



Likkutei Sichos

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Remembering a Contradiction

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1.

COMPARING TWO REMEMBRANCES

Regarding the passage at the end of our *parshah*,¹ “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you were leaving Egypt... do not forget,” our Sages comment² that “remember” means, “with your mouths,” and *do not forget* means, “in your hearts.”

Similarly, it says in *Toras Kohanim*³ on the verse,⁴ “Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it — You might think this means ‘in your heart.’ When the verse says,⁵ ‘Guard {the Shabbos day},’ it refers to guarding it in the heart. So, how is ‘remember’ to be fulfilled? — The remembrance should be repeated verbally.”

We also find a parallel between remembering Shabbos and remembering Amalek’s deed concerning the timing of these remembrances:

Regarding the remembrance of Amalek, Rambam says:⁶ “It is also a positive mitzvah to **constantly** remember their evil deeds and their ambush {of the Jewish people}, to arouse our hatred of them.” (Rambam then adds: “The Oral Tradition teaches: *Remember* — with your mouths; *Do not forget* — in your hearts.”) Meaning, “Remember what Amalek did to you” is a **constant** mitzvah.

[Even according to the authorities⁷ who maintain that remembering Amalek is a one-time mitzvah, or that it applies once a year, or the like, we can

¹ *Devarim* 25:17,19.

² *Sifri* on *Devarim* 25:17,19; *Megillah* 18a; *Toras Kohanim*, beg. of “*Bechukosai*.”

³ *Toras Kohanim*, beg. of “*Bechukosai*.”

⁴ *Shemos* 20:8.

⁵ {*Devarim* 5:12.}

⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch. 5, par. 5; see Rambam’s wording in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive mitzvah 189.

⁷ See Ramban on *Devarim* 25:17-19; *Sefer HaChinuch*, “Mizvah 603.”

posit that, also according to them,⁸ when we recall Amalek's treachery **daily**,⁹ we fulfill a biblical mitzvah each time.]

We also find something similar concerning the remembrance of Shabbos. The essential obligation is to "remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it" on Shabbos.¹⁰ However, Ramban asserts,¹¹ "according to *pshat*,"¹² the verse, "Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it," obligates us "to remember Shabbos every day constantly."

2.

THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S QUESTION

On this basis, we can elucidate *Tanchuma's* remarks on the verse, *Remember what Amalek did to you*:¹³

Here it says, *remember*, and concerning Shabbos it says, *remember* — Are they both **equal**? Shlomo said....

We can similarly elucidate what it says in *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*. When Moshe said:¹⁴

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you were leaving Egypt — The Jewish people said: Moshe, our teacher! One verse says, *Remember what Amalek did to you*, and another verse says, *Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it*. How can both be fulfilled? This one says *remember*, and that one says *remember*!...

⁸ As we do not {unnecessarily} extend disputes (see *Sdei Chemed*, "Klalim," "maareches haMem," "Kla;l" 16 et al.).

⁹ *Shelah*, "Torah SheBiksav," on the end of *parshas Ki Seitzei*: "And it is a great mitzvah to recite this *parshah* every day, to fulfill the mitzvah of remembering." (Similarly, it is included in the Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*.) *Magen Avraham* on "Orach Chaim," sec. 60, sub-par. 2: "The *Kavanos* and the writings {of the sages} say these remembrances are a positive mitzvah. Therefore, when a person says... *for Your great name* (he should remember) the deed of Amalek." And in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 60, par. 4: "Remembering... and the deed of Amalek... are positive Torah mitzvos... and it is appropriate for a person to remember them in proximity to the reading of *Shema*."

¹⁰ See *Mishneh Torah*, "Hilchos Shabbos," ch. 29, par. 1; Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive mitzvah 155.

¹¹ Ramban on *Shemos* 20:8.

¹² {The plain meaning of Scripture.}

¹³ *Tanchuma*, "Ki Setizei," sec. 7.

¹⁴ *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 44; see Radal, loc cit.

For both the remembrance of Shabbos and the remembrance of Amalek are to be: (a) a verbal remembrance (in addition to being a remembrance in the **heart**); and (b) a constant remembrance; they are both **equal**. Thus, the Jewish people asked, “How can they both be fulfilled?” According to this approach, they are constant mitzvos.

However, in truth, we cannot explain the question of the Jewish people along these lines, for we find other things that must be remembered daily (such as the remembrance¹⁵ of the exodus from Egypt, and so forth,¹⁶ and it is clear that when two (or more) remembrances are constant mitzvos, no conflict exists between them. There is room for all of them.

