



שבת שולחן ניצוצות

Shabbat Table Sparks

Igniting Torah Learning at the Sabbath Table

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Insights & Questions From the Parashah

“It was taught in a baraita in the name of Rabbi Akiva:
Yours, O Lord, is the greatness; this is the splitting of the Red Sea;
the power; this is the plague of the firstborn;
the glory; this is the giving of the Torah;
the triumph; this is Jerusalem;
and the majesty; this is the Temple.” **Berachot 58a**

The Shavuot Edition

Readings: Exodus 19:1-20:23, Dt. 14:22-16:17, Book of Ruth

נ *You must count for yourselves seven weeks...* Lev. 23:15 The Kehot Chumash comments: “The process just described is alluded to in the very wording of this commandment. The word for “you must count” can also be translated as “you must make bright.” Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi thus interprets this verse as follows: You must make yourselves bright: You must purify yourselves until your inner holiness shines forth, illuminating your lives. This is accomplished by working on your—Seven weeks; they must be complete: Refine the seven emotional attributes of your human/animal soul, transforming each one into a complete array comprising all seven emotions itself.” **Selah**

ב *You must designate this very day as a holy occasion...you must not perform any mundane work...* Lev. 23:21 The Sichot Kodesh 5721 comments, “While both Passover and Sukot are celebrated for an entire week, Shavuot lasts only one day. This is because Shavuot is the annual reliving of the revelation that took place when the Torah was given on Mount Sinai. This experience of G-d’s infinite essence transcends the limitations of time; we therefore do not require a full week to assimilate it into the complete array of our emotions.” **Why is it that the Torah is considered to transcend time?**

ג *In the third month...* Ex. 19:1 The Torah was given, says Maimonides, to bring peace into the world. Through the Torah, G-d allows His infinite wisdom to be distilled into a form accessible by finite creatures. He thus gave humanity the capacity to bring Godliness into the world, to continue to exist as finite human beings and still attain a level of Divine consciousness. The Torah does not superimpose one reality in place of the other, but rather melds the two into a Godly and meaningful existence in the context of this world. **The Torah is HaShem in a finite form. Would you say that Yeshua is our interface?**

Psalm of The Parashah

Psalm 29

A psalm of David. Ascribe to *HASHEM*, O sons of G-d, ascribe to *HASHEM* glory and strength. Ascribe to *HASHEM* the glory of His Name. Bow down to *HASHEM* in the beauty of holiness. The voice of *HASHEM* is over the waters. The G-d of glory thunders—*HASHEM* is over mighty waters. The voice of *HASHEM* is powerful. The voice of *HASHEM* is full of majesty. The voice of *HASHEM* breaks the cedars. Yes, *HASHEM* shatters cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of *HASHEM* hews out flames of fire. The voice of *HASHEM* shakes the desert. *HASHEM* shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of *HASHEM* makes the deer writhe in birth and strips forests bare, and in His Temple all are saying, “Glory!” *HASHEM* sits enthroned over the flood. Yes, *HASHEM* sits as King forever. *HASHEM* gives strength to His people. *HASHEM* blesses His people with *shalom*.



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T *Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow...they shall wash their clothes...Ex. 19:10* The Chassidic Insights to this verse state: “Allegorically, our "clothing" is our thought, speech, and deed. These are the tools the soul uses to express and present itself to the outside world, just as we clothe our bodies in accord with the image we wish to convey to society. G-d gave Moses the job of sanctifying the people, but it was the people's job to cleanse their clothing. The Moses of each generation can inspire us, direct us, and connect us to G-d, but this is dependent on our own preparation, the extent to which we cleanse our thought, speech, and actions from unseemly elements.” **What are practical ways in which we can “change” our spiritual clothing?**

T *I will heal them of their infirmities...Ex. 19:11* The Kehot Chumash brings down: “Along with healing them of their physical infirmities, God also healed the people of their spiritual infirmities: He erased the effects of any past wrongdoings and restored the entire people to the innocence of Adam and Eve before they ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. (Shabbat 146a) Were it not for the incident of the Golden Calf, the people would have retained this pristine status and lived forever. (Avodah Zarah 5a) The sublime quality of the original tablets affected the people by enabling them to remember perfectly the Torah they would learn. (Eruvin 54a) They were thus transformed into a nation of wholly righteous people.” **The Sages say that we will never reach this status again until Moshiach comes. Using this insight, explain why we need Messiah and how He fulfilled this pattern.**

I *am...Ex. 20:2* In giving the Torah to the Jewish people, G-d did not merely give them a guide to life; He provided them with the key to connect with His essence. This idea is alluded to in the first word of the Ten Commandments, "I." This "I" refers to G-d's ineffable essence, which is so sublime that it cannot be referred to by any Name or adjective. (The simpler word for "I" in the Torah is *ani*, but here, the slightly rarer form *anochi* is used. The sages interpret this instance of the word *anochi* as an acronym for the phrase "I have written and bestowed My very self" (Shabbat 105a as quoted in Ein Yaakov; cf. Likutei Torah 3:48d). **So Torah is the way in which to connect to HaShem. Using this information, explain why Yeshua said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”**

A Mikvah Moment

“The Torah has placed a great responsibility in the hands of women. However, this responsibility should not create undue anxiety or tension. A joyful approach to observing the rules of Taharat HaMishpachah invites the Shechina, God's Presence, to descend upon the couple.”

The Secret of Jewish Femininity, Tehilla Abramov

An Inspirational Story

Giving and Receiving

The Rabbi of Kotz was asked: “Why is Shavuot designated as ‘the time the Torah was given to us’, rather than the time we received the Torah?” He answered: “The giving took place on the day commemorated by this feast, but the receiving takes place at all times. It was given to all equally, but they did not all receive in equal measure.”

Immersion

This is what the Rabbi of Kotzk said concerning Rabbi Akiva’s saying that “G-d is the waters of immersion of Israel”: “The waters of immersion only purify the soul if one is wholly immersed, so that not a hair is showing. That is how we should be immersed in G-d.”

Where G-d Dwells

“Where is the dwelling of G-d?” This was the question with which the Rabbi of Kotzk surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting him. They laughed at him: “What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of His glory?” Then he answered his own question: “G-d dwells wherever man lets him in.”

A Spark Of Mussar

“If there is no *wisdom*, there is no yirah, no fear and awe. If there is no *fear and awe*, there is no *wisdom*.”

~ Mishnah Pirkei Avot R' Azariah, Contributed by Batyah Gage