

Ki Tetze September 2, 2017

זְכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלִיק בְּדַרְךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם... לֹא תִשְׁכַּח

Deuteronomy 25:17–19 *Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey after you left Egypt...do not forget!*



The portion, *Ki Tetze*, concludes with the commandment to remember for all time the wickedness of the Amalekite. The warning includes details that were not in the original account in Exodus, adding that the Amalek enemy took advantage of the famished and weary Israelite stragglers — killing the old, weak, and infirm. One might recognize these verses from the Sabbath preceding *Purim*, where they are added to the weekly reading to identify the evil Haman of the *Purim* story as a descendant of Amalek. On *Purim* as well, the Torah commands Jewish people to never forget that they narrowly missed annihilation.

It seems counter-intuitive that a nation that wishes to progress and move into a new era of hopeful construction would retain physical reminders of their near tragic destruction. And, yet, like the biblical command to “remember” the wicked enemy, Israelis memorialize these markers. Throughout the country, tangible signs remind them of the attacks and conflicts that the state builders endured to reestablish the country as the new modern Jewish homeland.

One cannot help but notice the army vehicles along the roadside on the route from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. There sit numerous abandoned military vehicles, remnants of over two hundred military convoys that brought supplies to Jerusalem and broke the Arab siege of that holy city during the 1948 War of Independence. Mickey Marcus, the American colonel from Brooklyn who oversaw the effort, died in the final days of the campaign and yet, amazingly, most of the convoy vehicles, military personnel, and volunteers made it to Jerusalem. These vehicles serve as constant visual reminders of the ingenuity and perseverance it took to rebuild this crucial part of the Land of Israel.

A similar monument is the *Andarta* or the “Monument to the Negev Brigade” that memorializes those who died defending Israel in 1948 in the Negev and Beersheba. This memorial is considered to have set the precedent for “land art” that openly tells a story about the area to passersby. Monument construction began in 1963 and took

five years to complete. *Andarta* is an enormous concrete structure punctured to resemble gunfire, covering ten thousand square meters. The names of some 324 fighters who perished are forever engraved on the its surface.

Modern Israel is built upon lands that hold extraordinary significance for the Jewish people. The preservation of those ancient sites remains valuable to the identity of Jews within and outside the country. The storied history of Modern Israel is crucial to the identity of world Jewry and individual Jews — even though that history contains periods of tragedy and upheaval. As the Torah commanded in ancient times, so, too, have modern Israelis memorialized the obstacles to statehood. Historic places, events, stories, and symbols contribute to our identities. They cultivate our mind and memories with an appreciation of generations that came before and gave of themselves in order for all of us continue on the journey of our people. Along with our language, literature, *Torah*, its teachings of past leaders they are the foundations of who we are.

Discussion Questions:

What are the positives and negatives to preserving visible memorials of tragic circumstances for passersby to see in their everyday travels and commutes, be they residents or visitors? Are sites like Yad Vashem, the Western Wall, Mt. Herzl, and Independence Hall in Tel Aviv necessary?

When Americans visit the Washington Monument, Vietnam Memorial, or Arlington Cemetery, what feelings and sentiments are revealed about commitment, pride, sacrifice, and community?

Additional Resources and Links:

Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.

Yael Zerubavel, [Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition](#), University of Chicago Press, 1995.

[ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCE Tanks and Armor since 1948](#)

[Yad Vashem](#)

YouTube of [Yom HaZikaron](#)

YouTube [Tour of Mt. Herzl](#)