[To remember them verbally, clearly, they do not have to be verbalized every moment of the day. And even concerning the remembrance in the heart, even if we accept the position that these remembrances must be in a person’s heart **constantly**, even so, one such constant remembrance in the heart does not preclude another. The proof: There are six mitzvos¹⁷ regarding which *Sefer HaChinuch* states:¹⁸ “Their obligation is **constant**; it does not cease for a person for even a **moment** all of his days.”]

¹⁵ See *Responsa of Shaagas Aryeh*, sec. 13, as to whether this remembrance must be verbalized.

¹⁶ See Ramban, addenda to *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive mitzvah 7; *Magen Avraham* on *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 60, sub-sec. 2; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 60, par. 4.

¹⁷ To believe in Hashem, not to believe in another, to unify Him, to love Him, to revere Him, not to be led astray by musings of the heart or sights of the eyes.

¹⁸ In the author’s epistle at the beg. of *Sefer HaChinuch* (at the end of the epistle).

3.

DIFFICULTIES REGARDING MOSHE'S RESPONSE

Similarly, we need to clarify Moshe's response {to the Jewish people}, as recorded in *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*:

Moshe replied to them: "A cup of spiced wine¹⁹ cannot be compared to a cup of vinegar {even though} this is a cup and that is a cup. This is a remembrance to guard and sanctify the Shabbos day, and the other is a remembrance of a punishment."

- a) How does Moshe's response address the Jewish people's question of how both remembrances can be fulfilled together?
- b) What is the basis for comparing a cup of spiced wine to a cup of **vinegar**?
- c) What is the reason for the nuanced wording, "This is a **cup** and that is a **cup**"?
- d) What is the **chiddush**²⁰ in Moshe's reply that "this is a remembrance to guard and sanctify... and the other is a remembrance of a punishment"? At the outset, the two commands **explicitly** conveyed that the purpose of remembering Amalek is **opposite** to the purpose of "Remember the Shabbos day"!

¹⁹ {In the original, "קוּבְדֵיטוּן."}

²⁰ {A *chiddush* is a novel insight.}

4.

SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT

The explanation:

Generally, there are three types of positive mitzvos: mitzvos involving action, mitzvos involving speech, and mitzvos involving thought. A person achieves perfection in mitzvah observance when action-mitzvos are fulfilled with intention and thought. The opposite is likewise true: speech- and thought-mitzvos are catalysts that propel a person to concrete action.²¹

This is similar to the faith in a person's heart, which must propel a person to **fulfill all of the mitzvos**. As our Sages say:²² “Chabakuk came along and **based** them {the mitzvos} on one {principle}, as it says,²³ ‘the righteous person shall live through his faith.’”

Among the mitzvos (of speech and thought) themselves, mitzvos that involve remembrance are distinct, for even when the remembrance must be verbalized, the essence and purpose of such a mitzvah is the person's **intention**. Remembering something verbally (or in a fleeting thought) is not true remembrance. Rather, a person must remember in a way that the memory permeates his entire being so that he **relives** what he is remembering.²⁴ This can also be inferred from Rambam's wording regarding the remembrance of Amalek,²⁵ which requires us to “arouse the spirits through these statements {to motivate us} to **fight against him** {Amalek}.”

Therefore, the question arises: How can a person remember (and be inspired by) two contrary ideas, such as Shabbos and Amalek? A person can remember the six mitzvos referred to above — such as belief in Hashem, loving

²¹ Cf. *Likkutei Torah*, beg. of “Pinchas”; see *Sefer HaGilgulim*, ch. 4.

²² *Makos* 24a.

²³ {*Chabakuk* 2:4.}

²⁴ Like the person who fainted when he remembered having gone to see the king (*Likkutei Dibburim*, vol. 1, pp. 164a ff.); see *Derech Mitzvosecha*, end of “*Mitzvas Zechiras Maaseh Amalek*” (98b ff.); *Or HaTorah*, “*Parshas Zachor*,” pp. 1796 ff.

²⁵ Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive mitzvah 189.

Him, revering Him, and the like — with a constant remembrance that includes them all. This is possible because they are all of the same type and are of similar substance (binding oneself to Hashem through belief, love, reverence, and the like). However, when it comes to {the remembrance of} Shabbos and Amalek, they are altogether different from each other — they are opposed to each other!

The purpose of remembering Shabbos is so that “we remember Creation at all times, and we acknowledge at all times that the world has a Creator.”²⁶ This accords with what *Sefer HaChinuch*²⁷ says: “We should firmly establish in our heart belief in the creation of the world, ‘for in six days, Hashem made...’”²⁸

That is to say, the remembrance of Shabbos is a constant remembrance of Hashem creating the world, and of “the renewal of Creation every day, constantly.”²⁹ This remembrance clearly emphasizes Hashem’s control of the world and everything in it.

