



שבת שולחן ניצוצות

Shabbat Table Sparks

Igniting Torah Learning at the Sabbath Table

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Insights & Questions From the Parashah

“At the conclusion of the first festival day of Sukkot they descended to the Women’s Court (Ezrat Nashim) and they would make there a great enactment. And golden candlesticks were there, and four golden bowls on the top of each of them and four ladders to each, and four youths drawn from the young priests, and in their hands there were jars of oil containing one hundred and twenty logs which they poured into the bowls. From the worn-out pants and belts of the priests they made wicks and with them they kindled the lamps. And there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not illuminated by the light of the Bet Hashoevah.” **Mishnah Sukkah 5:1**

Parashah Yitro Exodus 18:1-20:23

א It has been taught, “The Torah was given in public, openly, in a free place. Had it been given in the land of Israel, the Israelites could have said to the nations of the world: “You have no share in it.” But since it was given in the wilderness, in a free place for all, everyone wishing to accept it could come and do so.” **From the Mekhilta** (a collection of rabbinic folk-tales from the first and second centuries, A.D.) **It has been said that the Torah is “not for the gentiles”. How does this insight dispute this false claim?**

ב Parasha Yitro is the portion in which we receive the Torah. It is significant that the parasha is named after Yitro, a convert to Judaism. **What message do you think HaShem is trying to send to His nation?**

ג Dearer to G-d than all of the Israelites who stood at Mount Sinai is the convert. Had the Israelites not witnessed the lightning, thunder, and quaking mountain, and had they not heard the sounds of the shofar, they would not have accepted the Torah. But the convert, who did not see or hear any of these things, surrendered to G-d and accepted the yoke of heaven. Can anyone be dearer to G-d than such a person?” **Tanhuma (ed. Buber), Lekh Lekha 6:32.** It is also said, by the Sages, that a tzaddik can not stand in the place of a convert. Someone who turned from idolatry is greater than one who never lived it. **What brought you to Lapid Judaism? What obstacles did you have to overcome to make the Torah your very own?**

Psalm of The Parashah

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of G-d; they are a marvelous display of his craftsmanship. Day and night they keep on telling about G-d. Without a sound or word, silent in the skies, their message reaches out to all the world. The sun lives in the heavens where G-d placed it and moves out across the skies as radiant as a bridegroom going out from the chuppah, or as joyous as an athlete looking forward to a race! The sun crosses the heavens from end to end, and nothing can hide from its heat. HaShem's Torah is perfect. It protect us, make us wise, and give us joy and light. HaShem's Torah is pure, eternal, just. His Torah is more desirable than gold. It is sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned. In keeping them there is great reward. But how can I ever know what sins are lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. And keep me from deliberate wrongs; help me to stop doing them. Only then can I be free of guilt and innocent of some great crime. May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to you, O HaShem my Rock and my Redeemer.



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T According to the Zohar at the time that the Mishkan/Tabernacle was erected on Earth, there was a spiritual version of the Temple in the heaven. The Zohar refers to this Temple as the “Tabernacle of Metatron (we say Mem-Tet so as not to pronounce His Name)” where the angel Michael is the High Priest. The Zohar explains that just as Samuel and Joshua were guardians of the Tabernacle, and were referred to in the Scriptures as “Youth”, so too Metatron who is Youth was the watchman of the Temple above. The Zohar cites a story in which Rabbi Shimon praised Rabbi Chiyah and Rabbi Yose for having stayed in the Holy Temple for two days straight and having been taught there the celestial secrets of the Torah from the mouth of Metatron (who is also called the “Officer of Torah”). The Midrash also says that Metatron erected a Tabernacle for G-d concurrently with the Israelites in the desert; furthermore, the Midrash also says that Metatron offers upon its altar sacrifices to atone for the Jews’ sins while they are in exile. *Selah.*

T *And he went to his land...Ex. 18:27* Moses had wanted Yitro to stay with him. However, Yitro saw that he had a greater mission, one that involved reaching the world. He was called for a purpose and he thus decided to share in the messianic mission of his new adoptive Father, Abraham. Rabbi Munk comments in this way, “he [Jethro] replied that just as a light shines only in darkness he preferred to return to his own country and spread the light of Torah there. He felt that as a convert he would not stand out in Israel, a nation that was already suffused with light.” **What can we learn from Yitro’s courageous example?**



A Mikvah Moment

“U’rechatz/Tefillah - One rids oneself of sinful thoughts by means of rechatz, of cleansing oneself. This is accomplished by ceasing to commit transgression. If one tries to cleanse himself while still committing transgressions, one is like a person who immerses himself in a mikvah while holding an impure reptile. This is a commonly used expression in rabbinic literature. Immersing oneself while holding on to an impure reptile is a way of saying that one goes through the motions of repentance while still committing the sin that made one impure.

One doesn’t become impure in the mikvah if one is still holding on to the impure creature.” **Minchat Ani on the Pesach Haggadah**

An Inspirational Story

The Horse Shofar

Once Rabbi David went to Lublin with his disciple Rabbi Yitzhak, in order to spend Rosh HaShanah with his teacher, the Seer, as he did year after year. On the day of Rosh HaShanah, before the blowing of the ram’s horn, the Seer looked around and noticed that Rabbi David was not there. Yitzhak immediately ran to the inn to look for him. He found Rabbi David standing in front of the gate to the house, holding his cap full of barley to the horses, which their driver in his hurry to get to the House of Prayer had left behind unfed.

When Rabbi David, having finished feeding the horses, came to the House of Prayer, the Seer said: “That was fine blowing of the ram’s horn Rabbi David treated us to!”

“The concern expressed in these sources is that cruelty to animals consequentially engenders an indiscriminately cruel disposition. Acts of cruelty mold character in a manner which leads to spontaneously cruel behavior. ...Practicing kindness vis-à-vis animals has the opposite effect and serves to instill character traits of kindness and compassion. Development of such traits results in spontaneous acts of kindness, compassion and mercy.” Rabbi Bleich to a balachic question.

A Spark Of Mussar

“We should live, act, and say nothing to the injury of *anyone*. It is not only best as a matter of principle,

but it is the path to peace and

honor”

~ General Robert E. Lee