov. 1:31) - with the very things which they devised and schemed against us.³

It is interesting to note that what here constitutes Midat Ha-Din in regard to Amalek, at the same time is kindly dealing with Israel. It is clear, however, that we are again in the field of Measure for Measure, which principle we explored in our discussion of divine retribution.⁴ The principle shines through yet more clearly in the following

passage:

Said R. Ada: (God says:) I am like a trustee (Ba'al Pikdonot). Amalek deposited bundles of thorns with Him. The Holy One, blessed be He, returned his bundles of thorns to him; as it is said: "I remember (pakad-ti) that which Amalek did to Israel" (I Sam. 15:2).⁶

Furthermore, just as we have seen that Amalek possesses a special merit on account of his lineage from Abraham and Isaac, so also is he judged more harshly precisely because of that lineage:

8 The Holy One, blessed be He, examines the heart and feelings. He said to him (Amalek): If the mark of circumcision were still engraved in your flesh, I would not judge your thoughts as though they were actions. Now, that you no longer practice circumcision I shall judge thought as if it were action - and what you in the future will perpetrate, even though it were not yet accomplished. As it is said: "Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee; surely thou hast hated thine own blood, therefore blood shall pursue thee." (Exekiel 35:6). You have hated the blood of circumcision (privately), therefore I shall bloody you publicly.⁷

Amalek spurned the commandment of milah, which would have protected him from the full severity of Midat Ha-Din, and is thus made accountable even for evil thoughts and not yet accomplished actions. This is in consonance with the Rabbinic notion that the wicked turn the attribute of mercy into strict judgment.⁸

We learn from I Samuel 15:3, that Saul is commanded utterly to destroy the Amalekites. In thus being placed in the category of herem, Amalek, in the Rabbinic aggadot, is frequently grouped together with three other groups devoted to extinction: the kings Sihon and 'Og, Jericho, and the Canaanites.⁹ Amalek, in contradistinction to the Edomites and Egyptians, is slated only for evil:

Another comment: "Remember," etc. Citing R. Aibu, R. Tanhuma BeRabbi began his discourse as follows: This exhortation is to be considered in the light of the verse "Be ye not as the horse or the mule, which have no understanding, licking no matter whether (one pricks him) with a goad, or (pulls him) by a bridle, or (bedecks him) with his ornament, so that no one dares come near him" (Ps. 32:9). So the Holy One, blessed be He, exhorts Israel: Israel, let there be understanding in you. "Be ye not as the horse" in whom there is no understanding. How does a horse behave? Even when a man is about to bedeck him with ornaments or give him fodder, he turns his neck away and kicks the man. So, too, the mule. But you, act otherwise. In you let there be understanding. When you enter the land of Israel, remember to repay the good his goodness, and the evil his evil. How so? It is written: "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite" (Deut. 23:8). Why not? "For he is thy brother" (Ibid.) - whether good or evil, he is still thy brother. "Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because ye were strangers in his land" (Ibid.) - whether good or evil, you spent many years among the Egyptians. But Amalek! "Remember what Amalek did unto thee."¹⁰

The question immediately arises: Is not Amalek virtually an Edomite, inasmuch as he too is of the offspring of Esau?

Braude notes that "Amalek, to be sure, is a descendant of Edom who is not to be abhorred, but he is the most depraved of Edom's descendants."¹¹ Yet this observation is incomplete, because in several passages the attempt is made almost to avoid the whole question of Amalek's common ancestry with Edom. He is classed with the Canaanites who are doomed to total annihilation by very clever reasoning. First of all, the Canaanite King of Arad mentioned in Numbers 21:1ff is identified as an Amalekite:

"And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead" (Num. 20:29). Now what is written after this? "Now the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the Negev, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive" (num. 20:1). You find that when Aaron had died, the clouds of glory were removed, and they (Israel) appeared like a woman with uncovered head. Now who was this King of Arad? This is Amalek; as it is said: "Amalek dwells in the Negev region; and the Hittite and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanite dwells by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan" (Num. 13:29). Now he (the King of Arad) dwelt in the gap (on the border), and when he heard that Aaron had died and that the (protective) clouds of glory had vanished, he immediately provoked war with them.¹²

Since the King of Arad is thus conceived as an Amalekite, and since Israel fought against him and utterly laid waste his forces (Num. 21:1-3), it follows that Amalek too is fair game for extermination, his lineage with the Patriarchs notwithstanding:

If he was in fact an Amalekite why was he called a Canaanite? For Israel were forbidden to war against the descendants of Esau, as it is said: "Do not incite them, for from their land I shall not give so much as a foot's stride, because the mountain country of Seir is the inheritance which I have given him" (Deut. 2:5). After Amalek had incited them once, then twice, the Holy One said: This one is not forbidden to you as are the rest of the descendants of Esau - indeed, you are to treat him like a Canaanite, as it is said: "You shall make them an utter desolation..." (Deut. 20:17).¹³

Thus, by association with the King of Arad, Amalek is seen to be cut off from the protection offered the Edomites, and indeed the annihilation of him, even in the cruelest manner, has the force of mitswah.

At Rephidim, according to one aggadic tradition, Joshua righteously dealt with Amalek in the manner of Midat Ha-Din:

And Joshua shattered Amalek, and cut off the heads of the strong men of his people, by the mouth of the Word of the Lord, with the slaughter of the sword.¹⁴

But the most salient expression of Midat Ha-Din, both in the Tanakh and in the Rabbinic literature, has to do with the tale of the slaughter of the Amalekites and their king Agag, which is recorded in I Samuel 15:1-33. The aggadic material frequently reiterates the Biblical perspective, that Saul had committed a grievous sin in not carrying out the letter of God's command to utterly exter-

minate Amalek, but often adds the belief that it is precisely because of Saul's lack of zeal that Amalek continues to torment Israel.¹⁵ In Kohelet Rabbah we encounter a thoroughly reasoned justification for the charges against Saul:

"Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise" (Eccles. 7:16). Be not more righteous than your Creator, as in the case of Saul of whom it is written: "And Saul came to the city of Amalek" etc. (I Sam. 15:5). R. Huna and R. Benaiah say: He began to cavil at his Creator, arguing, 'Thus has the Holy One, blessed be He, ordered you, "Now go, and smite Amalek...slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (Ibid. vs.3). If the men sinned, how have the women and children, the cattle, ox and ass, sinned!' A Bat Kol went forth and said, "Be not righteous overmuch," more than thy Creator!...

R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Whoever shows himself merciful in circumstances where he should be pitiless, in the end becomes pitiless when he should be merciful. Whence have we that Saul was pitiless when he should have been merciful? As it is said: "And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep" (I Sam. 22:19), and Nob should not have been treated like the seed of Amalek. The Rabbis say: Whoever makes himself merciful in circumstances where he should be pitiless will eventually be overtaken by the Attribute of Justice, as it is said: "So Saul died and his three sons" (Ibid. 31:6).¹⁶

With this passage we view Midat Ha-Din in an entirely different light. A reason is given by R. Simeon b. Lakish for

the execution of strict justice: we must learn to differentiate between situations and act appropriately to a concrete state of affairs. This apologia, it would seem to us, indicates that some of the Rabbis were uneasy with the expression of Midat Ha-Din as we find it in I Samuel 15, and sought ways to ramify the notion of strict justice.

