



שבת שולחן ניצוצות

Shabbat Table Sparks

Igniting Torah Learning at the Sabbath Table

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Insights & Questions From the Parashah

“When a person says *vay’khulu* [the erev Shabbat Kiddush], two angels place their hands on his head and bless him, “Your guilt is removed, your sin is atoned. (Isaiah 6:7)”.

Me’am Lo’ez to Genesis 2:1

Parashah Breishit Vayeira 18:1-22:20

ר Rabbeinue Bachyah comments to our opening verse, “Why did G-d choose a tree to be the site at which He manifested Himself to Avraham on this occasion? It was because the angel was going to tell him that within a year he and Sarah would have a son. He would experience something similar to that which was experienced by an aged tree which still produced fruit. It is written in Job 14:7-9: “There is hope for a tree; if it is cut down it will renew itself; its shoots will not cease. If its shoots are old in the earth, and its stump dies in the ground, at the scent of water it will bud and produce branches like a sapling.” We also have a verse comparing the righteous to trees in Psalms 1:3 “He (the righteous) is like a tree planted beside streams of water which yields its fruit in season.” This is also how Rabbeinu Chananel explains our verse.” ***What other spiritual insights might you derive from this image?***

ר ...and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him?...*Gen. 18:18* Sforno comments, “seeing that he will become a standard bearer, flagpole for nations, his rebukes and instructions will carry a great deal of weight.” Abraham is our prime example of what it means to serve HaShem with complete devotion. ***What are some life examples we learn from Abraham’s service to HaShem?***

ר *Abraham was sitting ...Gen. 18:1* The Kehot Chumash says, “Of all the commandments, circumcision is the only one that visibly and permanently alters the physical body.” Literally, the Torah transforms our entire being. ***Why do you think that the mitzvah of circumcision is so opposed today in theology?***

Psalm of The Parashah

Psalm 11

For the music director, a psalm of David. In HASHEM I have taken shelter. How can you say to my soul: “Fly like a bird to your mountain? For look, the wicked bend the bow. They fix their arrow on the bowstring so they can shoot from the shadows at those who are upright in heart. If our foundations are destroyed, what should the righteous do?” HASHEM is in His holy Temple. HaShem’s throne is in heaven. His eyes are watching. His eyelids observe the children of men. HASHEM examines the righteous. But the wicked and one loving violence His soul hates. On the wicked He will rain down fire, brimstone and scorching wind as the portion of their cup! For HASHEM is righteous—He loves justice. The upright will see His face.



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T *While he was sitting at the entrance of the tent...Gen. 18:1* Rabbi Munk comments, “This is typical of Abraham: he was seated at the feet of his Master to receive the Divine teaching...seated at the entrance of Jewry’s tent to welcome all those who wish to enter into the covenant; seated at the entrance of his home to offer hospitality to all strangers...” This is also cited as a source for the fact that we sit when reciting the Shema. We stand to pray and sit to learn. This is why we sit when we hear the reading of the Torah as well. **Perhaps this is why hospitality is the best form of evangelism?**

H “The quality of generous hospitality is the most prominent feature of the heritage of Abraham. Greed and egoism will always be the obvious signs of a detachment from the great principles of Judaism. It is by his goodness of heart and his practice of charity that you will recognize the worthy descendant of the patriarchs.” (Yerushalmi, Kiddushin 4:1) **The root of the immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah was greed. How does greed lead to such abominations and how can we avoid it?**

I In regard to the offering of Isaac, the Chassidic Insights say, “It is precisely this sublime level that Isaac reached when he willingly surrendered his life to G-d. According to the Midrash, Isaac was not only willing to die for G-d; he actually did die: while bound on the altar, his soul temporarily left him and ascended to heaven. It was in this respect that Isaac’s self-sacrifice even surpassed that of his father: whereas Abraham showed himself ready to give up his life...Isaac actually did give up his life. The episode of the binding of Isaac is recited daily as a prelude to morning prayers [specifically the offerings], since our ultimate objective in praying is to dedicate our entire being to G-d.” **Why do you think that the offering of Isaac precedes the section of the offerings in the siddur?**

A Mikvah Moment

“In order to fulfill the commandment to mikvah we must have a heart’s intention to purify oneself spiritually from all wrongful thoughts and bad traits, to bring one’s soul into “the waters of pure understanding”. We then elevate ourselves into a vessel consecrated for holiness.”
P. 67 Total Immersion by Rivkah Slonim

An Inspirational Story

Seek the Sinner

A man who had done something wrong and was suffering from the consequences of his actions asked the maggid of Trisk to advise him in this matter. But he sternly refused to have anything to do with it. “It is improper to ask advice *before* acting, no *afterward*.” Said he.

The man turned to Rabbi Ya’akov Zevi of Parysov, a son of Rabbi Yehoshua Asher. “You must be helped,” Rabbi Yaakov Zevi said, “We must not be set on seeking the righteous, but on imploring mercy for sinners. Abraham sought the righteous, [when he inquired about the salvation of Sodom and Gomorrah] and so he did not succeed in what he undertook. But Moses prayed : ‘Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people,’ and G-d answered him: ‘I have pardoned according to thy word.’”

And Yeshua answered and said to them, “Those who are healthy have no need for a doctor, but those who are sick do. I did not come to call the righteous [tzadikim; those who obey Torah], but the sinful to repentance.”

Luke 5:31,32

A Spark Of Mussar

“One should not inflict *pain* on any living thing, including *animals*, but be kind and protective of them...Causing pain to animals is forbidden, by both Torah and Rabbinic law.”

~ Mesillas Yesharim