

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 198

Yitro | Adding to Shabbat - Each at Their Level



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת יתרו | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Yitro

From the Diary of a Mashgiach

"Dear diary, I feel the need to share with you something," Shimon opened his daily entry.

"It all began a few days ago. I participated in a conference that was held for Mashgichim (kashrut supervisors), in which several rabbis well-acquainted with the food production industry and the world of kashrut, delivered talks and insights.

During a break between the lectures, a few mashgichim sat together and exchanged various experiences."

"There is nothing to say," Shimon continued to write. "There was so much to hear from my fellow coworkers; the stories were interesting and fascinating, and some of them were even hair-raising.

Yet despite all this, the story that affected me the most was the story told by the mashgiach who

returned recently from Senegal, and I quote his tale:

I was sent to the country of Senegal in Africa, which is very prosperous in the fishing industry, to supervise the production of canned tuna fish of the albacore variety for a large French company.

During that visit alone, the company produced more than a million cans of albacore tuna.

After I finished my supervision, they offered me a tour of the Niokolo-Koba National Park, which is located not far from the factory.

During the tour, which was conducted from inside jeeps, we chanced from afar upon a group of four lions who stealthily crept in the dense grass to their prey.

They examined with yellow, glowing eyes the beasts in front of them who calmly grazed on the grass.

Parshat Yitro - From the Diary of a Mashgiach

They advanced slowly with catlike steps, and eventually decided to focus their hunt on a giant eland,¹ and broke into a swift run.

They surrounded their prey from all sides and leaped upon it in attack. The eland fought back, and the lions got battered by its horns and were trampled by its hooves.

It fell at first and then rose again, and it was only after five minutes of struggle that they managed to overcome it; I can tell you, that eland did not make it easy for them at all.'

The mashgiach continued, 'witnessing this dramatic scene influenced me greatly. First of all, it shattered the common notion that we have all heard in our childhood – that the lion is king of the jungle, and is so strong that it can hunt any animal it desires.

However, the main insight I gained from this sight was spiritual:

Upon seeing this sequence of events, I recalled a verse from

the Book of Tehillim (Psalms): "He lies in ambush secretly like a lion in its den. He lies in ambush to seize the poor. He seizes the poor when he draws him into his net" (Tehillim 10:9).

King David likened the evil inclination to a lion that hides among the dense grass, eyeing its next meal.

The evil inclination knows that its strength is limited and that it cannot necessarily topple man with a single "leap." Instead, it causes him to stumble in sin, and when the person rises and shakes himself off, it then leaps upon him once again. Ultimately, it may triumph and knock him into despair. It then sits comfortably to savor its meal.

I internalized this idea, and have since, not found peace or calm: If the evil inclination is likened to a sly, untiring, and persistent lion, how can one possibly contend with it?²

Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. The giant eland is the largest species of antelope that can be found in the world.

2. Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, of blessed memory, had a special sensitivity for

Parshat Yitro - From the Diary of a Mashgiach

By merely thinking about the intensity of the struggle that every Jew faces constantly, I

was seized by despair,' the mashgiach from Senegal finished his story."

~Wellsprings of Wisdom~

honoring Torah scholars; not only famous Torah scholars, but even any young students.

When a young Torah scholar would come before him, he would rise slightly in respect, and when that person would protest, claiming that he was not a great scholar, the rabbi would answer him: "How could I have known? In a case of doubt with regard to the honor of a Torah scholar, one must be stringent."

Once, he showed respect before one of his young acquaintances, who protested: "Rabbi, you are causing me distress. Who am I that you should trouble yourself to stand before me?"

Rabbi Abba Shaul replied: "Regarding 'the honor of the Torah,' you do not have the authority to rule who deserves honor and who does not." His close disciple, Rabbi Meir Cohen, related: "Once, after I was called up to the Torah reading at 'Ohel Rachel,' the rabbi made a blessing for me with honorary titles .

I muttered aloud, 'What am I, a great rabbi?'

After the reading, the rabbi whispered to me: 'Do you think only someone serving in a rabbinic position is called "Rabbi" ?

For me, every young scholar in a kollel is deserving of being called a "Rabbi".'

Once, he heard someone belittle the honor of a young scholar.

The rabbi rebuked him: "How can one speak against a young scholar? After all, he engages in Torah despite financial hardship. Who can come close to his level and stand in his proximity?" ('Rabbeinu Ha'or LeTzion' (Part 2, p. 505))

If such caution is required regarding a young scholar, how much more caution needs to be taken regarding a group of young scholars or an established community with a rabbi at their head.

There is much to expand upon in this matter, but we wish to focus on the topic of "kashrut certifications."

For some reason, some people think that in order to be considered a pious Jew who eats kosher at the highest level, they must refrain from eating a certain number of kosher certifications that aren't good enough for them.

Then, having decided, for some reason, not to eat them, they open up a war against them, and at every opportunity, belittle them.

This is wrong, we know that in order to issue a halachic ruling, one must hear both sides. Therefore, anyone who belittles before carefully hearing both sides is committing an offense.

Despair is not an Option

Shimon continued to jot down his thoughts, "I was left deep in thought after this conversation during the break in the Mashgichim conference: How could I encourage my fellow Mashgiach from Senegal? How can I explain to him that this very struggle elevates the Jew to divine heights. That even if one sometimes falls and stumbles along the way, one must never despair, but instead persist and continue to fight.

