

In this Torah portion we learn about how to be a human being, how to be concerned about our neighbors, how to be helpful, how not to harm others even captives. We learn how we are to conduct ourselves as a compassionate human being, how we are to help the poor and the widow, etc. At the very end of this Torah portion we learn something that does not seem to fit in at all. We learn how we are to remember what Amalek did to us when we left Egypt, how he attacked the stragglers. Immediately afterwards we learn how we are to blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. This is obviously a contradiction. First we are told to remember Amalek and then to blot out the memory of Amalek, not Amalek, but the memory of Amalek from the world. What can this mean? Also, what is this whole story about Amalek? What did they do really so bad? They did not enslave us for 210 years as the Egyptians. They did not throw all our baby boys in the river. They did not act as other nations had. All they did was stage a raid against some stragglers of the Jewish people, people who the Rabbis explain were outside the clouds of glory. They were Jews who were backsliders yet Moshe told Joshua to go take an army and to protect them because every Jew is precious to us not just those who are frum or pious. All Amalek did was make one raid and there branded eternally as our enemy. What's going on here? It's true that all of us have an animal nature. Man is part animal. We have basic animal drives that we must satisfy. We must eat and drink and satisfy our urges, but we are not just animals. Science for many years set about to destroy the uniqueness of man, to tell everyone that we were just a little smarter ape. Now they are changing and even science affirms that man is unique and special. We all do things that are not necessary for our biological survival. It is not true that we have developed only those traits that will assure our biological survival. We spend enormous amounts of energy and time to develop skills and institutions which have nothing at all to do with our biological survival. For example, what does music have to do with biological survival? What do concertos,

symphonies, even rock music have to do with insuring our biological survival? We also by our very nature are very curious. We want to know everything about our universe and ourselves but how is knowing the names of faraway stars and faraway galaxies going to insure our biological survival? We also construct value systems and try to live by them. No animal does that. It's true that we have an animal nature but that's not all there is to us. We say that unlike other religions and philosophies that in order to reach the spiritual we must go through the physical. When we go to hear a violinist all we are interested in is the beautiful music. However, in order for that violinist to play that music he had to practice for hours and hours. In order to reach the spiritual he had to go through the physical. In order to reach the spiritual we have to work very very hard. No animal even works. This is why we remember Amalek. Amalek was the symbol of those people who believed in the survival of the fittest, that all that was important was biological survival. He was an Am Lo Kashas. He was interested only in eating and drinking. His philosophy was a lot like that of the Nazis who carried the idea of the survival of the fittest to its logical conclusion. Who was the survivor of the fittest? The killer, the warrior. The animal who survives the best is the animal who kills the best. We disagree with that. We say this is false. We are to remember Amalek and we are to wipe out Timche, the memory of Amalek. The word Timcha in Hebrew has other meanings besides to wipe out. It means to protest, to write a check, to touch, to dilute, to become an expert. You know how to wipe out the memory of Amalek? You wipe out the memory of Amalek by protesting against injustice, by writing checks to help the less fortunate, by touching others, and making lasting and loving relationships. You wipe out the memory of Amalek by diluting sorrow, by sharing experiences and by becoming an expert on things in the world, by study. There is no greater spiritual pleasure a person can receive than by learning. A Jew does not believe in

the survival of the fittest. A killer is not our hero. Our heroes are heroes of the spirit and it requires hard hard work in order to achieve things of the spirit. We must become sensitive to things around us. In this week's Torah portion we learn how we are not supposed to work with a ox and donkey together on the same yoke. The Rabbis explain that the ox and the donkey have different strengths and it will harm the animals if you work them together. Other Rabbis say that there is even a deeper reason. An ox chews its cud but a donkey does not. While an ox and a donkey are working together the donkey will look up and see the ox chewing. He will think that the ox is eating and he is not eating, and will suffer. We all wish each other Brocha and Hatzlocha. We know that Brocha means blessing. In order to bless we have to know how to thank and appreciate, etc. Many of us do not know that Hatzlocha also has another meaning. Tso'lah in Hebrew also means to ford a river, to cross a river. Amalek when he crossed the river swam across. When a Jew crosses a river he is supposed to build a bridge so others can cross, too. It's true we have an animal nature but we also have a spiritual nature. In order to be truly human we must achieve this spiritual nature. The Nazis are wrong. Amalek was wrong. We are not just animal beings. We are spiritual beings, too. ]The story about the four women who were talking and the first said, "Oy". The second said, "Oy vay". The third said, "Oy vay izmeer". The fourth one looked at the ladies and said, "Ladies, we promised we would not talk about our children". If we train our children to know that they are spiritual beings based on an animal nature and not just animals we will not have to worry about these types of "oy vays".

