



שבת שולחן ניצוצות

# Shabbat Table Sparks

**Igniting Torah Learning at the Sabbath Table**

BY RABBI MORDECAI GRIFFIN | A SHABBAT TORAH LEARNING PROGRAM OF SAR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE AND LAPID JUDAISM | Elul 5780

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## Insights & Questions From the Parashah

“The mitzvah not to bear false witness is the fourth mitzvah on the second tablet parallel to the mitzvah ‘Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.’ This teaches us that one who violates the Sabbath is counted as if he bears false witness against HaShem, saying that He did not create heaven and earth in six days.” *Me’am Lo’ez to Devarim 5:17*

### Parashah Shoftim Devarim 16:18-21:9

**א** *Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue...Dt. 16:20* Rabbi munk states that the Torah is teaching here that the end does not justify the means. We must pursue justice but we also must do so with the appropriate means. We may not show partiality, we must be fair, and our justice must be “blind”. **What does it mean to have “blind justice”?**

**ב** *You shall be wholehearted with HaShem, your G-d....Dt. 18:13.* Rashi teaches that this means one should have perfect trust in HaShem; not being concerned with what tomorrow has in store. As a result, we should not seek the “advice” of astrologers and diviners but put our confidence in HaShem as the Master and director of Creation. Yeshua the Messiah taught, “So I say to you, do not worry about your life what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear... And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin....Now if in this way G-d clothes the grass which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry...the pagans eagerly pursue all these things; yet your Father in heaven knows that you need all these. But seek first the kingdom of G-d and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:25-34) **What do you worry about? What does it mean to “pursue the Kingdom of G-d”?**

## Psalm of The Parashah

### Psalm 17

A prayer of David. Hear, *HASHEM*, a just plea, listen to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips with no deceit. From Your presence comes my vindication. Your eyes see what is right. You have examined my heart. You searched me at night. Though You test me, You find nothing. I resolved that my mouth will not sin. As for the deeds of mankind by the word of Your lips I have kept out of the ways of the violent. My steps have kept on Your paths. My feet have not slipped. I called upon You, O G-d, for You will answer me. Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech. Be wonderful with Your *chesed*, O Savior of those taking refuge at Your right hand from those rising up against them. Protect me like the pupil of the eye. Hide me in the shadow of Your wings, from the wicked who attack me, my enemies, who surround me. Their callous heart they shut tight. With their mouth they speak proudly. Our steps are now surrounded. They set their eyes to throw us down to the ground, like a lion eager to tear to pieces, like a young lion crouching in cover. Arise, *HASHEM*! Confront him! Make him bow down! Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword, from men, with Your hand, *HASHEM*, from men of the world whose portion is in this life. You fill their belly with Your treasure with plenty of children, and leave their surplus to their babes. I, in righteousness, will behold Your face! When I awake, I will be satisfied with Your likeness.



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**T** Yeshua our Messiah taught, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” In the commentary to Devarim 19:1 Rashi explain that causing a person to sin is more harmful than killing him, for the murderer kills the body but the one who leads another to sin kills the soul.

***How do we lead others to sin? How might this be related to assimilation?***

**T** *Is the tree of the field a man...Dt. 20:19* The Kehot Chumash says, “The wording of this phrase in Hebrew allows it to be understood not only as a question but also as a statement (“Man is a tree of the field”), and indeed, the Torah has already metaphorically referred to a righteous individual as a tree. The principal way in which a tree serves as a metaphor for a human being is that just as a tree grows and produces fruit, so are we expected to mature and be productive in life.” Indeed, we are told to produce spiritual fruit. ***How can we ensure that our lives are spiritually fruitful?***

**T** Our Torah portion speaks about cities of refuge in which an accidental killer can remain safe from the “avenger of blood” (the angry relative). He is to stay in this city until the Kohen Gadol dies which will provide him atonement (Selah!). The commentaries liken accidental killing to unintentional Torah violations. The way in which to correct this is to “exile” ourselves to a place of Torah. The Torah becomes our city of refuge; our Strong Tower. This is because Torah study leads to proper observance and thus rectifies the issue. In fact, because our teshuvah causes our sins to become merits, our Torah study acts like a type of resurrection! ***Isn't G-d our Strong Tower and our refuge? Is the Torah our Tower or is G-d? How can we “exile ourselves” to a place of Torah?***

## **A Mikvah Moment**

“A stick which is full of impure liquid, once it touches a mikvah it becomes pure, according to Rabbi Yehoshua. And the Sages say: [it is not rendered pure] until one immerses its entirety.” *Mishnah Taborot 8:9*



## **An Inspirational Story**

### **A Tzaddik's Teshuvah**

Rabbi Saadiah Gaon lived during the 9th century. One winter morning, two of his pupils witnessed their master sitting on the snow-covered ground, weeping and praying in penitence. What could a *tzaddik* such as their teacher possibly need to repent for? Later that day, they could no longer restrain themselves and asked their teacher what the scene they had witnessed had been about. “Every day I repent and plead with G-d to forgive my shortcomings and failings in my service of Him.” “Your failings?” they asked. “Of what failings does the Gaon speak?”

“Let me tell you a story,” said Rabbi Saadiah. “I once disguised myself by dressing in simple garments and went to a small inn. There was a very kind and simple Jewish owner, and we spoke for a while before I went to sleep. I bade him farewell the next morning. The man soon discovered that he had been speaking with the “Great R' Gaon”. So he ran outside, jumped into his wagon and raced to find me. After a short time he caught up to me, jumped from his carriage and fell at my feet, weeping: ‘Please forgive me, Rav Saadiah. Please forgive me. I didn't know that it was you!’

“I said, ‘But my dear friend, you treated me very well, you were very kind and hospitable. Why are you so sorry? You have nothing to apologize for.’”

“No, no, Rabbi,’ he replied. ‘If I would have known who you are, I would have served you *completely* differently!’ “Suddenly I realized that this man was teaching me a very important lesson in the service of G-d. I thanked and blessed him, and returned home. It made me realize that every moment of my day I stand before HaShem. Had I realized this, I would have served Him differently. And that is what I was repenting for this morning.”

## **A Spark Of Mussar**

“G-d is a *King* Who endures insult that can not be imagined. We must tolerate insult even to this *degree*”

~ R'Moshe Cordovero, contributed by Batyah Gage