How would I demonstrate to him that only through struggles and challenges does the soul ascend and gain strength, and that thereby a person becomes a worthy vessel for the resting of the Shechinah, the divine presence?

I recalled the words of Shlomo HaMelech, who wrote: "G-d has made one thing opposite the other" (Kohelet 7:14).³

Good and evil stand in constant battle, and "the wicked encloses upon the righteous" (Chavakuk 1:4).

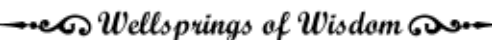
Evil surrounds the forces of good, and the good is then aroused to strengthen itself against evil. This is the eternal struggle between the evil and the good inclination.

In war, sometimes one side prevails, and sometimes the other.

If evil prevails over good, Heaven forbid, a person should not lose heart. While the evil inclination humiliates and degrades the sinner who has transgressed, he must know that there is a straightforward solution: repentance.

One of the evil inclination's sly methods is to confuse a person and humiliate him so that he will not repent.

However, a person must instead, strengthen themselves against the



3. See Sefer HaMa'amarim (5701-5705, p. 80) by the Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch, of saintly memory.

Parshat Yitro - Despair is not an Option

confusion of the evil inclination and commit to teshuvah (repentance) for all that he has sinned.”

Shimon finished writing the entry and closed his diary, but he was still unsatisfied and sought more depth and clarity on the subject.

Let us delve deeper and learn more about this topic:

Of the three Patriarchs of the Jewish people: Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, the choicest of the three, our sages reveal, is Yaakov Avinu.

Surprisingly, one of the reasons for this is that he struggled the most. Indeed, he struggled against the evil inclination in all of its manifestations.

As the verse states: "As a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, he comes home and leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him" (Amos 5:19).

In Yalkut Shimoni (Bereishit, Remez 134) this verse is

interpreted to describe three of Yaakov's struggles with the evil inclination: "Bear" – refers to Esav; "Lion" – is Lavan; "Snake" – is Shechem, son of Chamor.

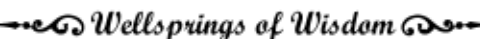
In Yaakov's first 63 years of life, he had to contend with Esav's wickedness and impurity.

Esav, the ancestor of the wicked kingdom of Edom, was steeped in immorality and tried with all of his might to cause Yaakov to stumble.

Ultimately, Yaakov succeeded in escaping Esav and reached Lavan, where it became clear to him that he had fallen from the frying pan into the fire. From the struggle against Esav's wickedness, he now fell into the struggle against Lavan's lies and dishonesty.

Lavan was a person of very great spiritual stature,⁴ and several of his practices teach us practical law for all generations.

Lavan's belief in G-d is evident throughout the stories of the Torah, and although he possessed



4. 'Mishpetei HaTorah' (Parshat Vayetze, p. 87).

Parshat Yitro - Greatness by Virtue of Challenges

terafim (idols) in which he believed, nevertheless G-d's Name was frequently upon his lips: "Come, blessed of G-d" (Bereishit 24:31); "From G-d has the matter come forth" (ibid. verse 50); "I have divined, and G-d has blessed me because of you" (ibid. 30:27).

However, despite all his virtues, he remained very distant from holiness, and his name remains etched forever as – Lavan the deceiver.

With Lavan, his many falsehoods cloaked themselves in an undeserving mantle. Lavan was a swindler in essence but presented himself to be a pure, smooth, and innocent person.

One who deceives others might not view the deception itself as a principle, but as a means

to an end. Deceit often serves to trick and mislead people, to hide and cover up the inner workings of one's evil heart.

Lavan, however, turned deceit into a principle. He refined it into a fundamental way of life. He saw lying to be a proper path, and Yaakov's true path to be a false path of life.

Lavan's approach was destructive and dangerous, erasing the boundaries between truth and falsehood.

After twenty years, Yaakov finally succeeded in fleeing away from him, and then he encountered the impurity of the snake – Shechem the son of Chamor, who attempted to inject venom into Yaakov's family.

Greatness by Virtue of Challenges

Several decades ago, a young man wandered around 'Rabbi Chaim Berlin Yeshiva' in Brooklyn with a broken spirit and a crushed mood. "I rise spiritually, only to fall. I start with great strides and then stop. I advance forward

but then retreat. What will become of me? What will come of me?"

Tears of self-pity filled his heart, and he took a pen and wrote an emotional letter to the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner.

Parshat Yitro - Greatness by Virtue of Challenges

Rabbi Hutner responded with a unique letter that over the years has become well known and required reading.⁵

To quote it partially:

“My dear friend, with your permission, I want to make you aware of a very important point, namely:

There is a terrible flaw among us. When we deal with the aspects of perfection of our great Torah leaders, we handle only the final peak and summary of their greatness. We tell of their perfect ways while skipping over the inner struggle that raged in their souls.

The impression we impart about these great individuals is as though they emerged from the Creator’s hand fully formed in their lofty stature and great splendor.

Everyone speaks and marvels at the purity of speech of the Chafetz Chaim, but who knows, let alone mentions, all of the battles, the struggles, the obstacles, the falls,

and the setbacks that the Chafetz Chaim encountered during his war with his evil inclination ?

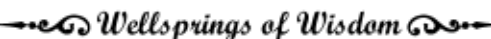
As a result of this flaw of ours, when a young person, who possesses spirit, ambition, and inner drive, encounters obstacles, falls, and downturns within himself, he regards himself as not belonging to the house of G-d.