KI SAYTZE 1982  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion, Ki Saytze, we start off with the phrase "when you will go to war on your enemies and G-d will give him in your hand". Here "you will go out" is singular. In the Torah portion, Behaaloscho, we learn something different. There it says "when you will go out to war in your land on the enemy who is afflicting you and you shall blow on the trumpets and you should be saved from your enemies". Why in our Torah portion does it say "you will go out to war and G-d will give him in your hand" while in the other Torah portion it says "when you will go to war you first have to blow the trumpets and then you will be saved". Why in one case does G-d give your enemies immediately into your hands and in the other you first have to blow trumpets? The answer the Rabbis explain is that in our Torah portion He uses the singular "when you will go out". In the other Torah portion the "you" is plural. When the Jewish people are united then G-d will give the enemies in our hands, but when we are all divided it is a different story. We learn that Ahab, who was always victorious when he went into battle even though he worshipped idols because the people were in back of him. He was united with them. It was only when he turned the people against him that he ever lost. G-d says that as long as we are united, that one Jew does not turn against another and do hateful and spiteful things to each other, then He will give the enemies into our hands. However, if we are all divided one Jew against another then we have to blow the trumpets. It takes a great miracle to have us be victorious. We Jews should remember this. Many times we do to ourselves what our enemies cannot do to us. I just returned from Israel where the people are united basically in back of the government. The Rabbis compare the commandment of Zochor, of remembering the Sabbath to remembering Amalek. They say that Amalek ends in an empty table and the Sabbath ends in a table filled with food and wine. They also say that in the beginning of the Torah where we learn that the earth was empty and void that this refers to the deeds of evil people, and when G-d said, "Let there be light" this refers to righteous people. How do we know that G-d likes deeds of righteousness? Because it said, "And He saw that the light was good". This seems a ridiculous Medrash. Can anyone ever think that the deeds of the evil people would be considered good? What we are learning here is that we are

to judge the deeds by the results. The evil people's deeds lead to chaos. The righteous deeds to life. We must look and see what are the results of their deeds, not their talk. It is obvious what the deeds of the PLO were. I think none of us should be upset by the media's propaganda. The true facts will eventually come out and people will see what the true deeds were. It is like the children's story they say when they ask, what did the grape say when the elephant sat on him? Not much, but he gave a little whine. That is the same thing here. All the propaganda will fall away and we will see that it did not amount to anything.

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KI THETZE 1983  
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In the Torah portion Ki Thetze we find right in the opening verse what looks like a grammatical error. It says, "When you will go out to war against your enemies and the Lord, your G-d will give him in your hand." Enemies is plural. G-d is going to give him, singular, in your hand. In life we all face two challenges, the external challenge and the internal challenge. Each of us competes in the world with others. Each of us wants to make his mark in the world. Each of us wants to be a huge success. We compete with others for grades and we compete with others for our livelihood. The word "Oyaiv" in Hebrew means adversary as well as enemy. Each of us have competitors. It is true that there is a scrap dealers association, etc., but when all is said and done each member is a competitor although maybe a friendly competitor. Life is filled with challenges, but the challenge that is the most important is the inner challenge. G-d has assured us if we will do the right thing He will allow us to be successful. However, we must cope with the inner challenge. Pretty soon it will be Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur, the High Holiday season. On the High Holidays we ask for Chaim. Chaim is plural. Why should this be so? Again, to teach us that we each have an inner life. So many times it happens that people are outwardly successful but inwardly they are failures. Look at many of the movie stars and great financial wizards who have committed suicide. Elvis Presley had everything but he spent his days shooting out T.V. sets with a 45. In this Torah portion we also find how we are to blot out the memory of Amalek. Amalek is considered the arch enemy of the Jew. Why should this be so? After all, it does not seem to make sense that Amalek, who only staged one raid against the Jewish people, should be considered our enemy while Egypt, who enslaved us for 218 years, is not considered an enemy. Look at all the countless thousands of people the Egyptians killed, the babies they threw into the Nile, the families they broke up, the suffering they caused, yet we are taught not to hate the Egyptians but Amalek we are told to wipe out their memory. What is going on here? Amalek was a people who were devoted solely to success. They believed in the survival of the fittest. The weak were deserving of no quarter. They were a people with a Nazi-like philosophy. The Egyptians failed and they did evil, but they were not committed to evil wholly. Every nation occasionally does bad things. In America

