

## Eulogy for the holy Jews Hallel and Yagel Yaniv Hy"d

**We did not return to our Land in order to dispossess Arabs but if they rise against us, we will fight them and win, all within the law.**

[Rabbi Eliezer Melamed](#) | Mar 5, 2023



Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

PR Photo

**These words of eulogy, for Hallel Menachem and Yagel Ya'akov, sons of the family of Rabbi Shalom and Esther Yaniv from Har Bracha, were spoken on Mount Herzl, Monday, Adar 6, 2023. Rabbi Melamed is the head of the yeshiva at Har Bracha and the rabbi of the town**

"Yesterday at noon, we were struck twice. The brothers, Hallel and Yagel, full of energy and vitality, were killed *al Kiddush Hashem* (martyred for the sanctification of God). Rabbi Shalom, their father, who for many years devoted himself lovingly to the education of our youth, became a bereaved father. Esti, who had already thought about how she would accompany her sons to their wedding canopy, became a bereaved mother.

Our Rabbis have taught us that every Jew who is killed simply for being a Jew is *kadosh* (holy), and is guaranteed to be a '*ben Olam ha-Ba*' (destined for the World to Come). In his death, just for being a Jew, has removed his personal clothes, and wrapped himself in the holiness of Israel.

If this is what is said about every Jew, surely it should be said about the Jews living on the front-line of settlement of Judea and Samaria, and definitely about Hallel, who recently finished his army stint as an IDF navy ship's deputy commander, and about Yagel, who was about to enlist in a combat unit.

In this present, transient world, their lives were cut short, but in the World of Truth, they ascended, and became sanctified in the holiness of *Clal Yisrael*, to the point where no living being can stand as tall in their surroundings.

And when Hallel and Yagel transcend the sanctity of *Clal Yisrael*, all the settlers, who travel on the same roads, become a little more holy along with them.

The destiny and calling of the Jewish people, from the days of our father Abraham until today, is to carry the banner of ethics and morality, and bring blessing to the world, and therefore, in every generation, the greatest evildoers fight us.

We did not return to our country to dispossess Arabs of their homes, but rather, to add goodness and blessing to the world. The Arabs could also benefit from this.

However, since they decided to rise up against us, we will fight them and win, and all lawfully, by means of the army, and the police. Anyone wishing to contribute further to Israel's security, should volunteer for a more significant service in the army, or the police.

Even if the war lasts years and generations, we will continue to stand guard for our people and our country. We will make the wilderness bloom, and stand strong against every enemy.

If we need to live, we will live; and if we need to die, we will die, and after us, our friends will continue to conquer the mountain, despite all obstacles and enemies.

Beloved settlers! Who can relate how great your small deeds are, how great your heroism is, when, even if you are afraid – you continue travelling day and night, to work and to study, to celebrations and funerals, and continue to settle our holy Land, and protect the People and the Land with your very bodies.

For two thousand years, Jews were killed in exile *al Kiddush Hashem*. They lived in humiliation, and died in agony. Religions and nations professed to replace us, claiming the "name of Israel was no longer", and its sons would never return to their land. However, our ancestors continued to adhere to the belief that a day would come when the words of the Torah would be fulfilled in Israel, and the People of Israel would return to their Land, to bring the word of God and His blessing to the entire world.

And we today who are no better than our forefathers, thanks to their self-sacrifice in exile, and thanks to the self-sacrifice of all the holy pioneers, merit having the words of the Torah fulfilled through us:

*"Then the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have mercy on you, and gather you again from all the nations where He scattered you... the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors"* (Deuteronomy 30:3).

And the words of the prophet:

*"Thus said the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the watercourses and the valleys, and to the desolate wastes and deserted cities which have become a prey and a laughingstock to the other nations round about... But you, O mountains of Israel, shall yield your produce and bear your fruit for My people Israel, for their return is near... I will settle a large population on you, the whole House of Israel; the towns shall be resettled, and the ruined sites rebuilt"* (Ezekiel 36:4).

In exile, we were not allowed to bury our dead with dignity, a large funeral could have provoked pogroms. Jews quietly buried their fellow holy Jews, secretly mourned their deaths, and in terrible agony, kept the embers from burning out. Today, we are privileged to bury our holy Jews in state status on Mount Herzl, with the participation of ministers and Knesset members.

How fortunate we are to have a country and an army, and with God's help, and the resourcefulness and bravery of our commanders and soldiers, we are able to stand against our enemies, and continue to build the Land, and make its wilderness flourish.

In this world, Hallel, Yagel and all the holy Jews buried in this mountain, appear to be dead, but in the World of Truth, they are very much alive. The young children, the boys and girls who play joyously all over the country – that comes from their strength. The weddings and births – come from their strength. The Torah and industry in the entire country – is from their strength. By dying for the sanctification of Hashem, they connected to the Source of Life, and added life to all of Israel.

*'O that the deliverance of Israel might come from Zion!  
When the LORD restores the fortunes of His people, Jacob will exult, Israel will rejoice.'*

Elan Ganeles *HY"D*

A day later, Elan Ganeles, a brilliant and talented, Jewish young man from the United States, was murdered. He came to Israel and volunteered for the army to serve his people, returned to study at Columbia University, one of the best in the world, and was killed while visiting Israel.