What characterizes Amalek is that he “knows his Master and intentionally rebels against Him.”³⁰ Indeed, Amalek knows of the existence of Divinity; Amalek recognizes Hashem’s **sovereignty** over himself and the world. Yet despite this recognition, Amalek “**intentionally** rebels against Him.” Amalek’s entire aim is to rebel against Hashem and oppose His authority.

Consequently, when the Jewish people are required to remember Amalek, the intent of this mitzvah is indeed to annul Amalek, as the plain intent of the mitzvah to “remember what Amalek did” is to “**wipe out** the remembrance of Amalek.”³¹ Nonetheless, by remembering, a person will necessarily come to understand that according to Torah, rebellion against Hashem is a reality. (This reality then gives rise to the necessity of the mitzvah to “wipe out” Amalek.) So

²⁶ Ramban on *Shemos* 20:8.

²⁷ *Sefer HaChinuch*, mitzvah 31.

²⁸ {*Shemos* 20:11.}

²⁹ {*Siddur*, first blessing before the morning “*Shema*.”}

³⁰ *Toras Kohanim* on *Bechukosai* 26:14 (quoted in Rashi on *Vayikra* 26:14); Rashi on *Bereishis* 10:9, 13:13 — in these {latter} sources, this quality is not attributed to Amalek, but in several places in Chassidus, it is explained that this *does* refer to Amalek; *Derech Mitzvosecha* (13b, 95a): “**Our Rabbis said about him {Amalek}** that he knows...; see similar remarks in *Maamar* “*Zachor 5665*,” beg. of ch. 3.

³¹ {*Devarim* 25:19}.

this remembrance is contradictory to {the principle brought to mind by} the remembrance of Shabbos.

This was the complaint of the Jewish people: “How can both be fulfilled? This one says *remember*, and that one says *remember!*” Since both commands require truthful remembrance, how can a person remember two opposites: the remembrance of Shabbos, which must permeate a Jew with the feeling of Hashem’s control over the entire world, together with a genuine remembrance of the existence of Amalek, who defies Hashem’s control of the world?³²

5.

THE PARADOX OF VINEGAR AND AMALEK

To this claim of the Jewish people, Moshe responded: “A cup of spiced wine cannot be compared to a cup of vinegar {even though} this is a cup and that is a cup. This one is a remembrance to guard and sanctify... and the other one is a remembrance of a punishment.”

This is the explanation of Moshe’s response: Vinegar³³ is paradoxical — on the one hand, it is not fit to drink, but on the other hand, our Sages say that vinegar revives the spirit.³⁴ Moreover, we find in several places³⁵ that vinegar is not considered to be a distinct substance; rather, it is a derivative of wine.

The deeper meaning of these ideas: Amalek (vinegar) also has a source in the realm of holiness. In other words, the fact that an entity “intentionally rebels against Him” — while the truth is that “there is nothing aside from Him”³⁶ — stems from the power of Hashem who is omnipotent. However, Amalek’s G-dly

³² See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 14, pp. 86 ff. for an explanation of this conundrum as to how it is possible to wipe out the **remembrance** of Amalek at the same time as we are commanded to “**remember** what Amalek did to you.”

³³ See the laws regarding the blessing to be recited over vinegar — *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 202, 204; and Alter Rebbe’s *Birkas HaNehenin*, ch. 7, par. 2,4.

³⁴ *Yoma* 81b; see *Berachos* 5b.

³⁵ The blessing over vinegar also indicates this recited “because it was **changed** and became spoiled” (Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 204, par. 2; Alter Rebbe’s *Birkas HaNehenin*, ch. 7, par. 2); see *Demai* 1:1 (and *Bartenura*, loc. cit.); *Pesachim* 42b.

³⁶ {*Devarim* 4:35.}

source becomes **revealed** by nullifying and wiping out Amalek — Amalek’s characteristic of deliberately rebelling against Hashem. Amalek’s inner source is thus revealed. From that standpoint, even a reality that “intentionally rebels against Him” does not contradict G-dliness.³⁷

This idea is more palatable following the principle that “for **anything** that the Merciful One prohibited to us, He permitted us something similar.”³⁸ For we also find a similar idea in the realm of holiness: “They had a **dispute** in the Heavenly Academy... the Holy One said... and the {members of} the Heavenly Academy said....”³⁹

Concerning this, Moshe Rabbeinu said, “A cup of spiced wine cannot be compared to a cup of vinegar {even though} this is a cup and that is a cup...”: The remembrances of Amalak and Shabbos can be fulfilled together since they are both alluded to by a “cup” — a receptacle for receiving the revelation of holiness and G-dliness — for Amalek’s source also lays in the realm of holiness, as discussed above. On the other hand, they “cannot be compared.... This is a remembrance to guard and sanctify... and the other is a remembrance of a punishment.” Meaning, the revelation of G-dliness achieved by remembering Shabbos is a function of the remembrance itself: “A remembrance to guard and sanctify the Shabbos day” — the remembrance itself brings about the sanctity, namely, the revelation of Hashem’s unity. In contrast, the revelation of G-dliness achieved by remembering Amalek is “a remembrance of a **punishment**” that is actualized by crushing and nullifying the disposition of Amalek, who “intentionally rebels against Him.”