we had our Wounded Knee and other atrocities yet the people in America down deep knew that was not right. The Amalekites, though, believed that the strong should survive and the weak should die. This is the reason why they are the general enemy of the Jew. We do not believe in the survival of the fittest. Man is not just an animal. A wounded animal is immediately pounced on by the other animals. Nature is very cruel. They have made studies of lions in Africa. They do not just kill for food. They also kill just for the fun of it. We spend an awful lot of our energy on things which just do not assure our physical survival. Look at all the time and effort we give to music. We are curious about all the heavens and the stars. Man also has an inner being which must be satisfied. Those who want to succeed at any price end up destroying their inner being. The word for "wipe out" in Hebrew has other meanings. We are to wipe out the memory of Amalek by protesting against injustice, writing out checks, diluting sorrow, touching others' lives, and becoming an expert. The word "Teemcha" has all those meanings besides wiping out. Many times teenagers have an idea that all that is important to do is to succeed. They are looking for mastery over others. In order to be a human being you have to know how to be defeated, how to fail, how to say, "I made a mistake." Too often people come up with smart answers which makes them come out looking like a rose although they smell like something else. They may have a powerful intellect but they are destroying their inner essence. The inner life demands that we be honest and admit when we are defeated. We learn from our mistakes and come back, but if all we are seeking is mastery and control over others then we will all end up destroying ourselves. The talents that G-d gave us He gave us to help others not to lord it over them. The story about a robin who picked up a piece of baloney early in the morning. He started to sing. Immediately a cat pounced on him. This just goes to prove that when you are full of baloney do not open your mouth.

KI SAITZAY 1989  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Ki Saitzay we learn that "fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin." In this statement we learn a basic concept in Jewish law, ~~and that is that of~~ individual responsibility, that everyone is punished for their own sins, not for the sins of the fathers. This is still a concept which is not fully recognized throughout the whole world, and we do know that there are many who <sup>have been</sup> ~~are~~ put to death just because they are the sons and daughters of a famous man and vice versa. This was outlawed in the court of Jewish jurisprudence from ~~the~~ <sup>its</sup> very inception. However, we find in the Ten Commandments where it says that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children for the second and this generation. How are we to understand, though, that this is not contradictory to what we just learned right here when it says in the Ten Commandments, in the second commandment, "You shall not bow down to idols and should not serve them, because I am the Lord your G-d, a jealous G-d, Who remembers the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations to those who hate Me". How can we reconcile what is said in the Ten Commandments to what is said here in the Torah portion Ki Saitzay?

The answer could be that here we are talking about criminal punishment, but if we look at life the way it really is we know that children suffer because of the misdeeds of their parents. We know that if a mother gets AIDS the children that she bears will also have AIDS. We know that if a father is a criminal and is sent to jail that the children will have a lot harder time in the world, that the sins of the father are inflicted upon the children but not in a criminal way, but that just their life, itself, will be more difficult, that each of us bears a responsibility to future generations to live in an upright fashion so that future generations will not suffer. It



does not mean that they are going to be criminally prosecuted, but it means that they will have a tough life if we do not wise up and conduct our own lives in a proper and decent way.

Also in this Torah portion we learn something very strange. We learn how it says that an Ammonite and a Moabite cannot enter into the congregation of the Lord. The Jewish people could take converts from all peoples, but they could not take converts from the Ammonites and Moabites. It seems strange that they could not take converts from these two peoples. The answer they gave is because "they did not meet us with bread and water when we came out of Egypt and that they hired against us Bilam Ben Ba'Or from Tzor to curse us". In other words, the two reasons that are given seem almost inconsequential. One is that they did not offer us hospitality, and secondly, they hired a soothsayer in order to destroy us. They hired a Madison Avenue PR firm to destroy our will to resist, etc., but why should this be considered such a terrible sin? After all, the Egyptians enslaved us for 210 years, the Malakites attacked us, other nations did terrible things to us, yet, they are all allowed into the congregation of G-d. In fact, today, of course, there are no such people as the Ammonites and Moabites so everybody is allowed to be a convert who wants to be a convert to Judaism. Why were these two peoples singled out for these particular peccadillos? They do not seem serious offenses. The rabbis say that these two reasons really go together.