Perhaps the harshest expression of severity in the whole episode comes with the simple description "And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces in Gilgal" (I Samuel 15:33). The phrase is even more brutally explicated in an aggadic passage:

Then Samuel came and exacted punishment from them; as it is said: "And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces in Gilgal." - he would cut from his flesh olive-sized bits and feed them to ostriches; that is the meaning of the verse: "It shall devour the members of his body, Yea the choosing of his death (be-khor mawet) shall be the devouring of his members" (Job 18:13). - He chose a bitter manner of death for him. Our Rabbis say: They erected four poles and stretched him (to death) upon them; and that just as he had said: "Surely the bitterness of death has departed" (I Samuel 15:32). - for they are wont to execute princes by horrible means. R. Yitshak said: They castrated him; as it is written: "As thy sword hath made women childless, So shall thy mother be childless among women" (Ibid. vs.32). Said R. Levi: Moses also hinted about this matter to Israel in the Torah; as it is said: "When men strive together with one another, (and the wife of the one draweth near to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand and taketh him by the secrets;) then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall have no pity" (Deut. 25:11-12).

Immediately thereafter is written: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee."¹⁷

As we recall, Amalek, according to certain aggadot,¹⁸ had degraded Israel by castration, so that by castrating Agag, Samuel acts according to the tit for tat tradition we have discussed before. This becomes yet clearer in a parallel passage:

"How he...smote thee in the nether parts" (Deut. 25:18). What is meant by the words "smote thee in the nether parts?" It is a euphemism for mutilation by cutting off the male parts, as you may learn from the Book of Samuel: "And Samuel cut Agag's parts" (I Sam. 15:33). This verse, according to R. Isaac, means that Samuel castrated Agag, saying to him: "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be without grandchildren among women" (Ibid.). When you castrated an Israelite, you caused his wife to be bound to a dry stick. As you did to Israel in the wilderness, so have I done to you.¹⁹

This passage, and the many others like it, lend support to Kadushin's categorization, according to which "Measure for Measure...is an independent manifestation of the concept of God's justice, sharing in the general ground provided by that concept for all forms of God's justice, and is in no manner inferred or derived."²⁰ In other words, we can expect to see both Midat Ha-Din and Measure for Measure operating simultaneously in a given passage; they are like two sides of the same coin.

An unusual and germane element is introduced into

the discussion in a Tanhuma (Buber) passage:

"Samuel hewed Agag to pieces at Gilgal" (I Sam. 15:33). R. Shmuel bar Evidimi said: He judged him according to the laws of the gentiles, without witnesses or legal warning (hatra-ah).²¹

Since the laws of the gentiles were obviously held in low esteem by the Rabbis, one wonders if this last statement is not a kind of condemnation of Samuel's action, since he acted according to the ways of the pagan nations in disregard of the legislation of the Jews. On the other hand, it might be argued that only Amalek was sufficiently corrupt that the ordinary process of justice could in his case rightfully be ignored. This latter interpretation would agree with a passage from the Pesikta Rabbati,²² which reckons the "strange execution" (mitah meshunah) dealt out by Samuel, appropriate behavior for one of a prophetic station.

The topic of Amalek proselytism also relates itself to the issue of Midat Ha-Din. According to the halakha, the nations proscribed from entry into the community of Israel include the descendants of Ammon, Moab, Egypt, and Edom.²³ The males of Ammon and Moab were excluded forever, though no restriction existed against marriage with their women. Descendants of Egyptians and Edomites of either sex were proscribed in the first and second generations; the third enjoyed full connubial rights. Many aggadic passages, however, put forth the view that the descendants of Amalek,

in contradistinction to all other peoples, are permanently excluded from the Israelite Community:

R. Eliezer says: God swore by the throne of His Glory, that if a person of any of the nations should come desiring to be converted to Judaism, Israel shall receive him, but a person from the house of Amalek they shall not receive. For it is said: "And David said unto the young man that told him: 'Whence art thou?' And he answered: 'I am the son of an Amalekite stranger'" (II Sam. 1:13). At that moment David recalled what had been told to Moses our teacher - that if a person of any of the nations should come desiring to be converted to Judaism, Israel should receive him, but a person from the house of Amalek they should not receive. Immediately: "And David said unto him: 'Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee' (Ibid. v.16). In this sense it is said: "From generation to generation" (Ex. 17:16).²⁴

Thus in regard to converts, the Aggada treats Amalek with the full severity of strict justice, justifying the sentence of Scripture. This is a most extreme example of Midat Ha-Din in operation, a case where amelioration is an impossibility.

Though Midat Ha-Din be most conspicuous in the majority of Amalek passages, there are a number of passages where the aspect of Midat Rahamim proceeds and looms foremost. A parable communicates the notion that God decreed the extinction of Amalek only after having displayed the utmost mercy:

Asked R. Levi: What is the matter (of Amalek and Edom) like? It is similar to the case

of a king who prepared a banquet. He had two enemies and he invited them to come. He asked of all those gathered round the table that they receive his enemies with friendship. And so they did. After they had eaten and drunk their fill, they (the enemies) took up iron hatchets and proceeded to tear down the king's palace. The king said to them: Is it not enough for you that I commanded that you be honored; that you tear down my palace? Do you not recognize the honor I have granted you? Take them out and impale them, one opposite the other! And so you find that after all the evils that Egypt and Edom perpetrated against Israel (God) commanded concerning them: "Do not abominate the Edomite" (Deut. 23:8). Said the Holy One, blessed be He: Impale them, one opposite the other; as it is said: "Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom shall be a desolate wilderness" (Joel 4:19). And so also: "Remember what Amalek did to you."²⁵

In contrast to the aggadot quoted above concerning the castration of Agag, a brief Mekhilta says:

"By the sword" (Ex. 17:13). R. Joshua said: He (Joshua) did not disfigure them, but rather judged them mercifully.²⁶

Furthermore, we see that the Kenites, who had become mixed in the Amalekite encampment, received special mercy:

Rabbi says: When Saul arrived at the Amalekite encampment he saw the sons of Jethro mixed together with Amalek's camp. He warned them to break away from the Amalekites; as it is said: Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of the land of Egypt" (I Sam. 15:6). But did Jethro deal kindly with all of Israel?! Why he dealt kindly only with

Moses! But from here you learn that one who has done a kindness to one of Israel's great men has, as it were, dealt well with all Israel. And because of the kind deed which he (Jethro) did for Moses, his descendants escaped Amalek's fate; as it is said: "So the Kenites departed from among the the Amalekites" (Ibid.).²⁷

The same passage from which such blood-thirsty fantasies proceeded in other passages, undergoes radical metamorphosis in a comment from the Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer:

Now it was the prayer of Samuel which broke the forces of Agag's subjects, so that they no longer threatened Israel, at Gilgal; as it is said: "(By prayer) Samuel hacked down (the army) of Agag before the Lord at Gilgal" (I Sam. 15:33).

And in expressing a diametrically opposed sentiment to what we have heretofore encountered, a passage makes the claim that the interdiction of abominating the Edomite applies equally well to Amalek:

It is written: "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut. 25:16). And another verse says: "Do not abominate the Edomite, for he is your brother" (Ibid. 23:8). Come and see that the Holy One's disposition is not like that of mortals. If a man's fellow does him wrong, the deed never moves from his heart. But the Holy One is not like that. Israel were enslaved in Egypt...and when they went forth from Egypt Amalek the wicked (from the seed of Esau) came and perpetrated many evils against Israel. Even so, the Holy One said: "Do not abominate the Edomite for he is your brother."²⁹

From our investigation it is thus apparent that

whereas Midat Ha-Din and Measure for Measure are the most frequent dispositions in regard to the treatment of Amalek, Midat Rahamim nevertheless comes into play significantly. These passages no doubt reflect in large measure the conflicting attitudes Jews of the Rabbinic period had toward their enemies, and remain germane statements to be considered to this very day.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Final End of Amalek

In our last chapter we analyzed two major tendencies in the aggadic literature regarding the manner in which Amalek is to be requited: the way of strict justice and the alternate course of mercy and love. It is, however, to be noted, that in no way is the mitswah to blot out Amalek abrogated. We have been speaking only about the manner in which the extermination takes place. Amalek is in any case to be the "first in line for retribution"¹ for "such is the rule obtaining throughout all generations, that the rod which strikes Israel in the end will itself be smitten."² Two questions therefore remain. Who is to accomplish the final blotting out of Amalek? And when is the termination of Amalek's line finally to come?