According to the fantasies of this young man, belonging to the house of G-d’s house means to sit with complete peace of mind on green pastures along calm waters, enjoying the holiness that his good inclination pulls towards, and enjoying, together with the righteous with their crowns upon their heads, the radiance of the Shechinah in the Garden of Eden.

But in truth, these are all empty illusions and falsehoods.

As long as a person lives in this world, he must struggle.

It does not matter at all what spiritual level he has attained, the



5. ‘Pachad Yitzchak’ (Igrot VeKtavim - Letter 128).

Parshat Yitro - The First 38 Days Out of Egypt

struggle against the evil inclination applies at every level.

On the contrary, the higher the level that a person rises to, the more intense this war becomes.

Envision the greatness of the world's great Torah leaders and the righteous in terms of them waging war with all of the lowly and base inclinations.

When you feel the storm of the evil inclination within you, know that precisely with this you resemble the great Torah leaders more than in any moment of perfect tranquility which you may long for.

It is precisely in those places where you find yourself experiencing the most frequent spiritual declines, in those very places you are most viable

to become a vessel for the distinction of honoring the name of G-d.

Dear friend, you must strengthen yourself with all your might and know that your inner struggles are what cause you to forge a true and eternal bond with the Holy One, blessed be He."

Shimon searched for the mashgiach's number and delivered to him over the phone these words of inspiration.

The mashgiach listened with interest, but requested practical advice that would help him overcome the overwhelming feeling of despair.

Such advice can be found in our Week's Torah portion, as we shall expand upon below.

The First 38 Days Out of Egypt

On the fifteenth of Nissan, the Jewish people left Egypt.

After seven days of travel, on the twenty-first of Nissan, they crossed the Sea of Reeds and continued their journey into the desert.

"They traveled for three days in the wilderness and did not find water. They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter" (Shemot 15:22-23).

Parshat Yitro - The First 38 Days Out of Egypt

Their response to this reality was to complain: "The people complained against Moshe, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" (ibid. verse 24).

G-d heard their complaint and commanded Moshe to take a piece of wood and throw it into the water, and the water became sweetened.

Afterward, when they had drunk from the sweet water, G-d commanded Moshe regarding the observance of Shabbat (Tractate Shabbat 87b). However, even though Moshe was commanded about the observance of the Shabbat, he did not yet receive permission to tell and instruct the Jewish people about it.

A few more days passed, and on the fifteenth of Iyar, the thirtieth day after they left Egypt, the bread that the Jewish people had taken with them ran out.

In response, they once again complained: "The entire congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moshe and Aharon in the wilderness. The children of Israel said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt, when we had sat by the pot of meat and eaten bread to satiety'" (Shemot 16:2-3).

G-d then informed Moshe Rabbeinu that from now on manna would descend for the Jewish people.

Moshe was also commanded to now teach the concept of Shabbat to the Jewish people.⁶

Moshe indeed taught the Jewish people the many laws of Shabbat, including the halacha that rules that it is forbidden to go out on Shabbat and gather the manna.

...*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*...

6. Tosafot Rosh (Shabbat 118b):

It is written: "And it came to pass on the seventh day."

Did we not learn above in chapter "Rabbi Akiva" (Shabbat 87b) that in Marah they were commanded about

Shabbat, and if so, this was not the first Shabbat ?!

Rather, in Marah, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Moshe about Shabbat, but Moshe did not convey it to the people of Israel until after the manna fell.

Parshat Yitro - Cause of Trouble with Amalek

And behold, the first Shabbat arrived, and a few obstinate Jews went out to gather the manna in direct defiance of Moshe's order: "It happened on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather, but they did not find" (ibid. verse 27).

Sadly enough, the Jewish people did not -entirely- even keep one Shabbat.

Thereafter, they continued their journey and arrived at Refidim, and again they ran out of water:

"The people quarreled with Moshe and said, 'Give us water so we may drink.' Moshe said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test G-d?'" (ibid. 17:2)

G-d commanded Moshe to strike the rock, and water came out from it.

Then, on the 38th day after leaving Egypt, on the twenty-third day of Iyar, Amalek arrived at the edge of the Jewish camp and started a war.

Cause of Trouble with Amalek

When Rav, the Talmudic sage, studied Parshat Beshalach, he taught (Shabbat 118b):

"If not for the sin of the people of Israel in desecrating that first Shabbat, no nation or tongue would have had the power to rule over them." Thus, the punishment for desecrating Shabbat was the war with Amalek. "As it is said: 'It happened on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather' (Shemot 16:27), and right after it is written: 'Amalek came' (ibid. 17:8)."

As is known, G-d rules over His world in a manner of a measure for a measure. Every action that a person does is recorded in Heaven, and from Heaven they ensure that a person is repaid according to their deeds.

The reward a person receives corresponds to the action and the mitzvah that was performed. G-d is righteous and faithful to pay the reward for every mitzvah, His judgment is just, and no good deed is lost before Him. He does not

Parshat Yitro - Cause of Trouble with Amalek

withhold the reward of any creature.⁷

However, the same is true for the opposite. The punishment a

...*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*...

7. In this connection, Rabbi Shlomo Levinstein told the following story ("U'Metok Ha'Or," Shabbat, Part 2, page 642):

Two cousins, both named Yechezkel Levi, very closely resembled each other physically but differed greatly in their actions and deeds. One was a G-d-fearing butcher who was pious in his spiritual life and good to people alike, and the other was a wealthy landowner who was distant from Torah, its commandments, and good deeds.

