

## Musings on Shabbat Zakhor 5777

Having just written about the first line of *Parasha Tetzaveh* and lamps and souls, <http://nebula.wsimg.com/f3f5750ccfb8ac4d7fc97ca1ee3df69f?AccessKeyId=C0FE29BEBD9695C71DA7&disposition=0&alloworigin=1> now we turn to the other aspect of this Shabbat, the mitzvah to remember Amalek.

We begin with two lines from the Sfat Emet, the rebbe of Ger writing in the 1830's:

### Shabbat Zakhor - 5631

ענין זכור להיות הדביקות בהשי"ת בכח פנימיות הלב במקום שאין שם שכחה.

Memory means to be in deep connection with the Blessed Holy One, through the potential that resides in the inner recesses of the heart, a place where there is no forgetting. The idea of remembering is connecting to this shining point of essence in each of us that is tucked into the interior recesses of our heart. It is the place where we are always Connected since our our soul is a piece of God [in the words of the Alter Rebbe, *helek Eloah mema'al mamash*] and in this place there is no forgetting. It is the deepest place of remembering- and what do we need to remember? We remember that we are Divine in essence and there is nothing but the Unity - ein od milvado / אין עוד מלבדו; leit atar panui minei /there is no place devoid of It.

### Yitro 5632 לפי השמירה זוכין לזכירה הוא מקום שא"צ שמירה

To the degree that we guard, we merit remembering, which is the place that does not require guarding. This is a subtle reference to the two readings of the Ten Utterances - one speaking of שמור את יום השבת and the other זכור את יום השבת.

Next, we examine the Netivot Shalom, the late Slonimer Rebbe writing in the 20th century, in his teaching on Shabbat Zakhor (volume on Shemot, p. 202) speaks about the special spiritual work of Shabbat Zakhor.

✨*My gratitude to my hevruta R. Diane Elliot for our joint unpacking of these insights.* ✨

The Slonimer cites midrash Tanhuma that compares the positive Torah commandments to remember Shabbat (Ex. 20) זָכֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ -and to remember Amalek (Ex. 25) זָכֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק and teaches that these two instances are set up in relation to each other.

And in Bavli Shabbat 118b, these verses are brought in relationship to the story of the manna (Ex. 16) וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יָצְאוּ מִן-הָעַם לְלֶקֶט וְלֹא מָצְאוּ: where the people did not have trust that the manna would last over Shabbat and so they went out to gather. The consequence is that soon thereafter Amalek enters the story. The Gemara teaches that had only the people truly observed this first Shabbat, Amalek would not have been able to approach them. The lack of trust meant that doubt entered into the people's consciousness. And we know that the gematria of Amalek/עמלק and safek/פֶּסֶק/doubt are equivalent. Another of many missed first opportunities in the Torah stories.

The Netivot Shalom continues, teaching us that Shabbat is the neshama/soul/vitalizing power of the 613 commandments. Shabbat is **דְּנִשְׁמַתָּא יוֹמָא**/the day of soul, the time of the soul of holiness. Similarly, Amalek is the neshama of the klipot/the encrusting forces of anti-holiness. On Shabbat, the Zohar tells us that all aspects of weekday negativity are removed [see the Raza de'Shabata prayer inserted before Erev Shabbat Barkhu in Sefard nusah and Sefardi siddurim]. We each have aspects of Amalek. negativity, doubt, lack of motivation, etc. etc. etc., deep inside - the klipot have some governance over us. And, when we are under some influence of the anti-holy, it is very difficult to break their attachment to us. However, during Shabbat. the Other Side of negativity has no place - Shabbat then can become, metaphysically, a sacred container for holy work.

And how does this relate to Shabbat Zachor? The Netivot Shalom describes that fulfilling the mitzvah of remembering Amalek and not forgetting to blot out the memory of Amalek, is more accessible with the help of the spiritual container of the holiness of Shabbat. In this safe space, we can face our bits of internalized Amalek, and uproot them from our soul's essence. We can use our soul-lamp/ner to illuminate the inner recesses of our being, to reveal (to ourselves and to the Mystery) those places that need our reproof and reminding.

[Related to Parashat Tetzaveh, we are reminded of the verses from proverbs that compare the candle to the soul and to the mitzvot].

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the Torah is light; and the way to life is reproof that disciplines.	משלי ו:כג כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכָחוֹת מוֹסֵר:
Proverbs 20:27 The spirit-soul of man is YHVH's candle, searching all the recesses of the belly.	משלי כ:כז נֵר יְיָ נִשְׁמַת אָדָם הִפֵּשׁ כָּל-חֲדָרֵי-בֶטֶן:

Only with spiritual practice, can we face and negate the places where we are complicit with evil external - and internal - realities. Only then can become the clear vessels that are transparent to Divine Will.

Let us be like Esther, giving over to our roll in the Divine drama, practicing humility and not-knowing. And let us manifest generosity, as we have already given our half-shekel, and, on Purim we give gifts to each other -mishloah manot - and to those less advantaged -matanot l'evyonim. Let us be blessed with the words of Megilat Esther:

8:16 לַיהוּדִים הַיְתֵה אֹרְהָ וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשׁן וְיִקְרָ:

Let us be blessed with light, appreciation of the present moment, joy and value to the world.