

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 247

**Yitro** | Needless Talk Undoes Much Good



# 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**

# ...∞ PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL ∞...

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Power to Overcome . . . . .	1
The Coachdriver's Secret . . . . .	4
Yitro Arrives in the Desert . . . . .	7
The Surrender of Egypt . . . . .	11
The Brazen Amalekites . . . . .	13
The Source of the Brazenness . . . . .	14
The Sin of Disparaging Torah Study . . . . .	16
The Root of It All—The Point of Interest! . . . . .	19
Danger! Gossip! . . . . .	20
One Aveirah Leads to Another Aveirah . . . . .	23
<i>Summary and Practical Conclusions</i> . . . . .	25



**DONATE**

### Beit Hamidrash Hameir La'aretz

Publisher and Distributor of the Teachings of  
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l



500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47  
Teaneck, NJ 07666



@ en@h-l.org.il



[www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en](http://www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en)



HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel



(954) 800-6526



[HameirLaaretsEN](#)



[HameirLaaretsEN](#)



054-870-8737

[Message Us to Join Our WhatsApp Groups](#)

# Parshat Yitro

## The Power to Overcome

During their regular *chavruta* (paired study session) learning *Tanach*, they came across the verse: "The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him" (Psalms 37:32).

Yossi read aloud from the commentary *Metzudat David*: "'Tzofeh' – meaning the wicked one looks out to ambush the righteous." He then prepared to move on to the next verse.

But Moshe stopped him. "Wait a moment! You still haven't explained – who is the wicked mentioned here?"

Yossi replied, "In the holy *Gemara* (Sukkah 52b), it is explained that the wicked one referred to here is the evil inclination (the *yetzer hara*)."

"If so," said Moshe, "I have a question:

The verse states that the *yetzer hara* strives with all its might to

kill the righteous. To me, this threat cannot be a real threat to the truly righteous. To explain what I mean, I'll tell you a parable I heard in my childhood:

Once, the 'captain' of the ant league team approached the 'captain' of the elephant league team and suggested that they play a friendly match.

The soccer match began, and of course, the elephants scored goal after goal... The panting ant captain gathered his teammates and urged them, 'Guys! From now on – play rough !'

"You see," Moshe continued, "every single Jew has an endless arsenal of spiritual weapons that allow him to contend with the *yetzer hara*. Some of these weapons are especially lethal: *tzitzit*, *tefillin*, and *mezuzah*. It is said of one who observes them (Menachot 43b): Rabbi Eliezer

ben Yaakov says, 'Whoever has tefillin on his head, tefillin on his arm, tzitzit on his garment, and a mezuzah on his doorway is protected from sin, as it is said: "A threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12), and it also says: "The angel of G-d encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them" (Psalms 34:8).'

"And each day a Jew studies Torah – following his set schedules or attending a regular class, the power of the Torah is so great that it saves a person

from sin ! For so said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel: 'My children ! I have created the evil inclination, and I have created the Torah as its antidote; if you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into his hand !'

"And there are many, many other extremely lethal weapons... In general, every mitzvah and every blessing draws a tremendous light onto the soul of a Jew and banishes from within him the foolish spirit – the *yetzer hara* !<sup>1</sup>

---

 *Wellsprings of Wisdom* 

---

1. Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick, may his righteous memory protect us, wrote (Brit Avot, end of chap. 4):

*"The Holy One, blessed be He, desires that every single Jew—whoever he may be and whatever his circumstances—be refined; therefore He bestowed upon Israel an abundance of Torah and mitzvot... so many disciplines to study: The Tanach, Mishnah, Gemara (Babylonian, Jerusalem, and Tosefta), the Midrashim (Rabbah and Tanchuma), together with all the halachic works. Likewise, one must fulfill the 248 positive commandments and guard himself from, Heaven forbid, transgressing the 365 prohibitions, for through this—even those*

*who are still sunk in the deepest depths, in the nethermost abyss and beneath it—if they fix for themselves a firm regimen to study a set amount every single day, the Torah will ultimately lift them out of the lowest abyss!"*

As Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, may his righteous memory protect us, teaches (Sichot HaRan, discourse 19):

*"I yearned intensely to draw the world to action—that it be an absolute obligation for every individual to study a fixed amount each day without fail. Even those who are exceedingly distant from holiness, trapped in an evil snare and for*

## Parshat Yitro - The Power to Overcome

“And if that is true for every Jew,<sup>2</sup> then *all the more so* – how much more so – for a tzaddik (a truly righteous person) !

“A tzaddik who has worked on himself for days and years, refining his body and sanctifying and purifying it completely – ultimately merits to reach a level where all worldly matters are considered by him as something entirely foreign ! All matters of this world and its temptations hold no place for him whatsoever...

“If so,” Moshe concluded his question, “the *yetzer hara*’s war against the tzaddik is like an ant waging war on an elephant ! Even if it manages to defeat him once or twice, it is certainly still very far from ‘killing’ him. So why is the *yetzer* living in the illusion that it “*seeks to slay him*” ?

Silence fell upon the two of them... And it was in the wake of this conversation that the booklet before you was written.

◆◆◆ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ◆◆◆

*whom sin has become habitual—may G-d spare us and rescue them—nevertheless, the power of the Torah is so great that it can release them from the sins to which they are accustomed, Heaven forfend. If they impose upon themselves an unbreakable statute and a strong obligation to study a certain amount every single day, come what may, they will assuredly merit to escape their evil trap through the Torah, for the power of the Torah is exceedingly great !”*

One must, therefore, be exceedingly vigilant not to lose heart when he sees that, despite studying fixed lessons each day, the evil inclination still overpowers him at times... He must realize that were it not for the Torah, who knows what would have

become of him and into what depths of darkness and kelipot he would have fallen; by virtue of his Torah study, he yet remains within the borders of sanctity. With every single day that he learns Torah, his soul grows ever more refined and purified and begins to emit delicate fragrances... day joins day until, after many days of steadfastness, he will ultimately merit to shed all matters of materiality, and they

will appear alien in his refined eyes...

2. Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel ZY”A taught that a woman who dresses modestly draws onto herself a very lofty spiritual protection – akin to the protection that a man draws onto himself by wrapping in a *tallit* and adorning himself with *tefillin*.

## The Coachdriver's Secret

Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz Shlita related the following (*Besod Avdecha*, vol. III p. 103 – reproduced with the author's permission):

As widely as the holy and awe-inspiring tzaddik, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov was famed for his open acts of charity, kindness, and the redemption of captives; he was yet even more relentless when these mitzvot could be done unseen.

One Friday afternoon, the illustrious Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zhidachov arrived to spend Shabbat in Sassov, as he often did to bask in his mentor's presence. That visit allowed him to witness with his own eyes how Rabbi Moshe Leib redeemed a captive in utter secrecy and to grasp how far such hidden rescue could reach.

The day was slipping away; Queen Shabbat was almost at the door. Every Jewish home hurried to greet her, and in the residence of the tzaddik, the air itself shimmered with quiet majesty.

Fresh from the bathhouse, beard still damp, Rabbi Moshe Leib stood wrapped in a gleaming white satin *kapota*, crowned with a fur *shtreimel*. Two hours remained before candle-lighting. Normally, he would withdraw into his study for soulful meditation; this time, however, he stepped outside as though summoned by an inner voice. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch noticed the unusual move, and sensing the flicker in his teacher's eyes, he followed at a discreet distance.

The tzaddik headed first toward the study hall but, once certain no one observed him, veered onto the dirt path leading to the open fields beyond the town. Clouds, tinted rose by the sinking sun, drifted overhead; wheat ripening beneath them formed a golden sea. A breeze fragrant with approaching Shabbat rustled the stalks and lifted the tzaddik's sidelocks. He halted on the field's edge and stared across the plain at the highway connecting the district towns to Brody as though

expecting someone appointed by Providence.

A hush seemed to freeze the scene. Suddenly, the ringing of wheels and the drumming of hooves shattered the stillness: a carriage drawn by two horses galloped along the road, raising a plume of dust that turned gold in the slanting light. At once, the tzaddik stepped onto the track. The team, racing like an arrow, stopped dead the moment they saw him, as if the very animals sensed the holy fire in his gaze.

A Polish nobleman thrust his head from a window, angry at the obstruction, yet at the sight of the stately figure in white satin, his scowl melted into astonishment. He stepped down, hat in hand, and bowed as before royalty. Rabbi Moshe Leib greeted him in fluent Polish and soon engaged him in an animated discussion of the political questions that preoccupied Warsaw and Kraków. The nobleman, amazed at the Jew's mastery of court intrigue and

language, responded eagerly, flattered beyond measure.

In the midst of their exchange, the tzaddik gestured toward the coachman, a man of about thirty in gleaming livery whose mournful eyes betrayed the misery beneath his uniform. "Who is that fellow?" he asked.

The nobleman, pleased by the interest, explained: "He is a Jewish youth. His family once leased an estate from me and fell into debt. I released them from prison but kept this youngest son of theirs; he serves me for life to repay what was never repaid by them."

"And who is now traveling with you?"

"My wife and my children. We take an evening ride for fresh air."

"The uniform is impressive," the tzaddik continued, "yet the man appears haunted. A coachman unfit for a gentleman of your rank endangers your honor—and perhaps even your life."

The nobleman protested that the man had given perfect service for years; the tzaddik said no more, bade farewell and watched as the carriage rattled off.

It had gone only a short distance when the horses struck a rut, and the coach toppled into the ditch. In an instant, Rabbi Moshe Leib was there to assist them. He pried open the door and, assisted by the shaken driver, pulled the nobleman and his family to safety. Bruised but alive, they lavished thanks on their rescuer. While they righted the carriage, the tzaddik repeated gently: "I warned you—your coachman is not suited to you." The nobleman, still dazed, dismissed the incident as an unlucky mishap.

They set out again, yet within minutes, the carriage overturned once more. Again, the tzaddik sprinted to the wreck, extricated the crying passengers, and helped reset the coach. The nobleman's glare toward his driver now burned with fury, yet pride made him excuse the mishap a second time.

A third time, the coach moved forward, and for the third time—still within sight of the tzaddik—it somersaulted. Rage overcame any caution. The nobleman ripped the noble insignia from the driver's coat, cursed him, and drove him away with threats and lashes.

Then, forced to take the reins himself, he saluted Rabbi Moshe Leib with trembling gratitude and rumbled off toward his estate, the evening light already fading into dusk.

The driver fled across the fields like a hunted stag. Rabbi Moshe Leib, breathless and drenched in sweat beneath his Sabbath finery, chased after him. The wheat tore at their clothes; the sky deepened to violet. Only after long pleading did the man come to believe that the tzaddik meant him well and consented to follow him back to town, now as a free person.

*Minchah* had already been delayed for the waiting congregation. No one paid attention to the foreigner seated

## Parshat Yitro - Yitro Arrives in the Desert

on the stone bench outside the study hall nor to the fact that the stranger accompanied the tzaddik home afterward. All week, the man remained in the courtyard of the study hall. By the next Shabbat, he had donned *tefillin*;

soon afterward, the community quietly absorbed him into the *minyan*. Only decades later did Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch reveal that the silent penitent had once been a captive soul that was redeemed in the last minutes before the Sabbath arrived.

### Yitro Arrives in the Desert

The above story relates a miraculous deliverance that happened to an individual—the Jewish coach driver.

In our parasha – Parashat Yitro – we read about the deliverance that G-d granted the people of Israel:

‘And Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that G-d had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt for Israel’s sake – all the hardships that had befallen them on the way – and how G-d delivered them’ (Exodus 18:8).

Let us preface with some background...

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan in the year 2448 to Creation, the light of redemption dawned: the

people of Israel went out of Egypt and began marching toward the Land of Israel.