One summer day, the wealthy cousin went out to his orchard and found the corpse of a Jewish man lying in his path.

The Jewish spark was kindled within him, and he carried the body to the main road, and after hiring gentile drivers, he arranged for the body to be brought to the city's rabbi, who saw to its proper Jewish burial.

Surprised that such a lofty mitzvah was performed by a man who rejected Jewish life, the rabbi summoned the wealthy cousin, hoping to draw him closer.

The wealthy man not only refused to come, but hurled insults at the rabbi and the Jewish faith. The rabbi excommunicated him, and the townspeople distanced themselves from him. The wealthy man angrily left, settling with his family in a gentile village three hours away.

Some time later, the wealthy cousin died in his sleep. His sons, fearing he would

not be buried respectfully due to the excommunication, seized a cunning opportunity. When their father's cousin, the righteous butcher, came to the village to buy livestock, they drugged him, removed his garments, and dressed their dead father in the butcher's clothes, and sent the corpse on a donkey to the Jewish quarter, where it was received with great sadness and buried with great honor.

Meanwhile, they left the butcher sleeping, dressed him in burial shrouds, and placed him in the Jewish cemetery at night. The butcher awoke terrified, and quickly returned home, causing shock and confusion among his family and neighbors, who thought he was dead and had been buried earlier that day.

Having nowhere else to go, he ended up at the rabbi's home, yet the rabbi as well, hesitated to admit him until the morning. At dawn, the rabbi investigated the matter thoroughly, and realizing what had happened, the rabbi explained to the bewildered townspeople: The wealthy sinner Yechezkel had once performed the mitzvah of caring for a Jewish corpse.

In return, G-d rewarded him so that he, too, would be buried as a proper Jew.

Even though he had distanced himself from a life of holiness, his one good deed did not go unrewarded.

Parshat Yitro - Remembrance Is Not Merely Knowledge

person receives is also given measure for measure.

As such, we must understand what connection there is between desecrating the Shabbat and the war brought upon us by Amalek. How is the measure-for-measure principle expressed and what parallel is there between desecrating the Shabbat and war with Amalek?

Another point that needs clarification:⁸

It is known that in the last 37 days of Moshe Rabbeinu's life, he spoke and taught to the Jewish people the Book of Devarim.

Among his many words, he said: "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you left Egypt" (Devarim 25:17).

The Jewish people responded to him: "Moshe Rabbeinu, in one verse the Torah states:

'Remember what Amalek did to you,' yet in another verse it states: 'Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy' (Shemot 20:8).

Both say 'remember' and require that we 'remember,' but how can both be fulfilled?"

Moshe Rabbeinu answered them with a parable: "A cup of fragrant wine is not similar to a cup of vinegar, although both this is a cup and that is a cup as well. Similarly, this 'remember' – is the commandment to guard and sanctify the Shabbat day, while that 'remember' – is to destroy and eradicate Amalek's offspring."

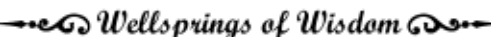
Now at first glance, the question of the Jewish people is not understood.

What is the meaning of their question, "How can both be fulfilled?" What is the problem with remembering two different events?

Remembrance Is Not Merely Knowledge

Let us pause and consider the commandments of the Torah "To remember:"

Among the six remembrances that G-d gave us in the Torah, is the commandment to remember



8. The following passage is quoted from Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer (Chapter 44).

Parshat Yitro - Amalek – Brazenness

the Shabbat day, and also the commandment to remember what Amalek did to us in the desert.

In common language, we often refer to plain knowledge as "remembrance." For example, when you ask a person if he knows and remembers who runs the world, he will answer: G-d of course.

However it is then puzzling that when something unpleasant might happen to him, he feels anger, seeking who to blame, and runs around in a panic.

You might ask him: Did you not say that G-d runs the world? If so, why are you angry and losing your composure? Turn instead to G-d with pleas and supplications that He sweeten the judgments for you and bestow only good upon you.

He may look at you with a puzzled expression. He doesn't see any connection between the

two. This person "knows" but does not "remember."

G-d commanded us to "remember" and have an "active memory"; that we constantly try to remember these truths, and create within ourselves a live memory that will stir inner emotion until it becomes a reality for us.

When a person's memory is active, he becomes connected to that concept and to the root of the matter.

This is the idea of "remembering" – to connect and attach oneself to the reality one remembers.

In our context: to connect – all the days of the week – to the holy day of Shabbat, and the same with regard to the war with Amalek.

Being that this memory demands total recall and awareness of the soul, the Jewish people couldn't understand: How could they live with two seemingly contradictory remembrances in their souls?!

Amalek – Brazenness

There are seventy nations of the world, and the foremost among them is Amalek, as

it is said: "The first of nations is Amalek" (Bamidbar 24:20).

This "primacy" is expressed by the fact that they were the greatest antagonists of the Creator of the world.

As explained by the saintly Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch, of blessed memory:⁹

"The evil force (klipah) of Amalek is unlike the other klipot.

All the other klipot oppose holiness, but their entire evil existence is due to the concealment of the Divine light. However, were the Divine light to be revealed, they would instantly and completely be nullified.

The klipah of Amalek, however, stands against and in revolt to the revelation of G-dliness.

Even when there is Divine revelation, for example a person comes to understand G-d's providence over creation and is inspired, the klipah of Amalek causes his heart to remain cold and be indifferent.