Addressing themselves to the first question - who is to be the executor of the blotting out - we see that a number of opinions may be found. A minority view is that Saul in fact accomplished the final extermination of the Amalekites:

R. Isaac said: We find that Joshua sought to blot out the remembrance of Amalek, as is said: "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Ex. 17: 13). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: As thou livest, some Amalekites are to remain. After thee, King Saul will rise out of Benjamin and pluck out by the root the last of Amalek's line; as it is said: "Out of Ephraim

came (Joshua), one who would have plucked them up, them of Amalek, by the roots; after thee, (O Joshua, Saul man of) Benjamin, with thy many soldiers (Judges 5:14).³

It is of note that the preceding opinion exists at all, for Saul lost his kingdom because he disobeyed the strict command to utterly exterminate the Amalekites. His great sin was that he preserved Agag alive. One would expect, therefore, to encounter the view that Samuel finished off the last remnant of Amalek. This, however, is not the case, and we have found only one small hint to such a position in an interpretation of the word "Zekher (remembrance)" according to which the word refers to Agag.⁴

A second opinion is that the final extermination of Amalek was accomplished in the time of Mordekhai and Esther:

And he said: The oath hath come forth from beneath the throne of the Great One, of all the world, the Lord; the first king who will sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the sons of Israel, Shaul, the son of Kish, will set the battle in array against the house of Amalek, and will slay them; and those of them that remain will Mordekhai and Esther destroy. The Lord hath said by His Word that the memory of Amalek shall perish to the age of ages.⁵

Similarly:

"And it was because of his hands, a bringing up" (Ex. 17:12)... Now when is his (Amalek's) sun to go down altogether, that is, the last of his line crushed and his seed rooted out of the world? When a "bringing up" will have taken place, that is, when Esther who was brought up to trust God - "And he brought up

(omen) Hadassah" (Esther 2:7) - will have come. Hence it is written: "And it was because of his hands, a bringing up until the going down of the sun." What is implied by the words "until the going down of the sun?" Not until Esther arrives in the world, she who will have been brought up to trust God, will Amalek's sun go down.⁶

If, however, the preceding opinion also be rejected, and it be argued that even with the execution of Haman and his sons we have not seen the end of Amalek's line, who then has the responsibility to make certain that the hated people ultimately will vanish? One opinion is that Israel alone must bear the obligation of rooting out Amalek:

"Remember what Amalek did unto thee...thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:17,19). When they asked: "Master of the universe, is it for us to blot out his name?" He replied: Yes. It is known and revealed to Me that when I surrender Amalek into the hand of Saul your king, he will let some of Amalek's seed remain alive, indeed will spare the king of Amalek: "But Saul and the people spared Agag" (I Sam. 15:19). Therefore I enjoin you, "thou shalt blot out."⁷

But the above text does not take into account the full implications of both Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25:

No sooner had the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Israel and said: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" (Deut. 25:17), than they replied: Master of the Universe, Thou, Thou remember, as is said: "Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom, the day of Jerusalem" (Ps. 137:7). The Holy One, blessed be He, told them: Do your part "thou shalt blot out the remembrance

of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19); and I shall do Mine, "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Ex. 17:14).⁸

The significance of the preceding resides in its expressing the mutuality of obligation for eliminating the dreaded enemy; God and Israel share equally the responsibility, and each relies on the other.

Yet another attitude distinct from those we have considered is that God Himself assumes full responsibility for making an end of the enemy:

It is written: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19), but it is also written: "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Ex. 17:14). How can both these verses stand (without contradicting one another)? It is to be resolved as follows: Before he (Amalek) stretched forth his hand against the throne, He commanded: "Thou shalt utterly blot out." After he had stretched forth his hand against the throne of the Holy One, blessed be He, He said: "I will utterly blot out." Now, is it really possible for flesh and blood to stretch forth his hand against the throne of the Holy One, blessed be He? He accomplished this by laying Jerusalem to the sword; as it is written: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the Lord" (Jer. 3:17). It says therefore: "I will utterly blot out."⁹

It would seem then, that in the opinion of some of the aggadists, Israel is relieved of the responsibility for the act of annihilation. This state of affairs would then be a manifestation of divine grace:

The Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say: Even though you angered Me so that the wicked one had to be sicked on you, nevertheless it is for Me to pluck up the root of Amalek's line. "It is (as decision made) by Me that Ephraim pluck them up - them of Amalek - by the roots" (Judges 5:14).¹⁰

According to another source God will proceed by stages in His annihilation of the enemy:

Said R. Hananiah: The Holy One, blessed be He, never requites a given nation until He has first punished its heavenly prince (counterpart)...¹¹

And God will not rest until the work of extermination has been completed:

So the Holy One, blessed be He, made war against Pharaoh, Amalek, Sisera, Sanechirib, Nebuchadnezzar - yet He was not pacified (i.e. did not feel satisfied) until He had wrought vengeance upon Edom (others: Amalek) by Himself.¹²

We understand therefore the content of the divine oath recorded in Exodus 17: "And he (Moses) said: 'The hand upon the throne of the Lord: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'";

R. Eleazar of Modi'im says: The Holy One, blessed be He, swore by the throne of His glory: I will not leave any offspring or progeny of Amalek under the entire heaven, so that people will not be able to say: This camel belongs to Amalek, this ewe lamb belongs to Amalek.¹³

Until now we have discussed the first question with which we commenced: Who is to terminate the line of Amalek from the world? We consider now our second query: When is this termination to take place? This question takes us into the realm of eschatology, so that we must consider areas heretofore not under our purview.

The theme of Amalek combines with Messianic notions, because the world cannot attain its messianic fulfillment until the last scion of Amalek be liquidated. The presence of Amalek, as it were, prevents aspects of Deity from being revealed:

Another comment: "The hand upon the throne of the Lord" (Ex. 17:16). R. Abba bar Kahana said: As long as the seed of Amalek endures it is as though - if one dare speak thus - God's face is hidden, but when Amalek's seed will be rooted out of the world, the Face - hidden, if one may venture to say such a thing - will be visible: "Yet shall not thy Teacher hide Himself any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teacher" (Is. 30:20).¹⁴

According to R. Eleazar we shall be rid of Amalek only when all idolatry ceases:

R. Eleazar says: When will the name of these people be blotted out? At the time when idolatry will be eradicated together with its worshippers, and God will be recognized throughout the world as the One, and His kingdom will be established for all eternity. For at that time, "shall the Lord go forth and fight," etc. (Zech. 14:3); "And the Lord shall be King," etc. (Ibid. vs.9). And it also says: "Thou wilt pursue them in anger and destroy them," etc. (Lam. 3:66).¹⁵

It is as though God's dominion were unable to shine forth as long as the enemy stalks the earth:

Another comment: "Because there is a hand against the throne (Kes) of the Lor' (Yah)" (Ex. 17:16). The text does not say "Lord" but "Lor'". R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama the son of R. Hanina: If one dare say such a thing, the name of God will not be complete and the throne of the Lord will not be whole as long as Amalek's seed is in the world; but when Amalek's seed will have been rooted out, the throne of the Lord will be whole and the name of God complete. David said: "The destructions of the enemy are come to a perpetual end, and their cities Thou didst uproot, their very memorial is perished" (Ps. 9:7). What does the text go on to say? "The Lord is enthroned; He hath prepared His throne for judgment" (Ps. 9:8).¹⁶