The Exodus from Egypt involved the overturning of all the laws of nature: a re-education of Pharaoh through the Ten Plagues, and afterward, the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds, the war with Amalek, manna falling from heaven, water gushing from the well, the appearance of the Clouds of Glory, and the Pillar of Fire...

The echo and commotion created by all this stirred an enormous upheaval in the hearts of everyone on earth...

Fifty days after leaving Egypt, the people of Israel merited standing at the foot of

## Parshat Yitro - Yitro Arrives in the Desert

Mount Sinai and receiving the Torah. The next day, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, Moses ascended Mount Sinai for forty days to receive the Torah. Before he ascended the mountain, Moses had explicitly informed the people of Israel that he was destined to descend from the mountain after forty days – at midday of the fortieth day.

The people of Israel counted the days eagerly since each passing day brought them closer to the great day – that day that had been hoped for by the Creator, by the Torah, by the world, and by the upper and lower realms<sup>3</sup> – the day when the Torah would descend and penetrate the reality of the world.

Finally, the fortieth day arrived... but Moses did not come down! The Israelites had miscounted the days, and growing impatient, the people of Israel approached Aaron – and the Golden Calf was made!

This dreadful sin shook all of creation to its core, and G-d informed Moses: "*I have decided that from you, a new nation of Israel will emerge!*"

Moses, our teacher, heard the decree and was seized with tremendous trembling, and he immediately began to pray before G-d. Until, after forty days and nights of prayer and finding merit for Israel, he succeeded in annulling the heavenly decree!

On the 1st of Elul, Moses ascended to heaven for the third time and remained there another forty days; afterward, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei (Yom Kippur), he returned to earth with the second Tablets in hand.

The next day, the 11<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, the Jewish people were commanded to build the Tabernacle. That very day, they began collecting donations – and within two days, they gathered all of the materials, and the

 *Wellsprings of Wisdom* 

3. To quote the wording of the holy Or HaChaim (Exodus 19:2).

## Parshat Yitro - Yitro Arrives in the Desert

construction of the Tabernacle and its vessels began...

About six months later, on the 23rd of Adar, the seven days of inauguration (*shivat yemei ha-milu'im*) began... and on the 1st of Nissan (the beginning of the second year since leaving Egypt), the Tabernacle was finally dedicated.

The news of what was happening in the Israelite camp spread and disseminated throughout the world, and in far-off Midian, Yitro paced nervously...

He decided: *I'm setting out!* When he arrived (in the month of Nissan) at the border of the Israelite

camp, he sent a messenger to his son-in-law Moses to say, "Moses, *I have arrived...*"

Moses went out to meet him and welcomed him joyfully. He held a grand feast in Yitro's honor, and they sat down to eat near the Tabernacle, as it is said: "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt-offering and sacrifices for G-d; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before G-d" (Exodus 18:12) – "*before G-d*" meaning before the Tent of Meeting—the Tabernacle.<sup>4</sup>

Yitro stayed in the desert for roughly 45 days, until the 19<sup>th</sup>

## ••• Wellsprings of Wisdom •••

**4.** Our Sages disagreed about when Yitro arrived in the desert. The Midrash says (Bereishit Rabbah, Parashah 82 §5): Rabbi Huna said that Rabbi Yannai and Rabbi Chiya the Great debated it. Rabbi Yannai said: Yitro came before the Giving of the Torah. Rabbi Chiya the Great said: Yitro came after the Giving of the Torah.

In the Gemara (Zevachim 116a): "It was stated [by the amora'im] – the sons of Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yehoshua ben

Levi [disagreed about it]. One said: Yitro's arrival was before the Giving of the Torah, and one said: Yitro came after the Giving of the Torah."

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra (Exodus 18:1) discusses this matter at great length and concludes like the one who said Yitro came after the Giving of the Torah... Thus, he explains (ad loc., v. 12) the words "*before G-d*" – "Moses' tent was on the east side of the Tent of Meeting."

## Parshat Yitro - Yitro Arrives in the Desert

of Iyar, when Moses said to him: "Yitro ! We are journeying to the place of which G-d said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will be good to you, for G-d has promised good to Israel" (Numbers 10:29).

Yitro, however, refused to join them and returned to Midian...

After this brief summary, we must examine the verse we cited above: *"And Jethro... heard all that G-d had done for Moses and for Israel His people – that G-d had brought Israel*

*out of Egypt,"* upon which Rashi comments: *"What news did he hear that made him come? The Splitting of the Sea and the War with Amalek."*<sup>5</sup>

The question begs itself:

Wasn't Yitro moved by the great revelation at Mount Sinai? After all, at the Sinai revelation, there was a far greater Divine revelation, the highest there ever was or will be!

Before we move on and answer this question, let us refresh our memory...

---

*Wellsprings of Wisdom*


---

5. "And Jethro heard" (Exodus 18:1) – what report did he hear that made him come? [He heard about] the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds and the war with Amalek." Later (v. 13), Rashi explains the verse according to both opinions (both the one that says Yitro came after the Giving of the Torah and the one that says he came before). Regardless, he does not mention the Giving of the Torah.

In this connection, we share a story:

At the beginning of the leadership of Rabbi Chanoch Henich of Alexander ZY"A, Rabbi Avraham of Sochaczew, author of *Avnei Nezer* ZY"A, met one of the Alexander chasidim returning from

his Rebbe (Rabbi Chanoch Henich), and asked him to repeat something from his Rebbe.

At first, the chasid refused to say, but after the Avnei Nezer persisted, he relented and related: "On Shabbat, the Rebbe preached on the verse 'And Jethro heard,' and said: Yitro was a Kohen Tzedek ('righteous priest'), which is the acronym 'Katz' – and this is what Rashi's question hints at: 'What report did he hear that made him come?' – how could the 'katz' (katz in Yiddish, meaning 'cat') cross the river? (Since a cat cannot swim – the intent of the saying expresses an obstacle that cannot possibly be crossed.)

"And he answered (citing Rashi's answer from the Midrash): 'The Splitting of the

## The Surrender of Egypt

Those years that the people of Israel spent in Egypt were etched forever into Jewish consciousness.