It is true that they would not have been excluded from the Jewish people because they did not offer bread and water to the Jewish people when they were leaving Egypt because after all, they could claim that there were terrible conditions and the plagues made earning a living very difficult, and how could they share with the Jewish people if there was not enough for themselves?

That would have been a valid excuse, but they claimed they did not have money to give the Jewish people bread and water but they had enough money to hire a soothsayer to curse the Jewish people and try to destroy them that way. They had enough money for negative things. They had enough money to satisfy their urge to destroy a people, but to help a people they did not have enough money. That, of course, was their great sin.

You find many people today who do not have enough money to pay synagogue dues, but they lose \$50 or \$100 once a week at a poker game. They do not have enough money to send their children to a Hebrew school or day school and they beg for scholarships, but they have enough money to take a vacation to Europe and drive a fancy car. It depends what they want. They do not have enough money for positive things but they do have enough money for negative things. This, of course, is a terrible situation. These are people who rationalize away not only their future but the future of their children. They claim they do not have money for this or time for that, but they have time to go play golf and take vacations and spend hours gossiping with their neighbors, but they do not have any time to help others. The problem with Ammon and Moab is that they were selfish, and basic selfishness is what destroys a society. This is the major sin that is father visit upon their children is when they are selfish and do not prepare for the future. They do not take into consideration their childrens' needs. In fact, many times when a person is selfish it ultimately hurts themselves. We can see that plainly in the catastrophic medical bill which was passed by Congress last year. All of a sudden a few people are getting up and aided by the insurance company claiming it is way too expensive. Of course, the truth of the matter is that for most people it will hardly be any expense at all, but, yet, people, because they are selfish and do not want to help their neighbor, are screaming, although if they really analyze it they are going to wreck a very good deal

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for them, because, according to this new catastrophic medical insurance, their drug bills will be paid. So many times older people come to me who have drug bills of \$800 or \$1000 a month and their social security is only \$800 a month. You can figure out what straits they are in. This will help them and allow them to pay their drug bills, but instead, people are going to quibble because they have to pay \$10 or \$20 more a month, and, because of that, it is going to cost them thousands because now, of course, this new medical insurance after they reform it and revise it will not pay for medical bills, so the very act of being selfish causes their own destruction.

We all know that in a certain sense it is very important to have ambition and very important to want to get ahead and try to feather your own nest because in this way society progresses, but we have to make sure, too, that society is not taken advantage of, that we balance our need for self-advancement with the basic needs of the people around us. If we do not, then we are going to end up by destroying society. That is, of course, what happened in Argentina. Argentina at one time had the fifth largest economy in the world, and now it is suffering because people did not want to pay taxes and assume their civic responsibilities, and the country now is headed on a downward course. It is true that communism has failed because communism levels everyone and does not let people who have energy and ability and drive and know-how get ahead, and, of course, those people who are filled with know-how and ability and energy and ambition want to leave because they know they can do much better in the west. We have to make sure, too, that our economies do not collapse, and our economies, too, can collapse if those people who are not born with ambition and do not have the skills and the talent and the intelligence are not also taken care of. We should remember what happened in the 1920's in the United States where you had all sorts of enterprises

which were unregulated where the sharp mind and sharp business practices that made a lot of money for a few people but eventually it destroyed the whole economy. We have to remember that not everybody can be an entrepreneur. That, of course, is one of the basic problems we have here in this country today where the drug culture feeds on people who cannot seem to get ahead, who seem to be lost. We have to take care of them, too. If it takes more taxes, we should be willing to pay the taxes. If we do not pay the taxes we cannot solve the problem because you are going to have people on the street. That is the basic contradiction in the American psyche today. We want a lot of services and want all the problems taken care of but we do not want to pay for them. In fact, what we are going to do is visit the sins of the father on the children because pretty soon all these chickens come home to roost. Unless we are willing to put our energy and our money and our efforts into solving the problems now we are going to have a very, very difficult time. Selfishness eventually does not pay. Selfishness actually ends up destroying a people. That is what was the problem with Ammon and Moab. They were a selfish people and did not want to extend themselves to help anybody. They always had enough money to destroy people but not enough money to help people.