Moreover, Amalek's impurity is so great that he speaks insolently and brazenly against the revelation of G-dliness, against the very revelation that he himself has grasped intellectually.

As our Sages have said about Amalek: 'He knows his Master and willingly intends to rebel against Him.'

To expand upon this further:

"Amalek" in gematria (numerical value) equals "safek" (doubt).

Thus, the unholy powers of Amalek seek to instill doubts in one's mind and heart regarding every matter of G-dliness, and stoically reply to inspiration and say: "Who said it is really so?"

Even though he himself knows the truth, since it is intellectually evident, he still casts doubt and thus cools off the intensity of the matter.

This is done out of pure brazenness. After all, he gains nothing from it, no benefit or

Parshat Yitro - Amalek – Brazenness

pleasure. It is only brazenness for its own sake.

This brazenness is the essence and impure vitality of Amalek.

He knows his value is nothing, he knows the virtue of holiness and nonetheless dares to challenge it. Therein lies its entire evil existence.

The essence of the klipah of Amalek is brazenness, whose entire being is one of absence – with no aim to benefit or any personal advantage.

G-d commanded us: "Remember what Amalek did to you" – the way to eradicate Amalek is by remembrance, by remembering that such a harsh klipah exists, and let it be evil in one's eyes that such a harsh klipah exists.

Through this remembrance, one can and must make every effort to overcome the coolness stemming from these doubts,¹⁰ and serve G-d with simple faith and complete acceptance of the yoke of Heaven.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

10. As mentioned above, the main power of the impurity of Amalek is in casting doubts.

He seizes his unfortunate victim and plants doubts within him until the victim loses all sense of inner stability.

In more severe cases, the doubts born in a person are so intense that he even doubts himself and his own essence, and thus he loses his mind.

Regarding this matter, my father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, of righteous memory, related as follows ('Imrei Noam,' Ki Tisa - Essay 5):

In Kfar Chabad lived a couple who had a very successful son: he possessed good character traits and was a great diligent student of Torah and had come of age to seek a match.

One day, a match was suggested for their son from another Chassidic family. Since they were very particular about their son, they investigated all sorts of details until they decided that the father would travel to the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York and ask him whether to finalize the match.

The man waited patiently in line for a private audience until it was his turn to enter the Rebbe's room.

He submitted a note with the names of his son and the proposed bride. The Rebbe studied the note for a few moments, and offered his blessing that they will establish a faithful Jewish home.

The Rebbe's answer was clear — the match was very good, and it should be closed immediately.

The Worlds' Fall From Their Spiritual Height

We now turn to discuss the inner meaning of Shabbat:

On the sixth day of Creation, man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden.

We cannot imagine nor fathom the great divine light that shone in Gan Eden, the radiance, beauty, and purity. The divine, noble, and pure atmosphere was palpably

Wellsprings of Wisdom

The father returned home happy and grateful for the Rebbe's holy answer. But when he told his wife the Rebbe's wonderful response, her face did not show joy like his.

The klipah of Amalek had already crept into her heart, stirring doubts:

"Over the past few days, while you visited the Rebbe, I found out several more 'suspicious' details about the prospective bride. Perhaps if you had presented all the details fully, the Rebbe would not have answered as he did," argued the mother.

"And besides, you went to the Rebbe at a later hour, after many hours that he received visitors; maybe he was already tired and not fully focused on your question," she added, "with all her 'wisdom.'"

Her husband would not accept these doubts. He argued back: "But the Rebbe is a righteous individual, not a mere material person; what place is there for fatigue or lack of concentration? The Rebbe has pure eyes that see from one end of the world to the other, and what could we

know about the prospective bride that he does not know by Divine insight?"

Yet the skeptical wife would not give him rest until he found himself once again on a plane, going to ask the Rebbe about the match a second time — this time he would be sure to present all of the "important" details that they had discovered about the prospective bride.

The Chassid stood again in line, and entered once more into the holy room of the Rebbe. But before he could open his mouth, the Rebbe addressed him first: "I am surprised at the need to ask such a question, but I will nonetheless explain to you:

"Above in Heaven, are recorded the names of all the prospective matches. When you gave me the proposed bride's name, I checked if she appeared on the list, and saw that indeed she was recorded there. I immediately hurried to tell you to close the match, for it is a great match for your dear son."

The Rebbe concluded, "tell your wife to close the match in an auspicious time."

Parshat Yitro - The Worlds' Fall From Their Spiritual Height

felt, and the feeling of vitality and wondrous delight filled the soul.

G-d revealed Himself to Adam and said: "All around you is wondrous vegetation, blossoming trees with succulent fruits.

You can eat from all of them, whenever you want, and as much as you want, without limit.

Everything is ready and waiting for you, but from one tree I forbid you to eat, and that is the Tree of Knowledge."

The following is excerpted from the work 'Siddur Ha'Ari':¹¹

'At that time, when Adam HaRishon was in the Garden of Eden, the entire creation was high, exalted, and lofty. All of the world's creatures sensed that "His sovereignty rules over all" (Tehillim 103:19).

However, since G-d desired man's service through free choice, He created the forces of

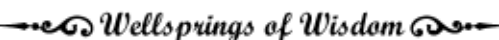
evil so that man would have something to struggle against.

When man would defeat evil (the klipot), the world would reach its rectification, and all of creation would rise and ascend to untold and unforeseen heights.

At that time, the boundary and limit between good and evil was clearly defined. Good was situated extremely high in the order of the worlds, and evil was situated far below, with a great gap between them.

