

Stamp Out Doubt

When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget! — Deuteronomy 25:19

This week Jews around the world celebrate Purim, which recounts the events in the book of Esther. To prepare for that celebration, we read a special Torah portion that alludes to the roots of the battle between the Jewish people from which Esther descended and the nation of Amalek, from which Haman descended. The Torah reading is from Exodus 17:8-16.

When we're young or new in our relationship with God, we tend to think that faith is a straightforward concept — either you believe in God or you don't. But the reality is actually quite different. As we grow to realize, faith is not an issue that is black and white. We might go to church or synagogue and say that God is great and God is all-powerful, but then we go home and worry about how we are going to make it through the rest of the month.

We may speak with our friends about our faith in God, but then we stay up in bed late at night worrying about a million things that can go wrong with our lives. The truth is that many of us are sitting on the proverbial fence. We believe in God, and yet, at the same time, we experience moments of doubt and even disbelief.

This year, our regular *Torah* reading is accompanied by an additional *Torah* reading. This special reading, which everyone is required to hear, is intended to prepare us for the holiday of Purim that we celebrate today. The portion that we read is about the war with the nation of Amalek who attacked the people of Israel as they came out of Egypt.

Spiritually speaking, Amalek is the antithesis of Israel. Amalek, which has the same numerical value as the Hebrew word for "doubt," stands for the idea that everything in life is happenstance. Everything is random and meaningless. Amalek causes us to doubt that things will work out. Amalek attacks our faith and our certainty.

Israel stands for the exact opposite. Israel represents the idea that there is a God in the world, a God who is intimately involved in the running of the world down to the very last detail. Nothing is coincidence and everything has meaning. Israel stands for faith in God — that He is always running the show, that He has a plan, and that it is good.

The story of Purim, as told in the book of Esther, is the victory of faith over doubt. Haman, the protagonist in the story, is a descendant of Amalek, but he is defeated by Esther and Mordecai, descendants of Israel.

The custom when reading the verse which says, “. . . *you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven,*” is to stomp our feet as a physical sign that we are blotting out Amalek. I invite you to join Jews around the world today as we take a stand and stamp out doubt. Choose faith; choose belief in an almighty and all-loving God – and blot out doubt forever!