In the beginning, things started off with settlement and putting down roots... but as time went on, unbearable slavery ensued – cruelty and evil beyond description...

In the work sites, men, women, and children groaned under the Egyptian boot. Meanwhile, in all other sectors of Egypt, the Egyptians were busy with feasts and parties, wallowing in a sea of abomination and debauchery...

If that was the situation in Egypt, how much more so in the other lands of the world. Who

cared that in Egypt, innocent civilians were being enslaved?...

And so, 116 years passed.

But as G-d had already said: “For I will not contend forever, nor will I be angry for all time; for it is from Me that spirit envelops, and souls – I have made them” (Isaiah 57:16)...

Moses arrived in Egypt on his mission from G-d and began to shake up the wretched lives of the Egyptians. One plague followed another: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Beasts, Pestilence, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, the Plague of the Firstborn...

The Egyptians felt the ground slipping out from under

### ∞ Wellsprings of Wisdom ∞

Sea’ – the sea split and there was no water in it, and then the “katz” could pass through the sea...

“When Rabbi Avraham of Sochaczew heard that *vort*, he responded in excitement and said: ‘That is what he said? That is what he said?!’ And he got up and traveled to

bask in the shadow of the Rebbe of Alexander.

The sharp-minded Rabbi Natan Lobert ZY”A would say to his students about this teaching: ‘Even if you were to descend many cycles of reincarnation into the world, you would not fully understand this profound and exalted teaching...’

(*Torat Chanoch* – *Divrei Chacham*, p. 29).

## Parshat Yitro - The Surrender of Egypt

them. They did not have a second of respite, not even a moment to collect their wit.

And when the dedicated treatment was finished, the people of Israel left Egypt...

Like a storm wind, the news swept through the entire ancient world: the superpower – mighty

Egypt – had surrendered !

The hearts of all listeners trembled like the trees of the forest: a band of untrained, unarmed slaves had brought Egypt to ruin ! From where did they get such power ?

Seven days passed, and the Egyptians decided to restore their lost honor. They licked their wounds and mustered all the forces at their disposal.

Commando soldiers, reconnaissance units, infantry, cavalry, elephants, dogs, and chariots...

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, strode through this vast camp and surveyed the enormous army, and his face was covered with disappointment...

He turned to his officers and said, ‘We still need reinforcements !’

His officers looked at him in surprise and said, ‘Dear king, all of our forces are here ! Not a single man is missing !’

‘Yes, I know you have mustered all the men who know how to fight with weapons. But I want you to muster all the people who know how to fight with words and with sorcery !’

Tens of thousands of additional warriors were mobilized for the war...

On the shore of the Sea of Reeds, the two camps met: on one side, Egypt's enormous camp, and on the other side, the Israelite camp, which consisted of only six hundred thousand men – the vast majority of whom were broken and crushed.

The end is known. Of the entire Egyptian camp, not a trace remained ! And the people of Israel continued on their way...

The news spread. But this time, it sparked deep terror in

## Parshat Yitro - The Brazen Amalekites

the hearts – “Nations heard – they trembled; terror gripped the dwellers of Philistia. Then the chieftains of Edom were dismayed; the mighty of Moab, trembling gripped them; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away” (Exodus 15:14–15).

The miracle of the Splitting of the Sea – aside from being a great and awesome miracle – also revealed the tremendous Providence of the Creator. At the Splitting of the Sea, the power of the supreme Divine providence was revealed to Yitro. As he testified and said: “Now I know that G-d is

greater than all the g-ds, for they were punished in the very matter in which [the Egyptians] had conspired against them...”

(Exodus 18:11).

The Holy One, blessed be He, runs His world measure for measure! Because the Egyptians sought to destroy the people of Israel by throwing them into the Nile, G-d punished them measure for measure and threw them into the sea – as it is said: “Moses held out his arm over the sea, and at daybreak, the sea returned to its strength, and the Egyptians were fleeing toward it...” (Exodus 14:27).<sup>6</sup>

## The Brazen Amalekites

About a month after the Splitting of the Sea, Amalek decided that he had to prove to the whole world that there was nothing to fear – that he was stronger than the people of Israel...

Even though Amalek had seen with his own eyes the power of G-d – His might and His valor –

and even though he had seen G-d's providence, nevertheless, he paid no attention to it. He resolved to rebel against G-d and to kill His children!

At lightning speed, he armed himself with a whole arsenal of weapons, ammunition, and combat gear – horses,

### ••• Wellsprings of Wisdom •••

6. As Rabbi Hillel David Galer Shlita explained (as cited in *Midah Keneged Midah*,

vol. IV p. 231, by Rabbi Aharon Yehoshua Pessin Shlita).

elephants, camels, mechanical equipment, and supplies, and he prepared for war against Israel...

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai revealed (Zohar, Beshalach 65a) that this war was the hardest war that had ever occurred throughout history. In his words: “*Come and see: from the day the world was created until that time, and from that time until the coming of King Moshiach, and even in the days of Gog and Magog, nothing like it will ever be seen.*”

The reason for this difficulty is that this war took place above, in the upper worlds (meaning that the attribute of Justice was greatly aroused), and it also took place below.

### The Source of the Brazenness

In distant Midian, Yitro heard about these events – about the Ten Plagues and about the Splitting of the Sea... about the greatness and might of the Creator of the World...

When Moses saw that the battle was being waged on two planes, he split it in two. The battle on the spiritual plane he took for himself – as it is said: “Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of G-d in my hand” (Exodus 17:9).

As for the battle on the physical plane, he entrusted it to Joshua bin Nun, as it is said: “And Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose men for us and go out and fight Amalek’” (Exodus 17:9).

Only a few lone Amalekite soldiers managed to escape from the battle... They returned to their land beaten and battered, and the echoes of the victory resounded throughout the land...

To his horror, he heard that Amalek had gone out to war against the Creator, and this news caused him an enormous inner turmoil:<sup>7</sup> *How did these monstrous people come into*

---

### ∞ Wellsprings of Wisdom ∞

7. This section is based on the words of Rabbi Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi ZY”A (*Birkas Mordechai* – Vayikra, p. 377).