If, then, Amalek is not to be obliterated until the messianic time, what will be the sequence of events that will lead to his ultimate annihilation? According to the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Amalek is among the forces of Gog and Magog who wage the last battle against Israel before the millenium:

And he (Balaam) looked on the house of Amalek, and took up the parable of his prophecy, and said: The first of the nations who made war with the house of Israel were those of the house of Amalek; and they at last, in the days of the King Messiah, with all the children of the east (i.e. Gog and Magog), will make war against Israel; destruction in their end.¹⁷

So we see that Amalek may continue in his existence and

even win victories for a time, but "dominion is given into the hand of the wicked nation Edom only until the Messiah comes, at which time one "out of Jacob...shall have dominion." (Judges 5:14)¹⁸ The brief statement found in several of the sources that God plans to wipe out Amalek from both this world and the world to come¹⁹ assumes a new dimension in the light of this messianic reasoning, as does the following Targum fragment:

And he said, Because the Word of the Lord hath sworn by the throne of His glory, that He by His word will fight against those of the House of Amalek, and destroy them unto three generations; from the generation of the Messiah, and from the generation of the world to come.²⁰

The passage capsulizes the classical Jewish notion of the eschatological process, and places the perennial enemy Amalek into the machinations of that working out.

But perhaps the most messianic of all passages relating to Amalek which we have discovered is the simple utterance from B. Gittin 57b: "The descendants of Haman (who himself was descended from Agag, King of the Amalekites) studied Torah at B'ne B'rak."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

We have undertaken to analyze the image of Amalek in its full development as found in the early Rabbinic literature. Our motivation for doing so has been the conviction that the study may shed light onto one of the perennial problems of the Jew: how he is to relate to the enemy who comes to destroy him. Before we undertake to tie together the strands of our study to arrive at a more unified view of the image of Amalek together with the theological motifs which inform our view of him, it will serve us well to consider the words of Mordecai Eliav, the editor of an important collection of memoirs composed by believing Jews during the period of the Nazi Holocaust:

Meditation upon the Holocaust period shocks the soul and causes great confusion to him who would attempt such a study. The human intellect cannot grasp the full dimension of wanton atrocity nor the depth of horror, and a person is liable to attempt, as it were, rational explanation and interpretation of the data. Especially critical is the perplexity of believing Jews, those who observe the mitsvot, who are overwhelmed when they attempt to understand the ways of Providence - which allowed the evil ones to cut off from the earth the largest and finest portion of the European Jewries, including its learning and centers of Torah which had flourished for generation after generation...

But there is no doubt that a believing Jew cannot give up the general principle of Providence and the administration of the

universe by the attribute of righteousness and mercy...But in the end it is not in our power to grasp the ways of Providence in the universe, according to our concepts of righteousness and mercy...We must come to terms with the fact that the Holocaust is a terrible sealed riddle in regard to the Creator's conduct toward His people, and it is not within our power to solve it...¹

The above-stated problem has constituted the central concern which formed a latent background for our work. Let us now re-examine the central topics of our analysis, asking ourselves in the process whether these early Rabbinic writings on Amalek in any way address themselves to the critical theological problems of post-Holocaust Jewry.

At the outset we noted that the word "Amalek" has manifold designations. He is, first of all, the offspring of the wicked Esau, who forms the archetype for the perennial enemy. What holds true for Esau, the progenitor of the Edomites, holds equally true for Amalek. By inference, therefore, Amalek is murderous, incestuous, a marrier of idolatrous women, himself an idolator, and a heretic (inasmuch as he denies the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead).

Turning to passages concerned with Amalek in particular, we proceeded from his less grievous character blemishes to his criminal traits. We noted simultaneously that Amalek functions as 1) a specific human personality, 2) the nation Amalek, and 3) like Jacob-Israel, both personality and nation. As such, he is inhospitable, ungrateful, has

extraordinary enthusiasm for warfare, is an informer, is a robber or highwayman, is disingenuous and deceptive, is perverse (a homosexual), is quick like a locust, a blood-licker (like a dog), is like a fly with a passion for an open wound. Because Amalek is gifted with cunning and intelligence he is able to afflict all possible indignities upon the People Israel. Furthermore, he is a kidnapper, an exploiter of those observing mourning, and barbarously desecrated the sign of brit milah. Amalek damaged the reputation of the newly emancipated people and caused them great harm when he "cooled them before the nations of the world."

Some comparison between the metaphor "Amalek" and the Third Reich are here in order, if it is remembered that Amalek, unlike Nazi Germany, shared the lineage of the Patriarchs Abraham and Isaac with Israel. The various character traits assigned to Amalek are, by and large, applicable to the Nazi, and as such, Amalek would serve as an appropriate symbol for the German war machine. We have seen that Amalek functioned, at least in an early stage of Rabbinic literature as a metaphor for Rome, so that the transference of symbolic connotations has precedence.

In our analysis of the many Amalek passages, it has become clear that Amalek frequently is treated with reference to the sins of Israel. We noted that two major trends obtain in the Rabbinic material regarding the doctrine of

divine retribution. The more prevalent tendency is to see the matter in terms of Measure for Measure, though a second view exists, according to which suffering as well as death come without sin, that God suffers when punishment is inflicted upon Israel - that man cannot expect immediate reward and punishment.

According to the first view, Amalek acted as the "chastising strap." Here the good relationship between God and Israel is conditional. If Israel exhausts God's patience, the biting dog attacks. Either God removes His protection thus rendering Israel vulnerable to the enemy's attack, or God Himself brings on the enemy, Amalek here functioning as a manifestation of divine wrath.

Related to the Measure for Measure doctrine is a means-end tendency. Amalek punishes for the ultimate benefit of Israel. The enemy disciplined Israel to recognize the central role and binding force of the Torah. It would be Israel's ineluctable fate to perish at any time that the words of Torah would be neglected. The tribe of Dan thus suffers especially at Amalek's hands because they engaged in idolatrous practices and Israel as a whole rendered themselves vulnerable by such sins as laxity in Sabbath observance, social injustice, and Minut. The battle with Amalek is in fact one vast allegory depicting Israel's ongoing relationship with Torah.

In regard to the doctrine of Measure for Measure,

analogies between Amalek and the Nazi Holocaust must be approached with extreme care. We should consider these words of Mordecai Eliav:

...One of the radical opinions sees in the holocaust, punishment for a grievous sin on the part of the Jewish people, principally for the sins after the enlightenment and emancipation in Europe and assimilation into Gentile culture, this being the factor which caused reconciliation with Galut and the giving up of the hope of the return to Zion.

...But does anyone really have the strength to argue that the intentions of the Creator and the working of Providence in all its particulars are so clear to him, that he can "evaluate" all that has occurred by a reasoned appraisal from a religious point of view, or to render historical judgment upon what has happened?²

We are in agreement with Eliav that the Measure for Measure doctrine of divine retribution is inapplicable to the case of the holocaust, even as many of the sages found it wanting in regard to Amalek.

Thus we observed that a second, suggestive strand also appears from time to time, according to which the correspondence between sin and punishment becomes highly complex. God and Israel are actually co-sufferers. Though Amalek is, in any case, an instrument of chastisement, God nonetheless suffers with Israel when they receive the blow. Or God and Israel are actually co-victims of the enemy who functions, as it were, outside the providential realm. From this second matrix, it would seem to us, we may begin to reason

about what has happened to our people in the twentieth century; from it we may begin to work our way toward understanding.

Turning our attention to the treatment of the hated enemy, given the fact that Israel survives him, we examined two major attitudes working through the passages: Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim. The two attitudes manifest a range of judgment extending from the shockingly harsh to the remarkably lenient.