Then the rabbis ask another question. They say that, let's assume that Ammon and Moab were very much afraid of the Jewish people, and, therefore, they did not want to help them in any way and hired a soothsayer to destroy them, but why didn't they hire a soothsayer to bless them so that they would be better than the Jewish people, so they would be stronger than the Jewish people and would have nothing to fear from the Jewish people because they had enough self-confidence to attain great things, but they did not do that. They would rather cut everyone down. They did not want to make themselves better but cut everyone down to size. Unfortunately, in the world today there are a lot of people like that. There are people who when they see

other people get ahead want to cut them down. That is one of the great dangers of Gorbachev's perestroika program. Actually when the miners struck in Russia one of their demands was also to get rid of all free enterprise because they did not like that in their midst there were people who were making more money and getting ahead and that people were getting rewarded for all their effort. We know that among the Jewish people we have per capita more people who are filled with energy and enthusiasm. We can tell that throughout history that the Jewish people rise to the top of every society because we have ambition, but we have to be careful that we do not leave the other people too far behind because if we do they will turn against us and will afflict us and hurt us and harm us. This applies not only for Jews but for any other group. We saw that in all revolutions throughout the world. If we look at our own history we know that for 500 years we had it very good in Poland. From the time of the first crusade when they kicked us out of Germany where our life was intolerable from about the year 1100 until 1650 we have it marvelous in Poland until the Chamanitzky Rebellion. The Poles were jealous of Jewish success. The success was due to our hard work, but they were jealous of our success and, therefore, they turned against us and anti-Semitism grew and grew in Poland. So we have to be very careful, based on our own experience and also based on our own self-interest, that we do not leave the other groups too far behind, that we also take care of their needs, because, G-d forbid, there should be a recession in the United States because already 10% of the population owns 80% of the wealth. If 10% of the population owns 90% of the wealth we will be just like Mexico and if there is a recession, watch out, because America is a violent people. We have to remember that the sins of the fathers are visited upon their children, not in the criminal sense, but if we neglect problems that we have today because we do not want to pay the taxes and do not invest the energy and put in the effort, then these

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problems will fester and grow and eventually they will turn on us and take everything away from us, too. So selfishness does not pay but eventually is self-destructive.

I am reminded of the story of a maid who worked for a rich couple who had no children. After a year or so she became pregnant and went to the woman and was going to quit, but the woman said, "Listen, we have no children, we'll adopt your baby." And so she did. Three years later the maid got pregnant again. The woman was compassionate and said she would take care of that baby, too. A year later the maid came to the woman and gave her notice. The woman asked, "Why are you doing that?" The maid replied, "Well, when I agreed to work for you I did not agree to take care of a family with two children." Selfishness does not pay but eventually is self-destructive. Let us hope that we will all remember that so that our society will stay on an even keel and so that we will be able to live in peace and harmony with our neighbors and that the Mashiach will come.

KI TAETZAE 1994  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Ki Taetze we have more mitzvahs than in any other Torah portion. There are approximately 73 mitzvahs in this Torah portion. They all seem to be concerned with many different subjects. There does not seem to be an underlying theme which underscores all these different mitzvahs.

However, I think if we look carefully at the text we will see that there is an underlying theme which is that not everything seems to be the way that we think it should be at first sight, that many times things give the appearance to us which is deceptive, but if we look below the surface we will see that things are not the way we think they are.

This Torah portion starts out by telling us about the captive woman, how in those days and, of course, today is the same thing, is in the time of war rape is very prevalent. The Torah made a concession to human nature allowing soldiers to bring home captives to marry. They had to wait a month and then they could marry the woman. However, the Torah would not condone rape in any shape or form. Therefore, we start this Torah portion by learning about the captive, and it starts out by saying that the soldier, "you will desire her". In fact, the word Koshach has a very strong connotation. It is more akin to lust than just desire. It says that "if at the end of this month you do not really want her then you can unenslave her. You cannot harm her in any way but you must let her do what she wants to do." In other words, many times we think that we can trust our feelings. In fact, in America this is the only way that we can really tell whether or not we are doing the right thing. We are bombarded by the television and by novels and by the radio with the idea that you have to trust your feelings, that if something feels good it must be good, but we know that this is not so. Just because things feel good does not mean that they are good. There has to be a determination of the heart and the mind, not just of the heart alone. Here this fellow thought that he was filled with love for this woman and he desired her greatly, but at the end he found out that he really

did not want her. Many times we make a mistake because we think that we can trust our feelings, but feelings are a very bad guide to moral behavior. A person in the backseat of a car with a beautiful woman is a very poor judge of the ethical stance he should be taking in that particular moment.