## Parshat Yitro - The Source of the Brazenness

*being – who ‘know their Master and intend to rebel against Him’? From where did this being – devoid and bereft of any spark of understanding or reason – “descend” upon us ? ! To know the Master of the Universe and still rebel against Him – can such a thing truly be ? !*

After reflecting over and over in his mind, Yitro understood that, indeed, it was possible ! As part of the wondrous array of creation and the astounding complexity and perplexity of the

human being, there exists even such a loathsome phenomenon to act monstrous – The Holy One, blessed be He, implanted in man the mechanism called "free will," such that, in certain cases, a person can turn himself into a monster ! Amalek succeeded in doing so beyond all expectations !<sup>8</sup>

Yitro was shaken: "It is possible to see and to understand... to recognize and know G-d... and yet still rebel ! If so, what guarantee do I have

---

••• *Wellsprings of Wisdom* •••

---

**8.** The Rambam teaches (Hilchot Melachim 11:4) that if a person arises and claims to be Moshiach, we must test him by established criteria, and if the conditions are fulfilled, we may believe him.

To quote his words:

"If a king will arise from the House of David, diligent in Torah and occupied with mitzvot like David, his ancestor – in accordance with the Written and Oral Torah – and he compels all of Israel to walk [in the ways of the Torah] and repairs its breaches, and he fights the wars of G-d, then he is presumed to be Moshiach.

If he does these things and succeeds, and builds the Temple in its place, and gathers

the dispersed of Israel – then he is certainly Moshiach. He will then improve the entire world to serve G-d together, as it is said: 'For then I will make the peoples pure of speech so that they all invoke the Name of G-d and serve Him with one accord' (Zephaniah 3:9)."

Furthermore, King Moshiach will finish the ancient open account between the people of Israel and Amalek. This account began when they left Egypt, as Amalek was the only nation that dared to come out and fight Israel. By doing so, Amalek demonstrated his wickedness and his tremendous audacity – as our Sages defined Amalek's essence: "He knows his Master and intends to rebel

## Parshat Yitro - The Sin of Disparaging Torah Study

*that I won't fall to those spiritual depths ?!"*

This fear propelled him and made him feel the urgent need to come to Moses...

With this, we can understand why the Splitting of the Sea and the war with Amalek are emphasized in his narrative – because reflecting on those caused him to awaken and come !

### The Sin of Disparaging Torah Study

In a talk delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel ZY"A, he said the following:

"Over the years, throughout Europe, many communities of supremely holy Jews lived. But

This is precise in Rashi's wording that we brought above: "What report did he hear and come," with the emphasis on the words "and come."

At this point, we must pause and consider: How is the monster of Amalek actually created ?

But first, let us preface with the following:

about two hundred and fifty years ago, there arose a certain man named Moses Mendelssohn, who was a sort of Torah scholar – a 'Rabbi Doctor'...

He claimed that it is not worthwhile for *bnei Torah* (Torah

### ∞ Wellsprings of Wisdom ∞

*against Him*" (see *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 21 p. 214). Therefore, G-d commanded: "Erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Deuteronomy 25:19).

In addition, our Sages explained in Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Teitzei §11) that as long as Amalek exists – the Name of G-d is not whole, and His throne is not whole. But immediately, speedily in our days, when Amalek's offspring

will perish – the Name of G-d will be whole, and the Throne will be whole.

Thus, the account with Amalek is not only against the people of Israel but against the Holy One, blessed be He, as the Torah says: "G-d's war with Amalek persists throughout the ages" (Exodus 17:16). From all this it is understood that King Moshiach will merit to be the greatest warrior of the wars of G-d in the world...

## Parshat Yitro - The Sin of Disparaging Torah Study

scholars) to be pitiful nobodies. They have no high-school diploma, no college entrance exam, no career prospects... all kinds of criticisms. He began to introduce secular study programs in the yeshivot, and they misleadingly called it '*Enlightenment*' – '*Haskalah*'.

Many rejected him outright, but there were some who didn't. At first, the damage his approach wrought wasn't noticeable, but – as is usually the case with the study of secular wisdom – the coldness and distance from G-d that wafted from it penetrated into their minds and, from there, spread further into their hearts...

The terrible impurity of the sages of *Yavan* (Greece) – settled in their hearts. They began to deteriorate until they came to publicly desecrate the Sabbaths and eat forbidden foods... It reached the point that a person, after three or four generations, did not even know he was a Jew – a terrible assimilation ensued.

As long as they did not demean Torah scholars, there was still hope for them. But when they began to disparage Torah scholars, their hope was entirely lost !

Those fools who cast off the yoke published articles and essays in which they depicted Torah scholars as 'people of darkness'... The poisonous venom that dripped from their pens seeped into the hearts of their readers, and they gradually began to distance themselves from Torah scholars and belittle them. Notably, in 1930, they came out openly and bitterly against rabbis and Jewish leaders.

In Heaven, all of the worlds trembled. Beads of dread dripped from the foreheads of the angels and seraphim... The holy Torah approached the Holy One, blessed be He, and wallowed before Him in a sea of tears, and cried out: '*Master of the Universe ! You wrote: "But if you despise My statutes" – meaning one despises others who perform [My commandments]; "and if your*

## Parshat Yitro - The Sin of Disparaging Torah Study

*soul abhors My ordinances” – meaning one hates the sages; “so as not to perform” – meaning he prevents others from performing; “all My commandments” – meaning he denies that I commanded them; “[thus] breaking My covenant” (Leviticus 26:15) – meaning he denies the fundamental [principle of faith].*

‘Rashi concludes: *Behold, these are seven transgressions – the first leads to the second, and so on until the seventh. Namely: he did not study; he did not perform; he despises others who perform; he hates the sages; he prevents others; he denies the commandments; he denies the fundamental pillar of faith.*’

Tragically, G-d gave permission for the destroyer to emerge from the darkness...