On the side of Midat Ha-Din it became clear that many of the aggadic passages attempt to justify the harsh judgment of Amalek put forth in the biblical material, especially in regard to Samuel's slaying of Agag. We found that the Measure for Measure theme dominated in this type of aggada. The contradiction between Amalek's being of one stock with Edom, whom it is forbidden to abominate, was resolved, through the example of the King of Arad, by Amalek's being identified with the Canaanites, a nation which is marked for destruction. Amalekite conversion to Judaism is considered an impossibility, thus distinguishing this nation from all others.

Other passages reverse the evaluation of the situation, and teach us of the ways of saintliness. It is argued that the utmost mercy was displayed toward the enemy before the decree was finally handed down to obliterate him. No mutilation of the vanquished Amalek took place; he was to be

treated in a humane manner. Some passages even deny that he turned the course of the battle against the Amalekite king through prayer. Furthermore, some of the aggadists held that the ban on abominating the Edomite does in fact apply equally to the Amalekite.

Here we are faced with a plethora of suggestive statements which can be of some value to us in our reasoning about the contemporary enemies of the Jewish people. Among our people we find sentiments covering the full range expressed in the Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim passages. It is our hope that the attitude of mercy will prevail.

During the course of our inquiry into who it was that would accomplish the final blotting out of Amalek and when the termination of Amalek's line was to come about, numerous opinions presented themselves. Though isolated strands put forth the opinion that the extermination of the dreaded enemy had already taken place in the days of Saul or during the period of Mordekhai and Esther, the more common opinion was that the final end of Amalek would only take place in the days of the Messiah. The whole question thus assumes an eschatological dimension. We noted a difference of opinion in the sources as to whether it was, in the last analysis, Israel alone, both God and Israel in a joint effort, or God alone who would accomplish this final act. No messianic fulfillment can occur until Amalek is obliterated, for Amalek will be among the forces of Gog and

Magog, who must be vanquished before the Messiah of the stock of David can appear.

Amalek remains to this day a halakhic concern to traditional Jews. In the Maimonidean formulation, three mitswot are derived from the Amalek passages found in Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25. The first is to accomplish the extermination of Amalek. Second, we are to remember the nefarious deeds of Amalek, in that he was the first of the hostile nations to attack Israel after they had left Egypt. The third is that we are forbidden to forget what Amalek did to us. The consequence of not remembering would be that Israel will be forced back into slavery. The act of remembering serves to keep Israel vigilant in the performance of mitswot. But we noted that many of the aggadot soften the elements of vengeance and hatred by asserting that the simple recital of and reflection upon Amalek's deed constitute fulfillment of the commandment.

When we turn our attention to the holocaust years, the difficulty of remembering confronts us. We know that to imitate the tactics of the destroyer is to honor him, yet remembrance is the sine qua non of our survival as a people. In front of Binyenei Ha-Uma, the national auditorium in Jerusalem, stands a massive pillar into whose granite capital is hewn the single word Zakhor, remember! The work that comprises this study has been of assistance to the author in his quest to understand that imperative.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

The Particular Identity of Amalek

A. Introduction

1. Yitzhak Heinemann, Darkhe Ha-Aggadah (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1954), pp. 29f.

2. b. Sanhedrin 99b.

B. Amalek as the Offspring of Esau

1. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 339); cf. Mekhilta Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 137).

2. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 4 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 116a). N.B. The author has here rendered the biblical verse in accordance with its Midrashic interpretation, which will be the case in all appropriate passages.

3. Pesikta Rabbati Zakhor, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 47b); cf. below I (D)(5) "Amalek as Rome".

4. Pesikta Rabbati, loc. cit.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 49b.

7. Ibid.

8. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:8 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130).

9. Devarim Rabbah Va-ethanan (ed. Wilna, parasha 2, sect. 11, p. 101b).

10. Targum Yerushalmi, Deut. 25:17 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 64).

11. Yalkut Shim'oni Hukkat, sect. 764 (ed. Jerusalem, pp. 523f.).

12. Ba-Midbar Rabbah Shelah, parasha 17 (ed. Wilna, p. 70a).

13. Mekhilta Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 147). Lauterbach notes that le-fi herev "is interpreted to mean 'By the mouth of God was the sword of this war decreed.'" (n. 10).

C. The Offspring of Rachel as the Appointed Vanquishers of Amalek

14. Max Seligsohn, art. "Rachel in Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. X, pp. 305ff.

15. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 21b).

16. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 341).

17. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 16 (ed. Buber, vol. II, p. 43).

18. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 54a).

19. The unusual phrase "mi-mah she-hishlim ba-navi" is here rendered, along with the midrashic interpretation of the biblical verse, according to: Pesikta Rabbati, trans. by William G. Braude (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 245f.

20. Targum Jonathan, Judges 5:14 (ed. Sperber, vol. II, p. 56).

21. See below: VII. "The Final End of Amalek".

22. Sifre, Num. 78 (ed. Friedmann, p. 20b).

23. Aggadat Esther, parashah 6 (ed. Buber, p. 65); Midrash Ha-Gadol Wa-yetse (ed. Margulies, p. 538).

24. See below: II "Amalek and the Book of Esther."

25. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 54b).

26. Pesikta Rabbati, trans. Braude, op. cit., vol I, p. 249, n. 24.

27. Ba-Midbar Rabbah, Ba-Midbar, parasha 1 (ed. Wilna, sect. 12, p. 4a).

28. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 54a).

29. Pesikta Rabbati, trans. Braude, op. cit., p. 247, n. 19.

30. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 54a).

31. Acc. to Braude, we should here read "And out of Jacob one brought low," though the root r.d.y. is here ordinarily understood to mean "to have dominion"; the midrashic comment requires the former understanding. See Pesikta Rabbati, trans. Braude, op. cit., p. 246, n. 14.

32. Braude, op. cit., p. 247, n. 16 reads: "Whenever the word Tyre (ts.w.r.) is spelled without a waw, simply ts.r., as here, it is taken to mean Rome, the archadversary. And so, in the final battle against Rome, one who springs out of lowly Jacob will lead..."; see below: I (D) (5) "Amalek as Rome."

33. Hebrew: le-hizdaweg 'im.

34. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 10 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 118a).

35. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 49b).

36. Ibid., piska 13, p. 56a. The verse is rendered according to Braude, op. cit., vol. I, p. 256; he renders mi-ni as "it is of me", thus shifting the emphasis onto God's role.

37. See below: VII. "The final end of Amalek."

D. The Particular Character of Amalek

38. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II., pp. 146f.).

39. Hebrew: 'Amalek ke-mish-ma'o.

40. Julius H. Greenstone, art. "Hospitality in Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. VI, pp. 480f.

41. S. Baer, 'Avodat Yisrael (Rödelheim, 1868), p. 39; the source of the passage is b. Shabbat 127a (boraita).

42. Mishnah Avot I, 5 (ed. Albeck, vol. VI, p. 354).

43. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 104a).

44. See below: III (B) "Amalek and the Torah."

45. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, loc. cit., see Luria's note #5.

46. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 137; cf. also Tanhuma Be-shallah, sect. 25 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 92a), and Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 340)).

47. For another interpretation see commentary 'Etz Yosef in Tanhuma, loc. cit.

48. See below: III (B) "Amalek and the Torah."

49. Mekhilta, Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 194).

50. Baer, op. cit., p. 93.

51. Mekhilta Be-shallah, ch. 2 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. I, p. 194).

52. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 12 (ed. Buber, pp. 40f.).

53. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, perek 22 (ed. Friedmann, p. 125).

54. Louis M. Epstein, Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1967), p. 136. Epstein here cites M. Sanh. 7, 4; Sanh. 54b; Yad I, B. 1, 4.

55. Ibid. The author here cites Sanh. 57b-58a; Yad, Melakhim 9, 14.

56. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 52a); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, pp. 238f.; cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3, p. 27a; also Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, p. 340).

57. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 12 (ed. Buber, vol. II, p. 40; see especially n. 74); cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 26b); and others.

58. P.R., ibid., P.R.K. ibid.; cf. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, p. 339).

59. M.H.G., ibid.; cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 26b); and others.

60. M.H.G., ibid.; and others. See below: I(C)(1)

"Amalek's Wily Tactics."

60a. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55b).

D. The Particular Character of Amalek

I. Amalek's Wily Tactics

61. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 136); cf. Midrash Ha-Gadol Beshallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 339) which version reads: "He went to gather thousands and ten thousands to assure punishment (for Israel); also Mekhilta Shirata (ed. Lauterbach, vol. III, p. 109).

62. H. M. Speaker, art. "Balaam in Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. II, p. 467. Speaker here cites Ba-Midbar Rabbah 20,1.

63. Eg. b. Berakhot 7a, Ta'anit 20a, Num. R. 20, 14.

64. Esther Rabbah, parashah 7, sect. 13 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 12b).

65. S. Mendelssohn, "Abduction," in J.E., vol. I, pp. 46f. Mendelssohn cites b. Sanh. 86a; cf. "Gonev Nefesh" in Entsiklopedia Talmudit, vol. V, p. ; and Avraham Arzi, art. "Geneva Ba-Mishpat Ha-'Ivri," in Ha-entsiklopedia Ha-'Ivrit, vol. X, pp. 980f.

66. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, pp. 135f).

67. Louis Ginzberg, art. "Cloud - Pillar of, in Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. IV, p. 123.

68. See below: III "Amalek as an Instrument of Divine Discipline."

69. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 13 (ed. Buber, vol. II, p. 41).

70. The names Reuben, Simeon, and Levi here allude to simple tribesmen among the Israelites. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55a) has a slightly different version reading: "He stood outside the clouds of glory and called each one by his name, saying: So-and-so son of So-and-so! Come out for I wish to trade with

you..."; cf. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 340); and others.

71. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55a).

72. See Kaufmann Kohler, art. "Aaron in the Apocryphal and Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. I, pp. 3f.

73. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55a, n. 33).

74. See below: VI "Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim."

75. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 136).

II. Amalek's Desecration of Milah

76. Baer, Avodat Yisrael, op. cit., p. 555.

77. Kaufmann Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: Ktav, 1968), p. . Kohler cites Y. Shabbat 19:6 and Y. Yebamot 71b; see also Kohler, art. "Circumcision in Apocryphal and Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. IV, pp. 93ff; Max Joseph, art. "Circumcision in Post-biblical and Rabbinic Literature," Entsiklopedia Talmudit, vol. IV, pp. 241ff.

78. Bereshit Rabbah, parashah 34, sect. 19 (ed. Wilna, vol. I, pp. 70b-71a).

79. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, perek 24 (ed. Friedmann, pp. 124f, p. 126).

80. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 51b); cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3, (ed. Buber, pp. 25a-b); and Bamidbar Rabbah Naso, parashah 13 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 218b).

81. Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954), esp. pp. 128ff.

82. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, pp. 27a-b); cf. Tanhuma Tetsa, sect. 14 (ed. Buber, vol. II, pp. 41f).

83. Jakob Levy, Wörterbuch über die Talmuden und Midraschim, vol. I, p. 544, here translates: "dein Israel wusste damals noch nicht, was das zemora (deren Cult) zu bedeuten hätte."

84. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Mandelbaum, vol. I, sect. 11, p. 49).

85. See Sefer Ha-Hinukh, Mitsvat Milah (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1954), p. 49, sect. 11.

86. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 7 (ed. Friedmann, p. 26b).

III. Amalek as Degradator of Israel's Stature Among the Nations

87. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 27a). In Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 52a) we find a slightly more developed version of the same parable. The phrase Hif-shire-kha ("made you luke warm") is employed in place of Hi-ki-ran ("cooled them off"), the term found in the quoted passage. cf. also Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 340).

88. Baer, 'Avodat Yisrael, op. cit., pp. 45f. (see notes there).

IV. Magical and Astrological Elements Surrounding the Character of Amalek

89. Joshua Trachtenberg, Jewish Magic and Superstition (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. vii-x.

90. Divre Ha-yamim shel Moshe Rabbenu, in Adolph Jellinek, Bet Ha-Midrash (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1967), vol. I, pt. II, p. 11.

91. Yalkut Reuveni Be-shallah (ed. Warsaw, p. 85).

92. Y. Rosh Ha-Shanah, perek 3, halakha 8; cf. Tanhuma Be-shallah, sect. 28 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 93a). In the latter passage there is a clear reference to astrology: "For they reckoned the hours by astrology."

93. Tanhuma Be-shallah, sect. 25 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 92a); cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 26b); also Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, p. 339f).

94. Eighteenth century commentary 'Etz Yosef, Tanhuma, loc. cit.

95. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:8 (ed. Ginsburger,

p. 130).

96. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, pp. 136f).

97. Tanhuma Tetsa, sect. 9 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 117b).

98. Max Seligsohn, art. "Shem Ha-Meforash", in J.E., vol. XI, pp. 262ff. The author cites Mishnah Sanh. 10:1.

99. Esther Rabbah, parashah 7, sect. 13 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 12b, column 2).

100. Solomon Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1909), p. 99.

101. Ibid., p. 100.

102. Wilhelm Bacher, Die Aggada der Tannaiten (Strassburg: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1903), vol. I, p. 146, n. 3. Our translation from the German. Cf. Kaufmann Kohler, art. "Amalek in Rabbinical Literature," in J.E., vol. I, p. 483.

103. Pesikta Rabbati, trans. by Wm. Braude, op. cit., p. 251, n. 31.

104. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55a). Trans. here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 251.

105. Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 250.

106. Ibid., n. 28.

107. See below: III(B) "Amalek and the Torah."

108. Hebrew: Ki yad 'al kes yah.

109. The actual text of Jer. 3:17 reads: Yik-re-u li-rushalayim Ki-se Adonai.

110. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 51a); cf. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, sect. 14, p. 445); and others.

111. S. Krauss, art. "Hadrian," in J.E., vol. VI, p. 135.

112. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Mandelbaum, vol. I, p. 44).

113. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 47b, n. 16).

114. Ibid.

115. Ba-Midbar Rabbah Naso, parashah 14, sect. 1 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 56b). Emphasis our's.

116. Hermann L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 214f.

E. Summary

117. Louis Ginzberg, On Jewish Law and Lore, "Jewish Folklore East and West" (New York: Atheneum, 1970). p.61.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

Amalek and the Book of Esther

1. The special Torah reading for Shabbat Zakhor is Deut. 25:17-19; the Haftarah is I Samuel 15:2-34 (among the Sephardim 15:1-34).

2. Megillah 3:4 (ed. Albeck).

3. Haman is thus named in Esther 3:1 and 10, 8:3 and 5, and 9:24. "Agag" as the king of the Amalekites is found in Num. 24:7, and I. Samuel 15.

4. Max Seligsohn, art. "Haman the Agagite," in J.E., vol. VI, p. 189.

5. See Rashi's comments b. Megillah 7a; cf. also Megillah 13a.

6. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. II, (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 149). Lauterbach's translation here given. See also loc. cit., n. 1.

7. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 49, (ed. Friedlander, p. 390). Friedlander remarks (loc. cit., n. 5) that "the point here is that Haman's pride was punished by the hand of a woman." The quoted text does not appear in the Warsaw edition. cf. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 49, (ed. Warsaw, pp. 117bf).

8. Cf. above: I(C) "The Offspring of Rachel as the Appointed Vanquishers of Amalek."

9. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 49 (ed. Warsaw, p. 117b). See Friedlander's notes in P.R.E., ch. 49, p. 389, n. 7.