I am only going to choose four examples of how things seem to be one way but they really are not. We must look below the surface of things or we can be fooled. The same thing is true of love. We think that love is something which requires us to give and give and give. We learn about the episode of the rebellious son, who becomes addicted to certain types of food and drink. In our day we are very much aware of addiction, how sometimes the best thing you can do for an addict is not to help him but to let him sink to the lowest level possible so that the pain of taking drugs is much greater than the pain of not taking drugs. In other words, what Rabbi Twersky said, who runs the Gateway Center and is considered a world expert on addiction, is that at his Gateway Center to cure addicts what he has to do is raise the threshold of pain so that they hit bottom sooner so they realize that taking drugs is much more painful than not taking drugs. If a parent is involved with a child who takes drugs he should not bail the child out. He should let him go to jail. If a child is involved with drugs you should not help him. You should not feel his habit. If a person runs out of money, then he runs out of money. You have to use tough love. In fact, the greatest love that you can do at this particular instance is to make sure that your child realizes that taking drugs is a terrible way of life and is only going to end in his destruction. You have to even risk the fact that he may destroy himself before he realizes the error of his ways. Most people will not but he might. We know that the law of the rebellious son was never enforced in the Torah where the parents actually turn the child over to the court and the child was killed, but we know that that could never be enforced because of all the legal procedures that had to be accomplished before a death sentence



could be carried out, but the Torah tells us that we have to study this because we have to understand that love sometimes requires a tough response and not an easy response, so things are not the way they appear on the surface.

Another illustration is when we learn about divorce. It says, "And you shall write for her a sefer Kreesus". A sefer means a scroll. It is like a sefer Torah. A sefer Kreesus we understand is a complete cutting off from the other, that there are no more bonds that tie the man to the woman or the woman to the man. Why does it use the word sefer? In fact, we know that when we write a get a get has to be written like a sefer Torah. It has to have lines on the page. It has to be longer than it is wide. We all know that it contains 12 lines, comparable to the 12 lines that separate the books in the Chumash, and we know that the word sefer is used here for a particular reason. Of course, many times we know that divorce is caused because the mind gets ahead of the heart, which is the exact opposite of what we learn about the captive woman. Many times a person who is a brilliant scholar feels that the whole world has to kowtow to him because he has learned so much Torah. When a person is a true Talmud Chochum it is not that he has knowledge but that the knowledge has permeated his character and made him not only knowledgeable but also humble. Some people when they are filled with knowledge, when they are filled with achievement think that the whole world has to bow down to them, that a relationship that they have must be a relationship in which they can dictate every detail, that a person must be at their beck and call and be willing to do everything at a moment's notice, and if not then they feel that that person has let them down. That is no type of relationship at all. When a person is a true scholar, when a person is a true Torah scholar, then that person knows that he is dependent upon others and that he has to consider their wishes and desires, too. Unfortunately, there are many people who have degrees in front of their names, who have books they have written, who have a reputation and, therefore, they do not have good relationships with anyone

especially their spouse because they are too arrogant. They are too high and mighty. That is why it is said that sometimes people who have excessive knowledge and excessive achievement make very poor spouses and this is the cause of many of the divorces. Not only does a true Torah scholar have knowledge but he also knows that he is dependent upon other people and needs other people and needs the love and care and concern of his spouse and his children and colleagues. He also knows that he can make a mistake. He is not intellectually arrogant and he is willing to admit that he can make a mistake. He also knows that he is not ethically perfect, that he has ethical flaws, too, and he is willing to confront these flaws. He also knows that he has to be generous with his time and his spirit and he also has to be a person who controls his emotion. He cannot blurt out in anger at a little tiny defect. Therefore, the word sefer is used here to teach us that sometimes a person who has knowledge can actually because of this knowledge can cause him to have very poor relationships. Knowledge must not be just in the mind but in the heart and suffused through the whole body. Therefore, things are not always the way they appear. Sometimes very knowledgeable people are not always easy to get along with, are not always the best spouses.

