



שבת שולחן ניצוצות

# Shabbat Table Sparks

**Igniting Torah Learning at the Sabbath Table**

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## Insights & Questions From the Parashah

“The Gemara cites another aggadic statement: Rabbi Avin bar Rav Adda said that Rabbi Yitzhak said: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wears phylacteries? As it is stated: “The Lord has sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength” (Isaiah 62:8). Since it is customary to swear upon holy objects, it is understood that His right hand and the arm of His strength are the holy objects upon which G-d swore. Specifically, “His right hand” refers to the Torah, as it is stated in describing the giving of the Torah: “From His right hand, a fiery law for His people” (Deuteronomy 33:2). “The arm of His strength,” His left hand, refers to phylacteries, as it is stated: “The Lord gave strength to His nation” (Psalms 29:11), in the form of the mitzva of phylacteries.” **Berachot 6a**

### Parashah Bamidbar Numbers 1:1-4:20

**נ** *In the desert...* Num. 1:1 The Chassidic Insights to this verse state: “The silent desolation of the desert is a metaphor for the lack of Divine revelation in creation. Yet, despite its spiritual silence, the mute world can indeed be taught to express the Divinity hidden within it. The Jewish people are uniquely suited to this task; by studying the Torah and observing its commandments, we can unveil the Divine purpose and potential behind every aspect of reality. In this way, we cultivate the barren desert, enabling it to express its Divine source and the purpose of its creation.” **What, in your opinion, is the purpose of Creation?**

**ב** *The Israelites shall camp...* Num. 2:2 The Kehot Chumash says: “The people’s encampment on all four sides of the Tabernacle symbolized how they protect the holy edifice and the Torah that resided in its innermost sanctum. Certainly, the Torah does not need our protection—on the contrary, the Torah and its commandments protect us. However, G-d wishes to endow us with the noble mission of protecting the Torah. The lesson in this is that we must guard our inner sanctuary and our inner identification with the Torah—within our hearts and our homes—from all four sides: from cool spiritual indifference on the cold north; from hot, lustful passions on the warm south; from gratification from brilliant accomplishment on the morning east; and from dark despair on the evening west.” **How can we best guard the Torah from indifference, passions, gratification, and despair?**

**א** Akeydat Yitzchak says: “The many flags that the Jews displayed in the desert will be replaced in messianic times by a single flag symbolizing “One nation, One G-d.”” **Selah.**

## Psalm of The Parashah

### Psalm 122

A Song of Ascents. Of David. I rejoiced when they said to me “Let us go to the House of *HASHEM*.” Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem - Jerusalem, built as a city joined together. There the tribes go up, the tribes of *HASHEM*—as a testimony to Israel—to praise the Name of *HASHEM*. For there thrones for judgment are set up, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem—“May those who love you be at peace! May there be *shalom* within your walls—quietness within your palaces.” For the sake of my brothers and friends, I now say: “*Shalom* be within you.” For the sake of the House of *HASHEM* our G-d, I will seek your good.



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**Take a census...**...Num. 1:2 The Kehot Chumash states: “Counting something is a way of showing that we value it. By counting how much of something we possess, we express how much each unit of the aggregate whole adds to the value of the whole and how indispensable each unit is to the whole. In this census, the fact that each Jew counted for one—neither more nor less—indicates that every Jew is equally dear to G-d, as an individual. Every Jew possesses this invaluable worth by virtue of his or her unique soul-essence. By virtue of this essence, which the simplest Jew possesses no less than did Moses, all Jews are equally G-d’s children. When we recognize this, we, too, will cherish and never dismiss or overlook any Jew.” *In realizing that we are all created special, like everyone else, how can we integrate that in how we view ourselves and others to stay humble?*

The Kehot Chumash continues: “The idiom the Torah uses for “take a census” is “raise the heads.” Since the purpose of the census was to conscript us for the task of battling the desolation of the spiritual desert, this indicates that in order to overcome this enemy, we must always feel above it. Therefore, the first fundamental directive of the Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law, is that when it comes to Jewish observance, we must not be embarrassed by scoffers. This includes external scoffers—those who try to mock us for our dedication to our ideals—and our inner scoffer, the evil inclination.” *How do you handle scoffers in your life? How do you overcome your “inner scoffer”?*

*Shall count all those in Israel...*...Num 1:3 Chassidic Insights: “ G-d instructed Moses to count only the Jews over twenty, the age of conscription into the army...As the soldiers go out into the world, they are expected to act as a living example of their people. The same is true of us all, since we are all charged to act as G-d’s “soldiers.” We are expected to wear our “uniforms” proudly, acting in a manner that makes it obvious that we serve in G-d’s army. Any observer should easily recognize that we have been drafted by G-d and have been charged with the mission to conquer the world with goodness and holiness. *Selah.*



### **A Mikvah Moment**

“The word mikvah means a gathering of water as stated in Genesis (1:9): "Let the waters be gathered below the heavens to one place". For me, this verse evokes an image of powerless, insignificant, isolated droplets of water converging and ultimately becoming a mighty force...What is tragic is being isolated, being left out. And Mikvah-- derived from the concept of gathering--subtly reminds us that we must prevent that tragedy by gathering in each member of our community.” **Total Immersion**

## **An Inspirational Story**

### **The Heart**

Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov used to say that during the time he was silent, reciting the Amidah, all the people who had ever asked him to pray to G-d in their behalf would pass through his mind.

Someone once asked how that was possible, since there was surely not enough time. Rabbi Mendel replied: “The need of every single one leaves a trace in my heart. In the hour of prayer I open my heart and say: ‘Lord of the world, read what is written here!’”

### **The Renewed Soul**

Rabbi Hirsh once said to his hasidim: “When a man rises in the morning and sees that G-d has returned his soul to him and that he has become a new creature, he should turn into a singer and sing to G-d. My holy master, Rabbi Menahem Mendel, had a hasid who whenever he came to the words in the morning prayer, “My G-d, the soul you have placed in me is pure,” danced and broke into a song of praise!

### **Acceptable Offering**

Rabbi Uri said: “It is written: ‘And Abel brought, also he...’ He brought his own ‘he,’ his own self. Only when a man offers himself as well, is his offering acceptable.”

### **A Spark Of Mussar**

“Give to *Hashem* of that which is His, for you and that which is yours is *His*.”

~ Avot 3:7 Rabbi Elazar of Bartotha, Contributed by Batyah Gage