

## PURIM AND THE NEW REFORM JUDAISM

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I really do not like what Purim has become, pagan mask parties, people getting drunk to no end and my ear drums exploding every time the evil Haman is mentioned during the reading of the Megilat Ester. So I, as do many others, try as hard as possible to stay focused. When someone greets me with a "Purim Sameach", I simply answer as follows: "Purim Sameach to you as well, and may God protect us from our enemies and may we and God together destroy all of our enemies, all of the modern day Amalek!".

Seems to me a reasonable enough response, but more and more the following refrain is thrown back: "First, we must destroy the Amalek within each and every one of us" (funny, I always thought we were the Children of Israel, the exact opposite of Amalek) and then comes the gematria game: "as you know, Amalek and doubt ('safek') are the same number in gematria". I just smile as I do after eating a full plate of cholent, knowing that this too will pass.

Yesterday I read how the venerable rabbi of Tekoa, Menachem Fruman, wrote that there is more than one way to skin a tiger, or an Amalekite, that is; one need not kill him, one need only to cause him to change his colors, give him some flowers, some chocolate, explain to him the evil of his ways and presto chango, we have destroyed his Amalekite tendencies and thus fulfilled the deeper Mitzvah within. After all, as it is shown in the Talmud, even some of the ancestry of the Amalekites ended up as Jews studying in the Beit Midrash.

Nice in theory, Menahem Fruman, but personally I do not plan to wait around until Ahmadinejad sees the light. I expect he will try to turn out the lights on us first. (Besides, oh spiritual Fruman the magic man, wouldn't the sainted Abraham Abulafia – yes, that's right, the one that tried to convert the Pope and almost got butchered in the process – tell you that the name Haman is contained in the name *Ahmadinejad* - go mediate on that for a few moments!)

At any rate, and to the point, well, you get the point. Purim is about being saved and about destroying the enemy. Very spiritual, but also very physical; just as are the commandments of the Torah. It is actually the Reform branch of Judaism that always tries to run away from the physical performance of the commandments by emphasizing the "deeper meaning", where still applicable, and thereby providing the perfect excuse for not taking the commandments literally. Further, as the first

Reformer Abraham Geiger stressed, the nationalistic elements of Judaism should be suppressed and give way to the universal tendencies of the tradition. This latter "theology" is what we see when we take the concept of Amalek and channel it into our own selves and further, try to stress the destruction of the Amalekite ideology over that of the Amalekite people.

This is what Orthodox Judaism today is becoming; a "kosher" version of Reform Judaism. Obviously, the search for spirituality in the performance of the physical is an entirely legitimate branch of traditional Jewish experience and thought – but when this tendency sublimates the commandment to the spiritual realm solely, well, let's just say that the Sabbatean Geiger is probably now smiling from his grave, thinking "Purim Sameach", no doubt. As each generation is confronted by its Hitlers, Chmelnikis, Ahmadinejads , Nassers or whomever, let's praise the Israel Defense Forces and pray that they and their soldiers are up to the task of confronting Amalek, the physical Amalek; unless, of course, Menachem Fruman achieves a breakthrough in the very near future. Which he won't, of course.