On his Twitter account, Elan posted one sentence, which explains in a simple and succinct way, why tensions in the Middle East will always continue: "On the one hand, there are people who want to kill the Jews; on the other hand, the Jews do not want to be killed – and neither side is willing to compromise."

The late Prime Minister Golda Meir said a similar thing: "If the Arabs lay down their weapons, there will be no more war. If Israel lays down its weapons, there will no longer be a State of Israel."

Annihilating Amalek

After all this, I will attempt to explain the mitzvah of *Zachor* – "Remember what Amalek did to you", which we fulfilled this past Shabbat.

Amalek is the bitterest enemy of Israel and of mankind, since it was a people who did not engage in agriculture and plowing, but instead, trained its young men to surprise attack villages and caravans, kill those who stood before them, loot their property, and sell the remaining men, women and children into slavery. It was difficult to fight them, because they had no permanent base, and they would suddenly appear from a great distance, and attack with great force. The damage

they caused was awful – vast pastures and agricultural land were abandoned in fear of their attacks.

As always, the greatest evildoers rise up especially against the People of Israel. And so, right after we left Egypt, even before we had a chance to coalesce and organize ourselves, Amalek came and attacked us, without any provocation or reason. And who did they attack? Slaves who were going free after an extended period of servitude. Instead of realizing the greatness of the miracle of the exodus from Egypt, or having mercy on the newly-released slaves, the Amalekites saw before them easy prey, and taking advantage of Israel's weakness, began attacking the stragglers in the rear, in order to capitalize from their sale as slaves, and plunder their possessions.

Even after Yehoshua, on behalf of Moshe Rabbeinu, fought and weakened them, it was clear this would not be the last battle; rather, every time Amalek would perceive signs of weakness, they would attack, kill, loot, and sit in wait for the next assault.

**The moral logic of the mitzvah is clear: just as Amalek did to all the cities they plundered, so should be done to them. Retributive justice is also essential in order to create a deterrent. For indeed, one who concedes to his enemies and fails to avenge them appropriately, encourages them to continue fighting. The great empires punished their foes severely, thus creating a deterrent that maintained their rule for hundreds of years.**

The Meaning for Today

According to the tradition of our rabbis, Amalek has been abolished from the world, and therefore, today there is no nation or individual to whom the law of Amalek applies. Nevertheless, we are still obligated to remember the mitzvah and not to forget it, because of the moral idea it entails.

**We especially need to remember this mitzvah, because Jews by nature, are merciful and benevolent. Numerous mitzvot in the Torah educate us to these values. By nature, we would be inclined to forgive Amalek. That is why the Torah commanded us to remember the actions of Amalek and to annihilate them, and as a result, remember that there is evil in the world, and when we have to fight, we must fight them without compromise until complete victory, as is customary in every generation. Only then can we rectify the world.**

## Amalekites Can Repent

Even though the Torah commands us to wipe out the descendants of Amalek, if one of them agrees to keep the seven Noahide laws, he no longer has the status of an Amalekite. Not only that, the Torah commands us to offer them peace before going to war with them, i.e., we offer them the opportunity to adopt the seven Noahide laws and agree to be subservient to the Jewish people. If they accept these conditions of peace, we do not wage war against them. If they refuse, however, we fight them to the end (Rambam Laws of Kings 6: 1-4; Kesef Mishneh, *ibid*).

Unlike the Nazi policy in which a person with even the slightest trace of Jewish origin was murdered, according to Jewish law Amalekites can save themselves by way of dismissing their heritage, and accepting the moral principles in the Seven Noahide laws. This right is reserved for all individuals, all families, and even all nations as a whole.

Accordingly, the ideal way to fulfill the mitzvah of wiping-out Amalek is for them to repent. Otherwise, there is an alternative way which is also *le'chatchila* (ideal) – to annihilate them in war.

In practice, the mitzvah has been fulfilled *bedi'avad* (in a less-than-ideal manner) – over the years, the descendants of Amalek were scattered and assimilated among the nations, their trace of origin was lost, and the judgement of Amalek was annulled without their having repented.

## Is it Permissible to Accept a Convert from Amalek?

The *poskim* (Jewish law arbiters) differed on the question: can an Amalekite convert to Judaism? According to the Rambam, an Amalekite may convert (*Hilchot Isurei Be'ah 12:17*). According to this opinion, the descendants of Haman converted, and "learned Torah in B'nei Brak."

On the other hand, some authorities say that it is forbidden to accept an Amalekite as a convert. This is the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer in the *Mekhilta* (end of Parshat 'BeShalach'), namely, that God swore on His throne that if an Amalekite came to convert, He would not accept him.

Regarding the Sages statement that the descendants of Haman learned Torah in B'nei Brak, according to this opinion, it occurred out of error, for the *Beit Din* was unaware that the person coming to convert was from the seed of Amalek, and thus accepted him, and after having already been accepted, they did not reject him (*Yeshuot Malko*). It is also possible that initially an Amalekite assimilated among

another nation, and after his judgement of being an Amalekite was annulled, he converted, and his descendants were those teachers of Torah in B'nei Brak (*Chida*). Or, they were descendants of an Amalekite from the sons of Haman who raped a Jewish woman, her son being Jewish, and he begot those Torah teachers from B'nei Brak (see, *Peninei Halakha: Z'manim 14:8, footnote 10*).

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/368269>