This distance caused the divine light that reached the klipot to be very scant; they received all of their vitality from only one single spark that dwelled within them and gave them life.

The entire "world of klipot" thus lived and existed from one spark of holiness, and because only one single spark gave life to evil, they had almost no power, and they submitted to the forces of holiness.



11. In the 'introduction to the Pitum HaKetoret'.

See also 'Or HaTorah' (Part 2, page 731) by Rabbi Shalom Teomim, of blessed memory.

Parshat Yitro - The Descent Of The Progressive Generations

Then the serpent arrived.

There are many secrets and mystical aspects that are hinted at in the matter of Adam's sin. How did the serpent, which is but a tiny part of the weak and meager klipot, manage to overcome the mighty and holy Adam and Chava?

But ultimately, the serpent was successful and inflicted and caused terrible damage.

All of the holy worlds consequently descended from their standing, and were pushed downward, level after level, until they reached the border of evil.

This caused the border and wall that separated good from

evil to be eroded, and from now on only a very thin boundary would separate good from evil.

This descent of the worlds also caused ten sparks of holiness to fall into the klipot, and through this new light that shone in the realm of the klipot, they received tremendous vitality and power to rule over the entire world.

Since the dividing line between the domain of the klipot and the domain of holiness was blurred, the klipot managed to leave their meager dwellings and humble abode and cling to the entirety of creation, including vegetation and even stones.

The Descent Of The Progressive Generations

Rabbi Dov Katz, of blessed memory, delivered the following in a sermon (Tnuat HaMussar', page 231):

"From the moment Adam HaRishon sinned, a process of diminishment in the greatness of creation began.

From generation to generation, as generations sinned, the creations diminished rapidly.

Until the generation of the Flood, humans still lived close to a thousand years, and their strength was very great.

The people of the subsequent generation of the Flood were huge giants with tremendous power. They "uprooted cedars of Lebanon in their stride, and lions and leopards were considered by them

Parshat Yitro - The Descent Of The Progressive Generations

to be no more than a mere worm in the flesh. Women would conceive and give birth on the same day."¹²

All of creation was still in great strength, so that "they would sow one year and it would yield sustenance for forty years," and so forth.

But due to the sins of humanity, they descended more and more, generation after generation. Man's lifespan shortened, his body weakened, his stature diminished, and eventually we have arrived at the state of Man today.

Just as humanity declined physically, so too it greatly declined spiritually. Generations diminished over thousands of years in all areas: understanding, wisdom, spiritual capacity, and moral qualities.

Consider the difference between each period: the era of the Patriarchs, the era of the Prophets, the era of the Men of the Great Assembly, the era of the Tannaim, the era of the Amoraim, and so on.

Rabbi Yochanan already declared in his generation (Eruvin 53a):

"The hearts of the earlier ones were like the wide entrance to the Ulam (Temple hall), and the later ones' like the narrow entrance to the Heichal (Temple chamber), and ours, is no more than the eye of a fine needle."

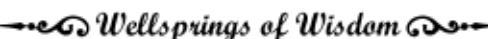
They also said (Yoma 9b): "The small fingernails of the earlier ones are more desirable than the belly of the later ones."

Others add and say (Shabbat 112b): "If the earlier ones were like angels, we are like men. And if the earlier ones were like men, we are like donkeys."

Can we even imagine in our times, a scholar equal in stature to the later Torah authorities, let alone as lofty as the Rambam or the Gra ?

A decline is similarly evident in all of the nations.

One cannot compare the wisdom of today's scholars to that



12. Bereshit Rabbah (34:11).

Parshat Yitro - The Ascension of the Worlds on Shabbat

of the sages of Athens, the giants of thought who laid the foundations of general human knowledge.

One cannot compare the greatness of today's rulers to that of the ancient kings and emperors, whose hearts were broad like an Ulam's entrance and whose aspirations reached the heavens: Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and others, who proclaimed themselves to be gods, claiming that they built the world and created themselves.

Thus the generations diminished until we reached our era, in which the entire world is filled with half truths and scheming.

Hearts are blocked from wisdom, materialism has overtaken life, and

man has turned into a beast of prey.

With all of the great progress of science, the astounding discoveries of nature's secrets, and the enormous development of technology, human conscience has been completely emptied.

The human spirit has become sullied, and the human race has slid down a steep slope of corruption and malice, till there is no difference between man and beast."

We can easily then, understand, how this terrible descent, created a situation in which a person can find himself in despair, lacking the will to live.

The Ascension of the Worlds on Shabbat

The nourishment that impurity receives, was created as a result of the blurring of the boundaries between the domain of holiness and the domain of impurity, and thus the entire reality of the world became distanced from the Creator, as outlined above.

But despite the terrible descent, G-d, in His great

mercy, granted us the great gift of Shabbat, on which all spiritual powers are renewed.

On Shabbat, the inner aspects of the worlds ascend,¹³ and the sparks of holiness withdraw from the klipah, and remain in total separation, with no closeness to them.

Parshat Yitro - The Damage of Shabbat Desecration

The sublime and pure space that existed before the sin is formed once again, and we can on Shabbat, therefore return to the level of Adam before the sin.

Let us reiterate:

On Shabbat, there is an ascent to the inner dimension of the worlds, thereby once again creating a necessary gap between good and evil, a gap between holiness and the klipah.

