

## Parshat Yitro: Shalom of Shabbat

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

On Shabbat we traditionally greet each other with the words, “*Shabbat Shalom.*” Shalom comes from the root word *sheleimut* (completion). The Midrash relates a story. Shabbat said to Hashem, “Master of the world, everything in the world has its partner, but I am left alone. Hashem answered, “*Kneset Yisrael* will be your partner.” Shabbat completes us, as a bride and groom complete each other.

The Shivilei Pinchas speaks of seven dimensions in which the Jewish people and Shabbat are compared to a groom and bride. The Gemara rules that a man may betroth a woman either himself or through a messenger, but it is better to do so in person. Afterwards, the Gemara describes how the great sages would prepare for Shabbat themselves. In *Lecha Dodi* we say, “Let us go out and greet the Shabbat bride.” Similarly, at a wedding the groom customarily steps towards the bride as she comes towards the chuppa. Rabbi Chelbah taught, “A person should be careful with the honor of his wife because blessing comes to his home through her merit.” The Zohar teaches similarly that the blessing of the coming week is dependent on how one honors the Shabbat. We make *Kiddush* over wine before eating. Under the *chuppah* (marriage canopy), the groom

sanctifies the bride and makes a blessing on wine. In the Shabbat Shemone Esrei there are seven blessings corresponding to the seven blessings under the *chuppah*. When a Jew says *Vayechulu* on Friday night, two angels put their hand on his head and bless him that all his sins should be forgiven. Likewise, the Gemara says the sins of a bride and groom are forgiven on their wedding day.

The Netivot Shalom writes that just as one gets ready for marriage one must get ready for *Shabbat*. One way to prepare is by speaking about *Shabbat*. Words create reality, upgrading physical preparation into something spiritual. When you buy and prepare food for *Shabbat* you should say that it is in honor of the *Shabbat*. Just as the bride and groom engage in introspection and *teshuva* before marriage, we should spend some time before *Shabbat* reviewing the deeds of the week. It is a worthy practice to be ready for *Shabbat* early by ceasing to do work at noon. From midday on one should be involved in studying Torah, saying *Shir Hashirim*, and preparing to accept the sanctity of *Shabbat*.

The way we approach *Shabbat* will affect our children. Often we collapse from the exhaustion of the week. We have to be proactive in creating the right mindset and aura. Rav

Salomon notes that *Shabbat* is like one long *shemone esrei*, a time of unceasing connection to our Father in heaven. Make the day exciting and special. Learn the laws of *Shabbat*. Prepare inspirational reading material and learning activities. Study Torah around the table. Bring a spirit of sanctity and joy into your home.

What does it mean to marry *Shabbat* every week? Like a marriage relationship, we're together with Hashem in an inseparable bond. *Shabbat* is an expression of otherworldly love. It is a time of *sheleimut*, that feeling of completion and of becoming one with the Creator.

*Shabbat* is the time when we feel the intensity of the kingship of Hashem, when we recognize that we are all working together towards one goal to serve Him. The *Shabbat* lights usher in an aura of tranquility into the home. The Zohar says that a burning candle represents two opposing forces. The candle is like the body and the flame is like the soul. When we kindle the *Shabbat* lights we combine the spiritual and the physical to create ultimate peace.

## Contemporary Halacha: The Mitzva of Talmud Torah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Michael Taubes

The Mishna in Peah says, “*Eilu dvarim she'ein lahem shiur.*” Included in the list of *mitzvot* that have no designated measure is the *mitzva* of studying Torah. The Bartenura refers to a verse in Yehoshua which we paraphrase in the Maariv prayer, “*V'hageta bo yomam v'layla.*” Torah should occupy one's attention day and night. The Bartenura infers from this verse that the *mitzva* is boundless and has no legislated measure. Therefore, a person should make every effort to involve himself in learning Torah whenever he can. The Mishna Rishona disagrees and says that the Mishna means there is no minimum limit. As long as one learns something in the morning and at night, he has fulfilled the *mitzva*. Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that if a person recites a verse of *Shema* in the morning and at night he has discharged his minimal obligation of learning Torah. However, in another Gemara in *Brachot*, Rabbi Shimon seems to contradict himself. He asks rhetorically, if a person will be occupied in the field plowing and planting all day what will happen to Torah? This implies that one should learn Torah non-stop. Rabbi Yishamel counters that one must do whatever one needs to earn sustenance and then one can learn.

Rabbi Shimon's opinion parallels the Bartenura who says that Torah has no upper limit. Rabbi Yishmael's argument corresponds to the Mishna Rishona, who says there is no minimum limit. The Gra seems to merge both

opinions that *Torah* has neither a bottom or an upper limit. A Jew must learn Torah whenever he is free. But for someone who has other obligations, the minimum is one verse during the day and one verse at night.