In the elections that took place in 5693 (1933), Hitler, may his name and memory be erased, seized power!

He gathered soldiers and seated them in offices and told

them: “*I want exact lists of every Jewish man and woman living in Europe!*” The Chafetz Chaim was already at the end of his life, and when he heard that Hitler was elected, he said: “*Whoever stays in Europe will not have a remnant left!*” Many of those people who heard the Chafetz Chaim’s piercing words didn’t want to accept them – which would mean giving up their entire lives. In Germany and throughout Europe, Jews had attained very prominent positions: they were key figures, directors of international banks, heads of the world’s best hospitals and universities...

Then suddenly, on the Friday of Parashat Ki Tavo – the first of September – Nazi Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began.

Hitler launched against the Jewish people a ‘Campaign of Annihilation.’ He had already prepared all the plans, all the camps – everything was ready beforehand; only the official

## Parshat Yitro - The Root of It All-The Point of Interest !

commencement of his plan took place on September 1...

This catastrophic outcome started to spiral downward – with the actions of *Haskalah* (Enlightenment), disparaging those who study and teach Torah. A Jew's defining role and purpose is Torah. Even if he needs to learn a profession for his livelihood, he

must be careful not to let those studies become part of his identity. And throughout the duration of those studies, he must learn many works of faith and reverence, so that his faith will not, G-d forbid, be impaired..."

Thus far, the words of my father. Let us delve a bit into them...

## The Root of It All-The Point of Interest !

In Rashi's words, which we brought above, all is spread out for us, and the root of everything is revealed. The starting point – the very beginning of it all – is: “he did not study.”

As my father explained, the intent of these words is with regard to the focal point of one's interest. What is the thing that interests the person and fills his consciousness ?

A person who is interested in holiness is holy and ultimately will merit every spiritual level and every virtue. By contrast, a person who steers his interest toward nonsense and vanities

– will descend further, as laid out in the saying of the sages above: he did not perform; he despises others who perform; he hates the sages; he prevents others; he denies the commandments; he denies the fundamental beliefs !

It all begins with the fact that “he does not study” – the Torah simply does not interest him enough. He then continues and “does not perform,” moves on to “despise others who do,” then rushes to “not let others do,” continues to “hate the sages,” and ultimately finds himself to be one who “knows his Master and intends to rebel against Him” –

on an island of revulsion and filth that is nothing but heresy.<sup>9</sup>

This is a very specific process. If you see someone who has been infected with the curse of heresy, you can be sure that it all started – and stems – from “not learning”.

A person’s spiritual level is measured by what he is interested in. But as with every spiritual level, there are ups and downs.

If we want to imagine it, let’s put it this way: In a person’s initial state, he stands atop a snowy mountain, enclosed within a snowball that surrounds him...

When the person begins to move, the ball begins to roll, and as it rolls, it grows thicker...

Now, if the person moves upward spiritually, his spiritual

If you see someone who fits the description of one who “does not learn,” you must know – you can already begin to see – his disgraceful end before your eyes.

Thus, within the reality of “not learning” lies the seed of disaster, the malignant poison that destroys and causes an ignoble end...

## Danger ! Gossip !

strength and soul abilities grow and intensify, and he becomes more spiritual and more joyous.

But if G-d forbid the person moves downward, he becomes increasingly entangled; the forces of impurity capture him and torment him, and he becomes beset by anxieties and fears, self-hatred and addictions...

This is what our Sages have said (Avot 4:2): “The reward of a mitzvah is [another] mitzvah, and the reward of a transgression is [another] transgression.”

### ∞ Wellsprings of Wisdom ∞

9. This section is based on the words of Rabbi Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi

ZY”A (*Birkas Mordechai* – *Vayikra*, p. 374).

## Parshat Yitro - Danger ! Gossip !

When a Jew performs a mitzvah, the snowball of goodness – now thickened – becomes worthy of receiving additional flow; thus, he is presented with another mitzvah.<sup>10</sup>

But, G-d forbid, when a Jew commits a transgression, he falls another step into the depths of impurity, and then, this is followed by him falling even further with yet another transgression...

Here, as with every spiritual level, there are shortcuts – opportunities to attain one's

destiny more quickly, for better or for worse – similar to what our Sages have said (Avodah Zarah 10b): “There is one who acquires his world in a single moment.”

Upon reflection, it seems that the worst thing – the one that short-circuits the process and causes a person to deteriorate at breakneck speed into the abyss – is a deep interest in evil speech and gossip.

When a person directs his interest toward knowing what this one thinks or what that one said, he connects himself to

## ••• Wellsprings of Wisdom •••

**10.** In a talk delivered by Rabbi Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi ZY”A (*Birkas Mordechai* – *Bamidbar*, p. 48), he said:

“They relate about one of the great Admorim, who spoke at the dedication of Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin, founded by Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin ZY”A, and this was the gist of the speech:

‘Gentlemen, the deeds of Rabbi Meir Shapiro arouse envy. There are many, and all of them are stamped with the seal of genius, cleverness, leadership, fear of Heaven, and so on and so forth. There is no doubt that the crowning achievement is this edifice that we are now dedicating

– to the glory of the House of Israel and the triumph of the Torah of Israel.

But I, gentlemen, am envious mainly of something else. Not of all these wonderful things – the handiwork of this extraordinary gaon.

I envy that particular mitzvah that brought about this (sacred edifice) that gleams before our eyes.

Which mitzvah is it that is capable of bringing in its wake the enormous marvels that stand out before us ? !

It is that unknown mitzvah that I envy most of all...”

them and becomes their disciple. After all, what is a disciple? One who has absorbed his teacher's mindset.

Since those opinion-mongers are surely immersed in the vanities of the world, they fall under the category of one who "does not study." Who knows what stage of the decline they themselves are in – perhaps they have already reached the very bottom of the rung and suffer from denial of G-d !

When one listens to *gossip*, one's mind is altered – for the worse. It is then quite obvious that a defective mind is the root of all sins.