By means of this, the additional life-force given to the klipot (impure forces) as a result of the previous closeness is withdrawn, and the klipot are pushed back

down to their original place, as it was before Adam's sin.

Since their life-force is removed from them, the klipot remain without ability, like lifeless corpses lying in the grave.

Not only from the universe at large are the klipot banished, but also from every Jewish individual who observes Shabbat properly; the klipot depart from him, and his soul radiates and is renewed.

This is a practical suggestion and recommended guidance on how to overcome despair:

Proper observance of the Shabbat according to halacha.

The Damage of Shabbat Desecration

When a Jew performs a forbidden labor on Shabbat, he causes the klipot to ascend and he invites them to arise from their lowly place and enter into the pure Shabbat space; by doing so, the klipot again receive a new life-force.

Therefore, one who performs forbidden work on Shabbat is called a 'mechalel Shabbat' (a desecrator of

Shabbat). For by doing forbidden labor on Shabbat, he brings the klipot into that 'chalal' (space).

He then gives 'life' (חיים) to the klipot (which is the same numerical value as 'chalal' (חלל)), and thus, through his wrongful deeds he revives the dead klipot.

This answers our previous question:

Parshat Yitro - Meaningful Preparations for Shabbat

As a result of the Shabbat desecration, Amalek came upon the Jewish people to destroy and kill them. This was indeed measure for measure, and moreover, it was actually a direct consequence.

Due to the desecration of Shabbat, the klipot succeeded

in drawing immense life-force, and this life-force gave Amalek the power to come and fight the holy nation of the Jewish people.

Thus, it was the desecration of Shabbat that gave them their strength.

Meaningful Preparations for Shabbat

On every day of Shabbat there is an increase of light that shines in the world.

However, in order for a person to feel it, he must prepare himself for Shabbat; each person, according to his preparation, merits the light of Shabbat.

We bring here an excerpt from "Chelev Ha'aretz" (Part 6, page 47):

"Since Shabbat is an exceedingly holy and awe-inspiring day, man's mind cannot grasp even a fraction of the purity of its radiant light. On this day, the Holy One, blessed be He, takes pride, renews His world, and a spirit of exalted holiness and uplifted spirit pervades the entire universe.

The Shechinah spreads its wings over every part of creation, and from the surplus bounty that flows into the world on this day, all of the six weekdays are sustained.

Therefore, G-d, the Compassionate One, blessed be He, commanded His children to properly prepare themselves for Shabbat, as one who awaits a queen who comes to reside in his home.

When the queen does arrive to dwell among us in glory, she bestows her splendor and majesty upon the divine part of our soul — "a portion of G-d above" — which then pulsates and gives life to every part within us.

For this reason, we find that our sages were extremely

Parshat Yitro - Remember What Amalek Did to You

meticulous in preparations for Shabbat, as discussed at length in the Gemara (Shabbat 119a).

In order for a person's soul, spirit, and neshamah to be illuminated by the holiness of Shabbat, he must prepare himself properly on Friday in honor of Shabbat.

The purpose of these preparations is to remove the klipah that rests upon a person during the weekdays and to prepare his soul, spirit, and neshamah to receive the holiness and illumination of Shabbat. If one, however, withholds any of these preparations, the klipah does not fully separate from his soul, and consequently he may lose out on achieving the additional spiritual levels of that Shabbat.

This is akin to a laborer who had worked all day in the heat and puts on his tuxedo above all

of his soiled clothes, or even some of them.

Surely this is not fitting; rather, one must first remove his weekday clothes, and only then adorn himself in garments of holiness.

Indeed, the required preparation also includes practical preparations: cleaning the house, cooking, baking, laundering, ironing, and so forth, as well as inner preparation through washing and immersion in the mikveh, etc.

Through these preparations, a person can accept the light of Shabbat to rest upon his soul, spirit, and neshamah, and thereby draw forth an abundance of holiness, purity, and wondrous spiritual powers for all of the six weekdays.

By means of the preparations for Shabbat, the klipah that rests on a person during the weekdays will depart, and the holiness and illumination of Shabbat will rest upon his soul.

Remember What Amalek Did to You

Finally, we return to address the Midrash:

The Jewish people responded: "Moshe Rabbeinu, in one verse

Parshat Yitro - Remember What Amalek Did to You

the Torah states: 'Remember what Amalek did to you,' yet in another verse it states: 'Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy' (Shemot 20:8).

Both say 'remember' and require that we 'remember,' but how can both be fulfilled?"

Moshe Rabbeinu answered them with a parable: "A cup of fragrant wine is not similar to a cup of vinegar, although both this is a cup and that is a cup as well. Similarly, this 'remember' – is the commandment to guard and sanctify the Shabbat day, while that 'remember' – is to destroy and eradicate Amalek's offspring."

We find that the saintly Lubavitcher Rebbe discussed this midrash:¹⁴

This Midrash requires an explanation:

1. What is the meaning of their question: "How can both be

fulfilled?" Is there room in a person's mind only for one remembrance?

2. How is this question resolved by the parable of the two cups?

Rather, the explanation lies in the fact that at first glance, these two remembrances encompass completely contradictory content:

The meaning of remembering Shabbat is "that we remember the act of Creation and constantly acknowledge that the world has a Creator" (Ramban, Shemot 20:8).

In other words, an awareness that G-d is the Creator and ruler of the world and all within it, and that the world and all it contains have no independent existence apart from Him.