Finally we have the story of Amalek, how we are supposed to remember Amalek, but there is a contradiction here. It says, "Remember what Amalek did to you," but then later on it says, "You should blot out the memory of Amalek," so there seems to be a contradiction in the text, itself. If we look carefully we will notice that Amalek stood for something which is the antithesis of Judaism. He held that man was nothing more than an animal. It used to be that science believed that man was just a smart ape and that we were nothing more than a naked ape who had more brains than the other apes, but we are really nothing more than an animal. We all know according to the survival of the fittest that the animal that survives is the most efficient killer and that the person who is strong should take anything he wants and should have no compunctions about doing it. In the animal kingdom there

are no wounded animals. There are no sick animals because many of the other animals attack them and devour them. That many people held was true of human society, too. That was the Nazi philosophy and is the complete antithesis to Judaism. That is why we mention Amalek. After all, Amalek only made one raid against the Jewish people. The Egyptians had enslaved us for 210 years and other peoples did terrible things to us but we do not remember them the way we remember Amalek, so when we say here, "Remember Amalek," it means remember this evil philosophy of Amalek and you should wipe it out. How do you wipe out this evil philosophy? The word Mochor in Hebrew has other meanings. It means to protest injustice, to write a check, to touch people, to have warm relationships, to dilute the sorrow of other peoples and be there for them when they need you. It also means to be an expert, to use the knowledge that you have for the betterment of mankind. That is the way that you wipe out the memory of Amalek, by being a mentsch, by showing that Amalek's philosophy is wrong. Nowadays science says that man is not a super-ape. After all, many of the activities that we engage in have nothing at all to do with our biological survival. Music, art, literature, poetry have nothing at all to do with our survival. What is learning arcane history and trying to chart every last star in the universe have to do with our survival? Man is a very curious animal. True, he is an animal but he is more than an animal. He is a human being. He is a mentsch, and we have to live like we are a mentsch. The way that we brought out this memory of Amalek, which on the surface it is true we look like we are just another animal, but deeper down we are more than that. Deeper down we are human beings who rise toward the heaven, who have the capacity to be compassionate and kind and caring and creative. We are also not just an animal. We are created in the divine image. Therefore, if we look at this Torah portion very carefully we will see that things on the surface are not what they seem, that we cannot go by our feelings. Our feelings cannot determine what is good. We have to have, besides feelings, intellect and mind. Also love is not a simple concept. Sometimes love requires us to do what

seems at first glance to be terrible things, abandon children who are addicts.

The third thing that we also learn is that sometimes intellectual prowess and achievement can make you terrible as far as interpersonal relationships are concerned if it makes you arrogant and does not make you understanding of others and does not make you realize that you are dependent on others and does not give you a generous spirit and does not like to be self-critical, then you know that you cannot have any type of relationships.

Finally, we learn that man on the surface may look like an animal but we are a very poor animal for an animal. After all, we cannot eat food the way other animals can. We have to cook our food. We cannot eat anything basically raw. We have to wear clothes otherwise the elements will destroy us. We are not as strong as the other animals. We cannot swim like the other animals or fly like other animals, so man is much more than an animal. Yes, we have certain animal characteristics and on the surface it looks like we are an animal but we are much more than an animal.

Let us all realize that we must live up to our better nature, that the way that we disprove the Amalek theory that we are animals is by protesting injustice, by writing checks to help our fellow human beings, by diluting sorrow, by touching others in warm relationships, and by becoming expert in knowledge so that we can elevate our spirits.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a kosher butcher and a Chinese laundryman who had stores right next to one another. The kosher butcher's name was Sam Goldberg and the Chinaman's name was Sam Goldberg. People came up to the Chinaman and asked, "Why is your name Sam Goldberg?" He said, "Well, I'll tell you what happened. When we both came to immigration at the same time, Sam Goldberg, the butcher, who was right ahead of me. When the immigration officer looked at him he said, 'What is your name?' The butcher said, 'My name is Sam Goldberg.' Then when he came

to me the immigration asked me what my name was and I said, 'Same Ting' and that is how I got the name Sam Goldberg." Things are not always the same thing. We have to look beneath the surface and if we look beneath the surface of almost all these things that are mentioned in Ki Taetzae we can learn great lessons on how to live. Let us always remember that we cannot just trust our feelings and say that if it feels good it is good. Love is not a simple concept, and knowledge can sometimes make us arrogant. We are not animals. We are much more than animals. We are human beings. Let us live like human beings so that we will live in such a way that peace and harmony will reign in the world so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.