When this is achieved, the “**cup** of vinegar” is shown to also be a substance that revives (reveals) the soul. Specifically, by remembering Amalek, we demonstrate that Amalek also derives (specifically) from the infinite dimension of G-dliness .

³⁷ See a similar idea in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, pp. 66 ff., and fn. 79 there.

³⁸ *Chullin* 115b.

³⁹ *Bava Metzia* 86a; this is explained in *Likkutei Torah*, “*Tazria*,” 22c ff.

This fits well with the Alter Rebbe's explanation in *Tanya*⁴⁰ that there are “two types of Divine pleasure,” just as with physical food, there are two kinds of delicacies: sweet and delicious foods, and “sharp or **sour** substances.” Still, these have been “well-spiced and prepared, making them into delicacies that **revive** the spirit.” This idea is expressed in the verse,⁴¹ “Hashem has done everything for His glory, even the wicked {who are destined} for the evil day.” In other words, the Divine intent is that a person should repent of his evil and turn his evil into *day* and *light* Above. That is, what a wicked person has “done” is also “done” by **Hashem** in order for this person to “repent of his evil and turn his evil into *day* and *light*.”

6.

LESSONS FOR US

This serves to provide practical lessons in *avodah*⁴² for every Jew — from two opposite perspectives:

When a Jew is situated on a high {spiritual} level, on the level of “Shabbos day,”⁴³ “holy to Hashem,”⁴⁴ he is liable to think that he does not need to be cautious since he is involved in holiness and has no connection to mundane matters.⁴⁵ In response to these thoughts, he is told that together with Shabbos, the remembrance of Amalek is necessary. Since Amalek has a source in the realm of holiness, even if a person is on the loftiest of levels, he must guard against the influence of the **kelipah**⁴⁶ of Amalek — rebellion against Hashem (even a very subtle rebellion, such as inappropriate gesturing {in the presence of a king}).⁴⁷

⁴⁰ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 27.

⁴¹ *Mishlei* 16:4.

⁴² {Divine service.}

⁴³ Note that Torah scholars are called “Shabbos” (*Zohar*, vol. 3, 29a).

⁴⁴ {*Shemos* 31:15; this verse is referring to Shabbos.}

⁴⁵ Moreover, performing mundane matters is **prohibited** on Shabbos (see Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beg. of sec. 308; sec. 306, par. 18; sec. 324, par. 2).

⁴⁶ {*Kelipah* translates literally as “a shell” or “a peel.” The term refers to anything that conceals and opposes G-dliness, just as a shell or a peel covers the fruit. *Kelipah* is an oft-used metaphor in Kabbalah and Chassidic literature to refer to evil or negativity.}

⁴⁷ Cf. *Chagigah* 5b.}

On the other hand, even a Jew who, in his estimation, has fallen very low — even into the domain of Amalek — mustn't despair. The Jew must know that Amalek also has a source within the realm of holiness. So the Jew can transform Amalek into a “**cup** of vinegar” that revives the spirit, like the superiority of light that emerges from the darkness.⁴⁸

The lesson is that a person must not be content even with the remembrance of Amalek (a remembrance of punishment). Instead, along with this remembrance, he must remember “to guard and sanctify the Shabbos day” on the level of “holy to Hashem.” Moreover, he **sanctifies** the day of Shabbos with a sanctity that is over and above the intrinsic sanctity of Shabbos.⁴⁹

— From talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas Tetzaveh, parshas Zachor*, 5732 (1972)

⁴⁸ This “light” possesses an additional advantage, analogous to the idea stated in the *Zohar* (vol. 2, 67, 68a) that only after Yisro, who was a priest for idolatry (*Tanchuma*, beg. of *parshas Yisro*; *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 1, par. 32), arrived and declared: “Now I know that Hashem is greater than all gods,” “the Torah was given in a consummate sense.” Note the explanation of *Mechilta* and Rashi on the beginning of *parshas Yisro*, as well as *Zevachim* 116a: “What news had he heard that inspired him to come?” — “It was the war against **Amalek**.” See *Or HaTorah*, “*Ki Seitzei*,” p. 1018.

⁴⁹ See *Berachos* 49a; *Beitzah* 17a; this is explained in *Torah Or*, 69c ff; *Or HaTorah*, “*Behar*,” pp. 611 ff; *Maamar “Es Shabsosai 5700.”*