The Rambam writes in Hilchot Talmud Torah that every Jew is obligated in the *mitzva* of learning Torah no matter what the circumstances. There is no minimum limit as long as there are fixed times set aside during the day and night. However, in his Sefer Hamitzvot, the Rambam suggests that the *mitzva* of learning Torah is boundless. He explains that the verse *v'shenantam l'vanecha* means one must master Torah so well to the extent that he can answer any question in a sharp manner

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answer any question in a sharp manner without hesitation.

It appears that the Rambam is actually describing two different scenarios. In Sefer Hamitzvos, which is in line with the opinion of the Bartenura, the Rambam sets up the ideal. A person should do nothing but study Torah in order to know Hashem. But there are legitimate intrusions such as supporting one's family that preclude this. Therefore, one can fulfill the *mitzva* with the minimum requirement, as he writes in Hilchot Talmud Torah.

At Sinai, when the Jewish people heard Hashem speak they wanted only to connect with Him. But Hashem said, "*Shuvu lachem l'ahaleichem*. Go back to your tents," to your daily life. The Rambam presents the minimum, and more common, situation in Hilchot Talmud Torah. But the goal is to understand Hashem as much as possible by immersing oneself in Torah at every opportunity. The Ohr Samayach maintains that there's no *mitzva* of learning Torah if there are other things a person must do. The obligation only

starts when one is free from other responsibilities.

Torah learning is a *mitzva* for its own sake, and a *mitzva* enables us to perform other *mitzvot*. The Mishna states, "*Ein boor yarei cheit vl'o am haaretz chasid*. An ignoramus can't be a righteous person." If you aren't knowledgeable of the laws, you can't do the *mitzvot* properly. Studying Torah to know how to fulfill it applies to everyone, including women. Nevertheless, a Jew must always keep his eye on the ideal, learning Torah whenever he can.

## The Secret of the Kruvim

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Eliezar Miller

The Nefesh Hachaim writes that the main dwelling place of the *Shechina* is in the heart of every Jew. When a Jew sanctifies himself and is careful to keep all of the *mitzvot*, he becomes like a *Beit Hamikdash* in which the Divine Presence rests, as the verse says in Yirmiyahu, "They are like the *heichel* of Hashem." If in fact the *Shechina* is within every Jew, what was the purpose of building the *Beit Hamikdash*? Rashi in Bava Batra explains that when *Klal Yisrael* did the will of Hashem, the *kruvim* (the angelic figures atop the ark) faced each other, showing Hashem's love for *Klal Yisrael*. But if they sinned, the *kruvim* turned away from each other. The *kruvim* demonstrated the level of closeness between Hashem and the *Bnei Yisrael*.

The Radak offers another explanation. The *Beit Hamikdash* had a special power to help our prayers ascend to heaven. The Gra in Shir Hashirim explains that the Jewish people needed a collective place to come together. Each person gave the other power to stand up against the evil inclination. In this way the *Beit Hamikdash* joined all hearts together. The Kli Yakar in *Parshat Terumah* adds that the *Beit Hamikdash* drew down the glory of

Hashem among *Klal Yisrael*. The Nefesh Hachaim cites the Zohar that each limb of the body resembles a different vessels of the *Beit Hamikdash*. Through this pattern Hashem's glory dwells within every Jew. The Arvei Nachal explains that the love, fear, and passion with which the Jews brought their donations to the *Beit Hamikdash* drew down *kedusha*, which in turn brought down the *Shechina* to the *Beit Hamikdash*.

The Rambam in *Parshat Teruma* notes that the glory that rested on Har Sinai rested in the *Beit Hamikdash* as well, in a hidden way. It's rays would shine forth to every Jew's heart. The Malbim points out that the *Beit Hamikdash* served to assemble the sparks and small lights within every Jew in one place so that the *Shechina* of Hashem would dwell in this world.

The Midrash in *Bereishis Rabbah* says the main dwelling place of the *Shechina* was in the lower world. When Adam sinned the *Shechina* went up to the first heaven. When Kayin sinned it went up a second level. With the generation of Enosh, it went up a third level. During the generation of the flood it went up a fourth level. After *dor haflaga* it went up a fifth level. During the generation of Sedom it went

up a sixth level. In the time of Avraham it went up to the seventh level. Avraham with his righteousness worked to bring down the *Shechina* one level, Yitzchak another level, Yaakov another, and so on until Moshe brought the *Shechina* back down again to our earthly level. We see that the central dwelling place of the *Shechina* is supposed to be in the lower world and from there sparks of light spread outward.

After Adam's sin the light of the *Shechina* dimmed. The verse in *Tehillim* says that Hashem is like a sun and a shield. He wants to shine His light and give us good. When our sins prevent this it is as if the Divine Presence is in chains and this causes Him great pain. In *Shir Hashirim*, Hashem is compared to a mother. Imagine the agony of a mother who she sees her child in need, but she is behind bars and cannot help him,. The abundance of spiritual and material goodness in this world is dependent on how much the *Shechina* reveals itself. Hashem is knocking on our hearts begging to come inside and be with us. Each of us has to make a personal *chesbon hanefesh* (accounting of the soul). We must ask ourselves, are we letting Him in?