KI SAITZAY 1995  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

The Torah portion Ki Saitzay has more mitzvahs than any other Torah portion. It speaks about many things. It first talks about the captive women. We all know that war is a terrible thing and it is not only men who suffer casualties. It used to be common and it still is that in war the women were raped. Secular sociologists will tell you that it is probably a good thing that the women are raped because this means that there can be a reconciliation between the victors and the vanquished. After all, the victors now have children by the vanquished and there cannot be harmony between the two people, but the Torah takes a different view. After all, for the woman who is raped it is no great experience. We know that today at the Women's Conference in Beijing that Hilary Clinton has spoken against the way the women especially as a political instrument, especially as is associated during acts of war, etc. The Torah takes a view, too, that rape is something to be abhorred. Of course, it also knows that people under extreme situations may do extreme things, so it tries to mitigate the effects of war by saying that if a soldier desires a woman he should first bring her home to his family and should have her shave her head and her fingernails and mourn for her parents and then after a month he should marry her. She should be his wife, not just a victim of rape. Of course, only in the Torah do we find that Jewish women have to have their head shaved before they are married. The reason why this became a custom in certain isolated Jewish groups because of first night rights. The noblesse oblige, the lord of the manor had the right to sleep with all the brides on their wedding night before even the husband. This was something that was, of course, abhorred by Judaism so in order to make sure that this did not happen to Jewish women so, therefore, the Jewish women in that area would always shave their head before their wedding so that when the lord of the manor would look at them he would say to let them go home. Of course, once something is done for more than one generation it becomes a custom and certain Jewish groups have tried to maintain this custom but this is no Jewish law at all. We see that the purpose of this law was to make sure that the armies would not rape the women.

This Torah portion ends also by telling us about Amalek, how Amalek attacked those who were in the rear, who were tired and weary and he did not fear G-d. In between there are many, many mitzvahs. We learn about returning lost objects. We learn about the rebellious son. We learn about having honest weights. We learn many rules and regulations of Judaism. In fact, if you study the Talmud you will spend a lot of time learning the sentences in this particular Torah portion. We learn that children do not die for the sins of the fathers and fathers for the sins of the children.

There is an underlying theme in this Torah portion, even though it has so many different types of laws, and the underlying theme is really self-deception. The rabbis say that the worst characteristic of a human being is when he deceives himself. When a person deceives himself then he cannot correct his faults. Then he cannot improve himself. Then he cannot do Teshuva. The rabbis say that one of the reasons why Amalek attacked the Jewish people was because they deceived themselves. As the Kotzker Rebbe said when they are talking about that "in your pocket you should not have different size stones". Of course, in those days stones were used to balance a scale and if you use the wrong weight of a stone you will cheat your customer out of a lot of money. The Torah here, the Kotzker Rebbe is saying, is that you should judge yourself by an objective standard. Don't use subjective standards to judge your own actions. We all know cases where people have cheated others and one waits and it is a very great temptation. In fact, I know the case of a person who is long since dead who used to tell me that he had one lucrative contract and he used to always bid below his competition as much as almost a half, and I asked him how was he able to make money. He said, "Easy, I short them on the weights." It seemed to me it was a game between him and the purchasing agent that he would submit the lowest bid and then short them on the weights so that he company would still not lose anything more than they were giving to the other competitor and he, himself, would make some money. I do not know if it was 100% kosher arrangement,

and, in fact, I told him that this was against the laws of the Torah, and he told me, "Rabbi, you stick to Torah and I'll stick to business." In other words, many times people deceive themselves and they try to convince themselves that certain things are true and right when they are not true and right. They say, "My situation is different. I don't have to observe the laws exactly." Of course, we learn here that Amalek attacked the Jewish people, the rabbis say, because they had deceived themselves. They were tired. Vayaiv in Hebrew means after you suffered many blows and you are depressed, maybe from different types of failures, personal failures, maybe because of business failures, maybe because of the hard knocks of health problems and children problems, etc. Again, it means that you are weary. You have been successful but you are just tired of all this. You want to do something more challenging and better with your life. The Jewish people were just tired of all this, so, therefore, they let their guard down and then Amalek attacked them.

The rabbis say that this is really borne out in the very beginning of the Torah portion, too, when we speak about the captive women. It says, "And you shall see this beautiful captive woman and you shall desire her." The word Vashak has actually the connotation of lusting after her. Then after you have brought her home and she has shaved her head and mourned for her parents and then it says, "And if it would be that you do not want her..." but it does not say you do not want her. It says you did not want her. It uses the past tense, not the present tense, to tell the man that he had actually deceived himself. He had deceived himself because of this woman, not because of what this woman represented but because of his own internal feelings that he did not judge them correctly, that really at the time when he thought he wanted her he really did not want her then. It said he was just lonely and overcome with his own hormones, etc. In fact, I heard a very good definition of the difference between prostitution and true love. It says prostitution says any woman will do. True love says only this woman will do. Unfortunately, either because of probably the pain of battle or the loss of comrades and feeling lonely,