Therefore, it is forbidden to listen to media pundits and commentators. It makes no difference whether they wear a kippah or not – for they all fall under the definition of one "does not study", G-d forbid !

Natural curiosity must be steered inward to points of light: to hear a new *chiddush* of Torah (it indeed is the sweetest thing

in the world – happy is the one who tastes of it); to be interested in one's spouse, in one's children (from stories we've heard, it sadly seems to have become a rather rare phenomenon to actually show deep "interest in one's children"); and in the people around them...

Natural curiosity must be turned inward to the inner world – to incline an ear (the ears of the intellect) and to listen to the feelings, sensations, and thoughts that raise their voices within us incessantly ! We, in our lowness, may, however, not hear them at all !

After that, it is praiseworthy to seclude oneself in some corner and to tell our Father In Heaven about one's feelings, sensations, and thoughts. One who persists in this holy practice – the practice of *hitbodedut* (solitary meditation and prayer) – is assured that he will reach the ultimate level, and in addition, all of the gates of heaven will be opened before him; his eyes will behold the divine, and his ears will hear divine songs of creation !

## Parshat Yitro - One Aveirah Leads to Another Aveirah

To summarize: *Amalek* (the archetypal Jewish enemy who rejects the very fundamentals of faith) came into being precisely as an eventual result of having

“not studied”; his sole field of interest was impurity and sorcery !

Now let us return to the first question we posed...

### One Aveirah Leads to Another Aveirah

The war waged by the *yetzer hara* against the *tzaddik* is in no way comparable to an ant’s skirmish with an elephant, which we mentioned earlier.

The *yetzer hara* knows that it indeed possesses the power to kill the *tzaddik*, and therefore it seeks to kill him !

The *yetzer hara* employs a single rule: one *aveirah* brings another *aveirah* !

It knows that if it can cause the *tzaddik* to stumble even in the subtlest sin, as thin as a hair’s breadth, the snowball effect will cause it to roll of its own accord into the abyss...

To quote Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, of sainted memory, in *Michtav M’Eliyahu*, Fifth Volume, p. 291:

“My late revered father, quoting Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, explained the verse, ‘The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to kill him’ means that the *yetzer hara* is so powerful that it would dominate even all of the righteous, were it not that the Holy One, blessed be He, limits its activity and allows it to mislead a person only by limited degrees, in step with the evolution of sin, along the line of ‘one transgression brings another transgression.’”

With this, he clarified the entire course of the Sin of the Golden Calf.

How did it begin?—“When the people saw that Moses was so late in coming down from the mountain”...

## Parshat Yitro - One Aveirah Leads to Another Aveirah

Rashi comments: “*Boshesh*”—a term denoting delay.” That is, they began to worry over his delay.

This was the beginning of the sin, for had they looked with the eye of truth, they would have realized that they had miscalculated because it is impossible for there to be any change in the words Moses relayed from the mouth of G-d. Rather than wonder at Moses' tardiness, they should have wondered at themselves—how far they must have erred, for they thought they had heard with perfect accuracy that he would come that very day, and now it became clear that they had been mistaken!

Since they did not think along these lines but instead allowed anxiety and doubt to creep into their hearts, the Satan was granted license to test them further...

The Satan came, threw the world into confusion, and showed them—in their imagination—a vision of darkness, gloom, and

chaos, declaring: ‘Surely Moses has died, and therefore chaos has come to the world.’

Once he succeeded in planting this image in their imagination, the Satan was permitted to announce openly and told them, 'Moses has died; six hours have already passed, and he has not yet come.'"

When this notion became fixed in their hearts, the Satan was allowed further liberty:

“For this Moses, the man...’—he showed them a semblance of Moses himself, borne through the air.”

As the Midrash relates:<sup>11</sup> "The Satan 'found his hands' at that moment when Moses appeared suspended between heaven and earth"—"found his hands," meaning that they strengthened his hands by submitting to his deceptive fantasies...

In summary, happy and fortunate is the person who is careful not to roll into the depths.

## Parshat Yitro - Summary and Practical Conclusions

Even if it should happen that one sins, he must halt and repent.

Thus, he will be rescued from the snowball of transgression...

### ***Summary and Practical Conclusions***

1. Every individual who wishes to know his spiritual standing must examine the focal point of his interest—what it is that intrigues him and fills his personality !

A person whose interest lies in holiness is himself holy and will ultimately merit every spiritual rung and virtue.

Conversely, a person who channels his curiosity toward foolishness and trivialities may, in the end, sink into the very abyss until, Heaven forbid, he denies the fundamentals of faith.

2. Our holy Sages have revealed to us that “the reward of a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*, and the reward of an *aveirah* is an *aveirah* !”

That is, when a Jew fulfills a *mitzvah*, his spiritual strength and psychic capacities grow ever stronger, and he becomes more spiritual and joyous.

Consequently, he becomes worthy of additional divine bounty, and therefore, another *mitzvah* is arranged for him.

But if, Heaven forbid, he commits a sin, he descends another step into the depths of impurity, and

there he is tripped up by another sin.

3. A most pernicious factor, capable of hurtling a person into the depths with lightning speed, is an interest in gossip !

When a person diverts his curiosity to discover what so-and-so thinks or what so-and-so has said, he attaches himself to that individual and becomes ‘his disciple’—for what is a disciple if not one who has absorbed his master’s mind !

Since those opinion-makers are assuredly immersed in worldly vanities, they fall under the category of those who “did not study Torah,” and who knows on what rung of descent they stand—perhaps they have already reached the ultimate degradation: a denial of the fundamentals of Judaism !

Accordingly, it is undesirable to listen to media commentators; it makes no difference whatsoever whether they wear a kippah or not—they all fall under the definition of those who “did not study”, G-d forbid.

4. A person must direct his natural curiosity toward points of light: to

**Parshat Yitro - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

hear a new *chiddush* Torah, to take a genuine interest in one's spouse, one's children, and the people around them...