10. Ibid.

11. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, ch. 20 (ed. Friedmann, p. 115); see also ch. 21, p. 117.

12. Heb. בשכרו של אגג, lit. as a reward for Agag. Friedmann notes: ולא איתפיש לי מהיכן גמירי. ואולי משום שיחסו הכתוב וקראו האגגי לומר שזכות אגג עמדה לו. Ibid., p. 115, n. 19.

13. See below: VI "Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim."

14. Esther Rabbah, ch. 7, paragraph 13 (ed. Wilna, p. 12b).

15. The Hebrew אבא אני seems to denote "my original ancestor."

16. Pesikta Rabbati, ch. 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 51b). Translation by Wm. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, pp. 236f. See Braude's notes 83ff.

17. Mekhilta, Tractate Amalek, ch. 2 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 157). Translation here is Lauterbach's.

18. Pesikta Rabbati, ch. 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 49a).

19. See esp. Esther Rabbah, parashah 4, paragraph 10 (ed. Wilna, p. 8b).

20. See below: VII "The Final End of Amalek."

21. See Max Seligsohn, art. "Mordecai (in Rabbinical Literature)," in J.E., vol. IX, pp. 7f.

22. See Ira Maurice Price, art. "Saul (in Rabbinical Literature)," in J.E., vol. XI, pp. 76ff.

23. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 49 (ed. Warsaw, p. 117b).

24. Pesikta Rabbati, ch. 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 54b). Translated here by Wm. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, pp. 249f.

25. Mekhilta, Tractate Amalek, ch. 2 (ed. Lauterbach ,

p. 159); see also Midrash Ha-Gadol, Exodus, Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, pp. 344f., paragraph 14).

26. Esther Rabbah, petikhta, section 7 (ed. Wilna, p. 2a).

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

Amalek as an Instrument for Divine Discipline

1. Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 60.

2. Ibid., pp. 61ff.

3. Yitzhak Heinemann, Darkhe Ha-Aggadah (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1954), p. 78.

4. Solomon Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 219.

5. Ibid., p. 231.

6. Ibid., p. 233.

7. Solomon Schechter, "The Doctrine of Divine Retribution" in Studies in Judaism: First series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), pp. 213-232. Abridged one volume edition here used (JPS, 1958), pp. 105-122.

8. Ibid., p. 106.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 117.

11. Ibid., p. 119.

12. Ibid.

A. Amalek as Chastening Strap

13. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 21b); see also Shemot Rabbah, Be-shallah, ch. 26 (ed.

Wilna, p. 48a); Rashi to Ex. 17:8, and others.

14. See above: I(D) "The Particular Character of Amalek."

15. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 104a).

16. Shemot Rabbah, parashat Be-shallah, parashah 26, section 2 (ed. Wilna, p. 48a).

17. Solomon Schechter, Aspects, op. cit., pp. 223ff.

18. Tanhuma, Hukkat (ed. Lewin-Epstein, paragraph 18, p. 81b); Tanhuma Ha-Kadum, Hukkat (ed. Buber, vol. II, paragraph 42, p. 125); and others.

19. Ba-Midbar Rabbah, Shelah lekha (ed. Wilna, parashah 17, paragraph 17, p. 70a).

20. Ibid., Hukkat, parashah 19, paragraph 20, p. 81a; and elsewhere.

21. Tanhuma Ha-Kadum, Me-tsora (ed. Buber, vol. II, paragraph 3, p. 44).

22. Sifre Ki Tetse, piska 296 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 314).

23. See Jacob Levy, Wörterbuch, vol. III, p. 243; Levy defines מנת מרדות as follows: "die Strafe der Züchtigung, Züchtigung durch Geißelung; oder auch wegen Uebertretung einer rabbinischen Satzung..."

B. Amalek and the Torah

24. Sifre Ki Tetse, piska 296 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 314).

25. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 135) Lauterbach's trans; also: Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 339) with a slightly varied rendering.

25^a Nahum H. Glatzer, The Dimensions of Job (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 16ff.

26. Midrash Ha-Gadol, Be-shallah (ed. Margulies,

vol. II, p. 340); see also: Tanhuma, Be-shallah, section 25 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 92); Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, piska 3 (ed. Buber, pp. 21a-b); Seder Eliahu Rabbah, perek 22 (ed. Friedmann, p. 126).

27. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, p. 144). Lauterbach's translation here given; cf. also Mishnah Rosh Ha-Shanah, perek 3, sect. 8 (ed. Albeck, p. 320).

28. Tanhuma, Be-shallah, sect. 27 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 92b).

29. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Deut. 25:18 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 343); cf. also ibid., Ex. 17:8; B. Sanhedrin 103b. Translation here rendered by J. W. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch (New York: Ktav, 1968), pp. 633f.

30. Kaufmann Kohler, art. "Dan (in Rabbinical and Hellenistic Literature)," in J.E. vol. IV, p. 423.

31. B. Shabbat, 118b.

32. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, piska 3 (ed. Mandelbaum, p. 42f).

33. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 25a).

34. Kaufmann Kohler, art. "Heresy and Heretics", in J.E., vol. VI, p. 353.

35. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55a). Rendered here by Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, vol. I, pp. 250. The introductory verse is here translated according to Margulies' suggestion; see n. 28.

36. Kohler, "Heresy," loc. cit., for more thorough treatment of the subject of minut see Travers Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903), and Travers Herford, "The Problem of the 'Minim'. Further Considered" in Kohut Memorial Volume (New York, 1935), pp. 359-369.

37. Schechter, "The D
C. God and Israel as Co-sufferers

37. Schechter, "The Doctrine of Divine Retribution," op. cit., pp. 117ff.

38. Tanhuma Be-shallah, sect. 27 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 92b); cf. B. Taanit 11^a, and Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. 1 (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 145).

39. Tanhuma Be-shallah, sect. 28 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 93a).

40. Tanhuma Ki Tetse, sect. 11. (ed. Buber, p. 20b).

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

The Victory over Amalek at Rephidim

1. Solomon Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), ch. XII "The Zachuth of the Fathers", pp. 170-198.

2. See above: I(B): "The Offspring of Rachel as the Appointed Vanquishers of Amalek."

3. Schechter, op. cit., pp. 173f; see also: Melvin R. Zager, Praise and Criticism of Moses in Tannaitic Literature (HUC-JIR Unpublished Rabbinic thesis, 1960).

4. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, p. 142); see also Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 341); and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:9 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130).

5. Pesikta Rabbati, Zakhor, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 49a); translation here rendered by Wm. Braude, vol I, pp. 226f; see notes 36-40.

6. Pesikta Rabbati, Zakhor, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 49a, n. 33).

A. Moses' Role in the Victory

7. Midrash Aggada Be-shallah, piska 17 (ed. Buber, p. 149); see also Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:15 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130).

8. See above: III(B) "Amalek and the Torah."

9. B. Berakhot, 54a.

10. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 143); see also Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 342); Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:11 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130); Mishnah Rosh Ha-Shanah 3:8.

11. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 50b).

12. See Melvin R. Zager, "Praise and Criticism of Moses in Tannaitic Literature" (Cincinnati: HUC-JIR unpublished Rabbinic thesis, 1960), esp. ch. III, pp. 58-79.

13. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 342).

14. See below: VII "The Final End of Amalek."

15. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:12 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130); translation here rendered by J. W. Etheridge, The Targums (New York: Ktav, 1968), vol. I, p. 503.

16. See above: I(C) "Offspring of Rachel as the Appointed Vanquishers of Amalek."

17. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, p. 141); see also Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, p. 341).

18. Shemot Rabbah Be-shallah, parashah 26, section 3 (ed. Wilna, p. 48a).

19. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 104b); also Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:9 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130), and Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah (ed. Margulies, p. 341).

