Genocide - Shemot 17:14-16

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְהֹוָ֜ה אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֗ה כְּתֹ֨ב זֹ֤את זִכָּרוֹן֙ בַּסֵּ֔פֶר וְשִׂ֖ים בְּאׇזְנֵ֣י יְהוֹשֻׁ֑עַ כִּֽי־מָחֹ֤ה אֶמְחֶה֙ אֶת־זֵ֣כֶר עֲמָלֵ֔ק מִתַּ֖חַת הַשָּׁמָֽיִם׃

וַיִּ֥בֶן מֹשֶׁ֖ה מִזְבֵּ֑חַ וַיִּקְרָ֥א שְׁמ֖וֹ יְהֹוָ֥ה ׀ נִסִּֽי׃

וַיֹּ֗אמֶר כִּֽי־יָד֙ עַל־כֵּ֣ס יָ֔הּ מִלְחָמָ֥ה לַיהֹוָ֖ה בַּֽעֲמָלֵ֑ק מִדֹּ֖ר דֹּֽר׃

The Lord said to Moses, Inscribe this [as] a memorial in the book, and recite it into Joshua's ears, that I will surely obliterate the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens.

Then Moses built an altar, and he named it The Lord is my miracle.

And he said, For there is a hand on the throne of the Eternal, [that there shall be] a war for the Lord against Amalek from generation to generation.

A discussion on **Genocide** based on **Shemot 17:14-16**

Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Sefer HaChinuch:
On Amalek: Mitzvah 603 – remember, Mitzvah 604 – wipe out, Mitzvah 605 – don't forget. We are commanded to remember what Amalek did and put into our hearts anyone who harms Israel; according to the damage he does we will do to him in order to obliterate his memory.

Rambam
The 188th mitzvah is to cut off the descendants of Amalek and differentiate them from other descendants of Esav. He claims that there is a Halachic war (Milchemet Mitzvah) to be waged against Amalek.

Rav Kook:
It is necessary to make ourselves familiar with morality, fear of God and faith in Torah. These are the fundamental basics. It should not be that God pushes away your natural sense of morality. A sign of the fear of God (Yirat Shamayim) is where it elevates our natural sense of morality. If fear of heaven inhibits you from being a better person, you are living a contradiction. It is a sign that you have misunderstood your fear of heaven.

Rambam Hilchot Melachim:
One cannot wage war before one offers peace, no matter the type of war. If the enemy lays down arms and accepts the 7 Noachide laws, then one must not kill them.
- One must ask if the enemy are still Amalek before killing them

Rav Yosef Caro:
Once Amalek accept the Noachide laws, they become like any other non-Jewish nation upholding good societal morals.
- The Reivit and other commentators are more lenient; even if the enemy are not keeping the Noachide laws, we are not obligated to kill them, as long as they are peaceful.

Shmuel Aleph:
And he said, "I have sinned. Now, honour me now in the presence of the elders of my people, and in the presence of Israel, and return with me, and I shall prostrate myself to the Lord your God. "And Samuel returned after Saul, and Saul prostrated himself to the Lord. And Samuel said, "Bring Agag, the king of Amalek, near to me." And Agag went to him delicately. And Agag said, "Surely, the bitterness of death has turned."
- Torah declared a holy war on Amalek in order for the Jews to remain servants to God rather than man. Amalek tried to sell us back into slavery, and so this is why we have a holy war against them.

Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:
- Do you agree with the Rav Yosef Caro whereby if Amalek have accepted the Noachide laws they are no longer our enemy? How can we override a mitzvah found in the Torah?
- If we are trying to obliterate the memory of Amalek then why is Parshat Zachor dedicated to remembering Amalek every year?
- Do Rav Kook's statements fully nullify the concept of genocide in Judaism?

Some General Questions to ask Chanichim:
- How do we define who Amalek is? Can you think of any characters in Jewish history who are alleged to be a descendent of Amalek?
- What makes a person or nation evil? Can a person be inherently evil?
- Could Rav Yosef Caro's ideas on how Amalek can do Teshuva have any implication for our own Teshuva?
- Is genocide an inherently bad thing if the Torah permits it in some circumstances? How can we reconcile our societal ideas with Torah and Mitzvot?
- Should we trust Rabbinic authority claiming that we can override Mitzvot stated in the Torah?

Some personal Questions to ask Chanichim:
- Do you think that it is justified that an entire nation people should be wiped off the earth by virtue of their birth?
- Do you think remembering Amalek is still relevant to us in this day and age, considering we do not know who Amalek are?
- Do you know of any genocides continuing on today? Do we do enough to ensure that genocide and ethnic cleansing do not happen?
- Does good and bad vary depending on the society/religion that you come from? Should it?

Lord Sacks on Genocide:
Apart from attempted genocide, the Holocaust and Rwanda had two things in common. First, they were preceded by deliberate dehumanisation: the Jews were deemed "vermin" or "lice"; the Tutsis were Inyenzi, "cockroaches". In this way mass murder could be justified as a kind of sterilisation, a necessary, if painful, operation to restore a nation to its health. Secondly, both tragedies were known in advance. The international representatives who gathered at Evian, France, in 1938 knew that a terrible fate was about to overtake the Jews of Europe. Yet one after another declared that they had no room for refugees. Many, instead of opening the doors of immigration, closed them even more tightly. Likewise in Rwanda, in 1990 the main Hutu newspaper had issued its own equivalent of the Nuremberg laws. By 1992, Hutu militia had already distributed 581,000 machetes, one for every third Hutu male. In 1993, an international commission gave warning of a possible genocide. Similarly, in January 1994 the head of the United Nations peacekeeping force passed on a warning from an anonymous Hutu informant that a mass extermination was being planned. Both times humanity hid its face. People often ask: where was God in the Holocaust? It is the wrong question. The real question is: where was man in the Holocaust?

Youtube: Hotel Rwanda (opening scene) until 00:57

Youtube: How could the Rwandan Genocide happen? BBC Africa

Youtube: The "ethnic cleansing" of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims explained

Youtube: What is happening to the Uighurs? Exiled Uighurs push for 'genocide' investigation - BBC Newsnight. (For older chanichim)