One must internalize that natural interest, turn it inward to the inner worlds—bend an ear of intellect—and listen to the feelings, sensations, and thoughts that ceaselessly raise their voices within us, which we often, in our lowliness, fail to hear at all !

Afterward, one should seclude oneself in some quiet corner and tell our Father In Heaven his feelings, sensations, and thoughts; whoever perseveres in this sacred labor, the labor of *hitbodedut* (solitary communion with G-d), is assured that he will reach the ultimate goal, and all the gates of heaven will be opened before him: his eyes will behold, and his ears will hear the Divine and the song of creation !

**Shabbat Shalom!**





# WEEKLY ENGLISH ZOOM CLASS

with  
**RABBI ISRAEL ABARGEL** shlita

**FOLLOWED BY Q&A  
EVERY SUNDAY**

California Time - 08:00 AM

Colorado Time - 09:00 AM

Florida Time - 11:00 AM

Israel Time - 18:00 PM



[www.zoom.us/j/4459755725](https://www.zoom.us/j/4459755725)

For details:

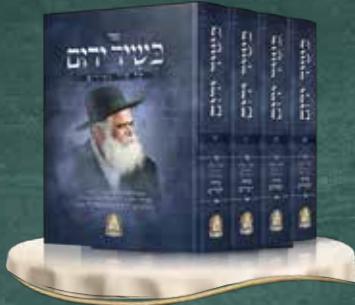
 **(347) 352 - 8125**



New!

On the tenth anniversary of the passing of our teacher and master,  
Rabbi Yoram Abergel, of blessed memory.

New and rare books from his teachings have been published:

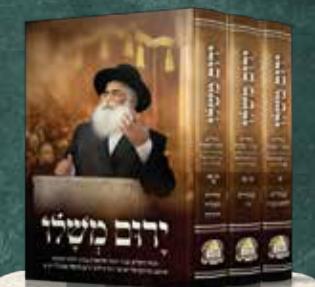


## ❖ Beshir Yarum ❖

A treasure of articles on awe of G-d  
With striking stories and parables  
On Shir HaShirim, the Song of Songs,  
Arranged from the lessons of our  
teacher, of blessed memory

## ❖ Yarum Meshalo ❖

Parables and pearls of wisdom that were  
collected and arranged In a captivating  
and heart-winning language  
From the lessons of our teacher and leader  
Rabbi Yoram Abergel, of blessed memory



## ❖ Shufrei DeYosef ❖

On the Five Books of the Torah  
Sweeter than honey  
Composed by the holy kabbalist  
Rabbi Yosef HaKohen, of blessed memory  
Now published for the first time  
In a new and magnificent edition



Hurry to order: 08-931-1785  
[shop.hameir-laarets.org.il](http://shop.hameir-laarets.org.il)

666 HaKatzir Street, Netivot | +1(347)352-8125



# New!

On the tenth anniversary of the passing of our teacher and master,  
Rabbi Yoram Abergel, of blessed memory.

New and rare books from his teachings have been published:



## ❖ Imrei Noam ❖

Shabbat talks of Rabbi Yoram, in a new edition with titles for each discourse, with the addition of 'Amirah Ne'imah'— practical guidance for daily life

## ❖ Hameir L'Yisrael ❖

Selected lessons interwoven with the holy words of our Sages,  
Including guidance and a path in serving Hashem,  
And practical tools  
For confronting the challenges of our generation.



## ❖ Betzur Yarum ❖

The "Betzur Yarum" lessons of our teacher of blessed memory,  
Now published for the first time,  
On the section Sha'ar HaYichud VeHaEmunah  
From the book Tanya.



Hurry to order: 08-931-1785  
[shop.hameir-laarets.org.il](http://shop.hameir-laarets.org.il)

666 HaKatzir Street, Netivot | +1(347)352-8125



## Shabbat Times Yitro

20th of Shevat, 5784

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:02 pm	6:03 pm	6:33 pm
Miami	5:50 pm	6:44 pm	7:21 pm
Los Angeles	5:11 pm	6:08 pm	6:42 pm
Montreal	4:50 pm	5:56 pm	6:22 pm
Toronto	5:18 pm	6:21 pm	6:49 pm
London	4:41 pm	5:53 pm	6:13 pm
Jerusalem	5:02 pm	5:54 pm	6:29 pm
Tel Aviv	4:59 pm	5:51 pm	6:26 pm
Haifa	4:57 pm	5:52 pm	6:26 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:00 pm	5:54 pm	6:29 pm

### Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of  
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

There is no Jew in the world who has no share in the Torah. As we say in the prayer, "Grant us our portion in Your Torah" – each person asks to receive his own share.

Even if, in this world, a person slips and falls somewhat, that is only temporary, only for the time being, because after every descent there is a great ascent.

Therefore, when someone brings a Jew back in complete teshuvah, that is the very best day, so to speak, for the Holy One, blessed be He; it gives Him tremendous joy.



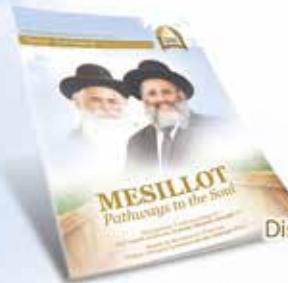
### Become a Partner!

For Donations:

American Friends of Netivot Inc  
980 Broadway St 336 Thornwood, NY 10594  
PCSB Bank  
Routing- #221970980  
Checking- 5151000774  
Or Visit: [Hameir-Laarets.org.il/Donate](http://Hameir-Laarets.org.il/Donate)  
+1 (954) 800-6526

RECOGNIZED BY THE IRS AS A 501(c)(3)

TAX DEDUCTIBLE ORGANIZATION



## Do You Enjoy Mesilot?

Distribute Pathways to the Soul in  
Your Synagogue!

## Receive Mesilot Weekly Anywhere Worldwide!

- Free of Charge -

Join Now!



Ask The Rabbi!



## Media

[hameir-laarets.org.il/en](http://hameir-laarets.org.il/en)

Hameir Laarets

(954) 800-6526

054-870-8737

en@h-l.org.il