20. Schechter, op. cit., p. 181.

21. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 50b-f); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 234; cf. also Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 105a).

22. See above: I(C) "The Offspring of Rachel" and II "Amalek and the Book of Esther."

23. See below: VII "The Final End of Amalek."

C. Jethro and Amalek

24. See Max Seligsohn, art. "Jethro (in Rabbinical Literature)," in J.E., vol. VII, pp. 173f.

25. Midrash Sh'muel, perek 12 (ed. Buber, p. 81).

26. Shemot Rabbah Yitro, parashah 27, section 6 (ed. Wilna, p. 49a); cf. b. Zevahim, 116a; and Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 21a).

27. Shemot Rabbah, ibid.

28. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 22a).

D. The Purpose of Victory over Amalek

29. Shemot Rabbah Be-shallah, parashah 20, sect. 18 (ed. Wilna, vol. I, p. 39b); translation based on Midrash Rabbah, Exodus, transl. S. M. Lehrman (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), vol. III, pp. 256f.

30. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, Ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 147); translation here rendered by Lauterbach.

In n. 10 Lauterbach remarks "The phrase le-fi harev is interpreted to mean 'By the mouth of God was the sword of this war decreed.'"

31. Ibid., ch. II, pp. 159ff. n. 10 reads: "Before Him is a euphemism for: 'for Him...'"

32. Tanhuma Be-shallah, sect. 28 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, p. 93a).

33. Mekhilta Ba-hodesh, ch. V (ed. Lauterbach, pp. 229f).

34. Midrash Aseret Ha-Diberot (ed. Jellenik, vol. I, pp. 66f).

35. Mekhilta, Masekhta de-Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 158).

36. Ibid.

37. Pesikta Rabbati, Zakhor, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann,

p. 50b); translation rendered by Wm. Braude, p. vol.
I, p. 232.

38. Schechter, op. cit., p. 180.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

The Act of Remembering Amalek

1. The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides, trans. Rabbi Dr. Charles B. Chavel (London & New York: The Soncino Press, 1967), vol. I, # 188, p. 202.
2. See below: VI "Midat Ha-Din and Midat-Rahamim" and VII "The Final End of Amalek."
3. The Commandments, op. cit., vol. I, # 189, p. 203.
4. Sefer Ha-Hinukh (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1954), p. 690.
5. The Commandments, op. cit., vol. II, # 59, p. 59.
6. Sifre on Deuteronomy Ki Tetse, sect. 296 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 314); cf. Yalkut Shim'oni Be-Hukkotai, paragraph 671 (ed. Jerusalem, vol. I, p. 424).
7. B. Sanhedrin 20b.
8. Pesikta Rabbati, Zakhor, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 47a); translation here rendered by Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, vol. I, p. 220.
9. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 105a-b).
10. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 7 (ed. Lewin-Epstein, pp. 116b-117a).
11. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 105a); cf. also Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 52a) and ibid, piska 13, p. 55b; Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, pp. 26b-27a), where the parable is formulated in terms of a father-son relationship.
12. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 53a);

translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p.242.

13. Pesikta de-Ray Kahana, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 24a).
14. Pesikta de-Ray Kahana, ibid.
15. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Deut. 25:19 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 344).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

Midat Ha-Din and Midat Rahamim

1. See Max Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1952), p. 217.

2. Ibid.

3. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55b); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p.254.

4. See above: Chapter III "Amalek as an Instrument of Divine Discipline."

6. Bereshit Rabbah Va-yera, parashah 53, sect. 5 (ed. Wilna, vol. I, p. 108b).

7. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, perek 22 (ed. Friedmann, p. 126).

8. Solomon Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 239.

9. Bereshit Rabbah Wa-yeshev, parashah 85, sect. 14 (ed. Wilna, vol. I, pp. 161b-162a); some versions include Midian as one of the groups devoted for extinction.

10. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 47b); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 221.

11. Braude, P.R., loc. cit., n. 14.

12. Ba-Midbar Rabbah Hukkat, parashah 19, sect. 20 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 81a); cf. Aggadat Esther, parashah 3 (ed. Buber, p. 29); Tanhuma Hukkat, sect. 42 (ed. Buber, vol. II, 62b-63a); Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Num.

21:1, 33:40 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 266 & 294).

13. Ba-Midbar Rabbah Hukat, parashah 19, sect. 20 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 81a).

14. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:13 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130); translation here rendered by Etheridge, vol. I, p. 503.

15. E.g. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 48 (ed. Warsaw, pp. 117a-b); see above: II "Amalek and the Book of Esther."

16. Kohelet Rabbah, parashah 7, sect. 16:1 (ed. Wilna, vol. II, p. 20b); translation here rendered by A. Cohen in Midrash Rabbah (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), vol. VIII, pt. II, p. 199; cf. B. Yoma 22b.

17. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, pp. 25b-26a).

18. See above: I(D II) "Amalek's Desecration of Brit Milah."

19. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, pp. 52a-b); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 239.

20. Kadushin, op. cit., p. 16.

21. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 10 (ed. Buber, vol. II, p. 39b).

22. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, pp. 55b-56a).

23. Emil G. Hirsch, art. "Proselyte," in J.E., vol. X, p. 224; Hirsch here cites Yad, Issure Biah, XII, 17-24.

24. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, pp. 160f); cf. Tanhuma Tetse, sect. 12 (ed. Buber, vol. II, pp. 43f); Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, pp. 28b-29a); Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 51a).

25. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 22b).

26. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. I (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 147); cf. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah, sect. 13 (ed.

Margulies, vol. II, p. 343).

27. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, perek 44 (ed. Warsaw, p. 106a).

28. Ibid., perek 49, p. 117b.

29. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, pp. 22a-b).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

The Final End of Amalek

1. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, perek 22 (ed. Friedmann, p. 126).

2. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 148); Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah, sect. 14 (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 343).

3. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 53a); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 242.

4. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II, (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, pp. 157f).

5. Targum Yerushalmi, Ex. 17:16 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 38); translation here rendered by Etheridge, The Targums, vol. I, p. 504.

6. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 50b); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, pp. 233f; cf. Midrash Ha-Gadol Be-shallah, sect. 14 (ed. Margulies, vol. II, p. 434).

7. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55b); translation rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 255.

8. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 53a); translation rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 245; cf. Shemot Rabbah Bo, parashah 15, sect. 17 (ed. Wilna, p. 27a, column 2).

9. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 28b).

10. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 55b); translation rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, pp. 253f.
11. Midrash Shmuel, perek 18 (ed. Buber, p. 48).
12. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, perek 19 (ed. Friedmann, p. 26).
13. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 160); cf. Midrash Tehillim, Psalm 9(10) (ed. Buber, p. 86).
14. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 51a); translation here rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 234; cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana Zakhor, piska 3 (ed. Buber, p. 29a).
15. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, pp. 158f).
16. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 12 (ed. Friedmann, p. 51a); transl. rendered by Braude, P.R., vol. I, p. 235 - N.B. notes 75-77; cf. Midrash Tehillim, Psalm 9(10) (ed. Buber, p. 86f); Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 160).
17. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Num. 24:20 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 276); transl. here based upon Etheridge, The Targums, vol. II, p. 430; see Kaufmann Kohler, art. "Eschatology" in J.E., vol. V, p. 212.
18. Pesikta Rabbati, piska 13 (ed. Friedmann, p. 54a).
19. E.g. Mekhilta Amalek, ch. II (ed. Lauterbach, vol. II, p. 157).
20. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Ex. 17:16 (ed. Ginsburger, p. 130); transl. here rendered by Etheridge, The Targums, vol. I, p. 130.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Ani Ma-amin, ed. Mordecai Eliav (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1969), pp. 10f. Our translation from the Hebrew,
2. Ibid.

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