On the other hand, the meaning of remembering Amalek is that we must recall the existence of a nation that "knows its Master and yet intends to rebel against

Wellsprings of Wisdom

13. On Shabbat, specifically the inner dimensions of the worlds ascend and not the external aspects, which is why we

cannot see the elevation with our own eyes.

14. 'Biurei HaChumash' (Part 9, page 43).

Parshat Yitro - Remember What Amalek Did to You

Him," meaning a reality that rebels against G-d.

This was the astonishment that the Jewish people expressed: How can one be commanded to remember and internalize two such contradictory concepts simultaneously?

To this Moshe responded: "A cup of 'konditon' (fragrant wine) is not similar to a cup of vinegar, although both this is a cup and that is a cup as well."

A cup of fragrant wine and a cup of vinegar are completely different from each other — konditon is a fine wine, while vinegar is not fit for drinking, yet they both originated from wine just the same.

Moshe explained that the same applies here: True, Amalek, as he stands before us, rebels against G-d and opposes every aspect of holiness. Nevertheless, Amalek's

own source on high is also in Divine holiness. He is but an expression of G-d's omnipotence, even to the point of creating a being that can oppose and rebel against its Creator.

At the same time, the attitude toward these two remembrances is not the same. One 'Remember' — is to guard and sanctify Shabbat; the other 'Remember' however — pertains to punishment.

Although both remembrances relate to matters whose source is in holiness, and their purpose is to reveal that holiness, when it comes to Shabbat, which itself is holy, this is done through positive and actions of remembrance.

Whereas concerning Amalek, who stands before us as a rebel against G-d, the way to reveal his Divine source is through a negative remembrance — up to and including through his annihilation.



Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. Every Shabbat brings additional light into the world. In order for a person to sense this light, he must prepare himself for Shabbat: each person receives the great light according to his preparation.

2. Shabbat is a day that is exceedingly holy and awesome. The human mind cannot grasp even a fraction of its pure and lofty light.

G-d takes pride on this day, He renews His world, and a lofty spirit of holiness and elevation fills the entire universe.

The Shechinah spreads its wings over every part of creation, and from the surplus bounty that flows into the world on this day, all of the six weekdays are nourished.

It is therefore that G-d commanded the Jewish people to properly prepare for Shabbat.

3. Preparations for Shabbat include: cleaning the house, cooking, baking, laundering, ironing, etc., as well as inner and

meaningful preparations such as reading the weekly Parshah twice in Hebrew and once in Targum, immersing in the mikveh.

By means of these preparations, the impure klipah that rests upon a person during the weekdays departs, and the holiness and illumination of Shabbat rests upon his soul.

4. Washing and immersing in a mikveh in honor of Shabbat removes the klipah that rests on a person throughout the weekdays and prepares his soul, spirit, and neshamah to receive the holiness and illumination of Shabbat.

If a person neglects these preparations, the klipah does not fully depart from his soul, and consequently, the added holiness of Shabbat is diminished.

5. G-d commanded us in His Torah to remember the Shabbat day. This act of remembering is that we recall the act of Creation and acknowledge at all times that there is a Creator to the world.

Parshat Yitro - Summary and Practical Conclusions

In other words, recognition that G-d is the Creator and ruler of the world and all that is within it, and that the world and all it contains have no independent existence apart from Him.

6. The reason that a person might fall into a sense of despair is that he fails to sense the reality of G-d.

On Shabbat, the light of G-d is revealed — through the light of Shabbat.

Therefore, the moment a person merits to observe Shabbat, even if he has committed many sins in the past, if he now accepts upon himself to keep Shabbat, and from this day forward commits to not to desecrate it; the light of Shabbat — the light of the World to Come — immediately reveals itself to him.

His soul is then renewed, and he receives the power and ability to overcome despair and be filled with true joy.

Shabbat Shalom !



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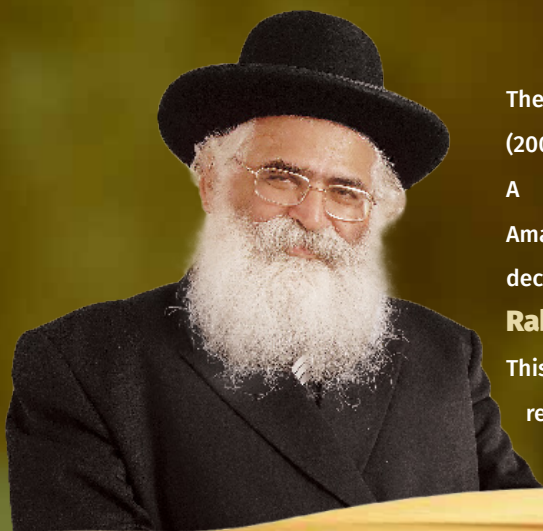
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Shabbat Times Yitro

17th of Shevat, 5785



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:12 pm	6:12 pm	6:43 pm
Miami	5:56 pm	6:49 pm	7:26 pm
Los Angeles	5:19 pm	6:16 pm	6:50 pm
Montreal	5:02 pm	6:07 pm	6:34 pm
Toronto	5:29 pm	6:32 pm	7:00 pm
London	4:56 pm	6:07 pm	6:28 pm
Jerusalem	5:09 pm	6:01 pm	6:38 pm
Tel Aviv	5:06 pm	5:58 pm	6:34 pm
Haifa	5:04 pm	5:59 pm	6:35 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:07 pm	6:01 pm	6:38 pm

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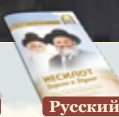
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