

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTH OF ADAR

Adar 5759 February 17, 1999 - March 17, 1999

There was a standup comedian in LA who used to say “Comedy is dead. What you’re laughing at is ridicule.” Ridicule is a lot easier than comedy — and it takes a lot less talent. Comedy takes an appreciation of life, a modicum of wit and a certain amount of love of one’s fellow man. Ridicule is easy and cheap. It’s a blunt instrument that clubs large unmoving targets.

The fact that comedy is dead and that ridicule sits grinning on its throne is symptomatic of the age. What is the message of ridicule? Life is absurd. Everything is ridiculous. Nothing is important. There was another standup comedian in LA who used to say that today’s best job is to be a psychiatrist and the second best job is probably to be a divorce lawyer. It’s not surprising when nothing is important.

The opposite of happiness is not unhappiness, it’s apathy. Happiness is the knowledge that things are important and that I have a connection to them. Apathy is the feeling that nothing matters. Why get out of bed? Apathy is the air that ridicule breathes.

When the Jewish People were leaving Egypt, there was a nation who came out and attacked them. That nation knew of all the miracles that G-d had done for the Jewish People in Egypt but it didn’t faze them. They still attacked. Why? Because their name is Amalek. Because they are the incarnation of all apathy in this world. They are the scoffer who says nothing is important. Nothing is real. There is no law. No judge. No judgment. Nothing. The world stood in awe as the sea divided for the Jewish People. But Amalek merely smirks. One good sneer can banish a million miracles.

THE KING OF COMEDY

ON THE ROAD

Amalek attacked the Jewish People when they were “on the road.” What is the significance of the road? A road always connects. No road leads nowhere. Every road connects here with there. Amalek waits in ambush beside the road from the head to the heart. Deep inside every Jew there is a primordial sense-memory of standing at Sinai. We are believers, children of believers. Why then, do so many of us feel so far from G-d? Enter the clown. Amalek stops that sense-memory on the highway from the head to the heart. His very name spells out his mission. The gematria (numerical equivalent) of *Amalek* is 240. The gematria of *safek* — doubt — is also 240. Amalek is the power of doubt in the world that tries to sever the Jewish heart from its Source.

But there’s another road on which Amalek awaits in ambush. The Jewish People are on a road from this world to the next. This world is no more than a narrow dark corridor which leads to a great palace of light. Amalek is that force in the world which tells us to stop. Just a second! Stay here! What’s the hurry? *Relax!* In Bilaam’s prophecy (*Bamidbar 24:20*), it says “*Reishis goyim Amalek — Amalek is the first among nations.*” If you take the first letters of these three words, *reish, gimmel, ayin*, it spells “*rega!* — Just a second!” Stand still!

Don’t move! When people get depressed and apathetic, their movements tend also to be lethargic. Amalek stands in one place. He never moves. He is waiting for us to pass. But he is always standing still, for he is the epitome of apathy, of hopelessness.



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THE KING OF COMEDY *continued*

HAMAN AND HITLER

Amalek is the arch-enemy of the Jewish People. He was incarnated as Haman who tried to obliterate the Jewish People. We rejoice in our victory over him at the festival of Purim on the 14th and 15th of this month.

However, Amalek makes frequent other guest appearances in his theater of the absurd. In every generation he arises to destroy us. He appeared recently as Adolf Hitler. Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*, "I am embarked on a struggle to the death with the Jews for the hearts and minds of men. The Jews have inflicted two wounds on mankind. Circumcision for the body, and conscience for the soul. I am come to free mankind from their bondage." Behind all conscience is the awareness that things are important. That life is important. Hitler saw man as nothing more than an animal. An intelligent speaking animal, but an animal none the less.

Wherever you find someone with a fanatical, implacable and illogical enmity to the Jewish People — you have found Amalek. His very existence is founded on his antipathy and hatred for the offspring of Jacob, the agents of that bondage called conscience. Amalek is called the first of the nations. He was the first of the nations to attack Israel. Everything that is first contains the blueprint of all that is to follow. The seed comes first. Contained in the seed is the tree. Amalek is the bitter seed of Jew hatred.

BLOODSUCKER

The Midrash says the name Amalek is formed of the two words *Am lak*, literally "people that lick." Says the Midrash, the name is apt, for they are "the nation who wants to lick the blood of Israel." (It's interesting that through the ages, Amalek always accuses the Jews of being bloodsuckers.)

Blood is the link between the body and the *nefesh* — the life force of the body. As the Torah tells us when it prohibits the

consumption of blood, "Because blood is the life force." Amalek wants to sever that connection between the body and the soul. Between this world and the next. Between the head and the heart. Amalek is the force in this world that lays in wait, ready to kidnap the Jew's innate knowledge of G-d on the way to its destination — to the place where it will be crystallized into conviction — the heart. Intellect devoid of emotional conviction leads to cynicism and hedonism. Amalek's two great protégés.

As E.M. Forster once put it, "Only connect the prose and the passion..." Only connect the head and the heart and Man will reach his true vocation, offering his mind on the altar of the heart to his Maker.

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THIS MONTH'S SIGN
DAGIM / PISCES

Some 2,355 years ago in Persia, when Haman plotted the genocide of the Jewish People, he consulted the stars to see which month would be the most propitious for his murderous plan.

He found that the month of Adar, whose sign is *Dagim* (Pisces), "The Fish," contained no special merit for the Jews. He surmised that, just like a fish, he could "swallow" his prey. The fact that death had "swallowed" Moses on the seventh day of Adar lent support to his hypothesis.

However, Haman had forgotten two small points: Moses was also *born* on the 7th Adar: and it's true that fish can

swallow up their prey — but they can also get swallowed up by bigger fish themselves.

Which is exactly what happened to Haman and his crew — all their plans were turned upside down, and Haman and his family were hung on the exact same gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai.

This total turnabout of events is symbolized by the two fish, swimming in opposite directions, which is the sign of *Dagim*.

OVENS
of the
SOUL

My mind lies clamped between
The grinning teeth of idiocy
Tearing down its last defenses.

on the beach a desert wind
is howling round the dunes
Not a footprint.
Not a sound.
just the smoke that rises
from the lonely ovens of the soul