



Torah Reflections: Conversations on the Weekly Parsha

Parshat Vaeira 5784: Exploring the Significance of the Land of Israel: Questions for Reflection

Integrating Torah into one's life through reflection and conversation can be an incredibly fun and engaging experience. It's a journey of discovery, where ancient wisdom and timeless teachings come to life in our daily experiences. Through reflection, we have the opportunity to dive deep into the rich tapestry of Torah, extracting profound insights and lessons that resonate with our modern lives. The joy lies in the 'aha' moments, those instances when a Torah verse or story suddenly connects with our personal challenges, aspirations, and values. And when we engage in conversations about Torah with others, it becomes an interactive exploration, where diverse perspectives and interpretations enhance our understanding. These dialogues often spark excitement and intellectual curiosity, making the learning process both enjoyable and fulfilling. Torah becomes a vibrant and dynamic part of our lives, offering not just guidance but also a source of endless fascination, connection, and growth.

NOTE: Don't feel obligated to go through every source or answer all the questions—unless you want to. Even one source, or one question will give you plenty of material for discussion and meditation. Enjoy this!

1. Consider the following sources as a basis for reflection and conversation with friends and family:

1. Genesis 21:9-12:

"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, making sport. Wherefore she said unto Abraham: 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.' And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son. And G-d said unto Abraham: 'Let it not be grievous in your sight because of the lad, and because of your bondwoman; in all that Sarah says unto you, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall seed be called to you.'

2. Vayikra Rabbah 27:5

And G-d seeks that which is pursued (Eccl. 3:15). Always 'G-d seeks that which is pursued'. You find a case where a righteous man pursues a righteous man, 'And G-d seeks that which is pursued'; where a wicked man pursues a righteous man, 'And G-d seeks that which is pursued'; where a wicked man pursues a wicked man, 'And G-d seeks that which is pursued'; even where a righteous man pursues a wicked man, 'And G-d seeks that which is pursued.' Whatever the case, 'And G-d seeks that which is pursued'...The Holy One demands satisfaction for the blood of the pursued at the hands of the pursuers. Abel was pursued by Cain and the Holy One chose Abel... Noah was pursued by his generation, and the Holy one chose Noah. Abraham was pursued by



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Nimrod, and the Holy One chose Abraham. Isaac was pursued by the Philistines, and the Holy One chose Isaac. Jacob was pursued by Esau, and the Holy One chose Jacob. Joseph was pursued by his brothers, the Holy One chose Joseph. [...] Moses was pursued by Pharaoh, and the Holy One chose Moses. David was pursued by Saul, and the Holy One chose David. Saul was pursued by the Philistines, and the Holy One chose Saul. Israel are pursued by the nations, and the Holy One chose Israel.

3. Rashi on Genesis 21:10

WITH MY SON, WITH ISAAC —For since this is my son, even though he were not as good as Isaac really is, or if he were as good a man as Isaac really is, even though he were not my son, this one (Ishmael) is not deserving of inheriting with him: how much less is he deserving of inheriting with my son, with Isaac — with one who possesses both these qualities (of being my son and of being the good man Isaac) (Genesis Rabbah 53:11).

4. Rashbam on Genesis 21:12

FOR ISAAC'S DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED YOUR SEED: a reference to the covenant between G-d and Avraham, which included that Avraham's seed would remain strangers in a land not theirs before they would inherit the land of Canaan (15,13). G-d reminded him that his promise referred to Yitzchok and not to Ishmael.

2. Points to Ponder:

1. How did Sarah's concern for Isaac's inheritance set the stage for the concept of the Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel? How might this concept resonate with the Noahide community in their understanding of the importance of the Land of Israel in history?
2. In the Midrash, it's mentioned that G-d always seeks the good of the pursued. How does this idea relate to the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel? Can you think of historical examples where this principle was evident in Jewish history and how it might apply to the Noahide community's perspective on the Land of Israel?
3. How does the dispute between Yishmael and Yitzchak regarding firstborn rights shed light on the importance of the Land of Israel in the Jewish tradition? How can this narrative be meaningful or applicable to Noahides in terms of their relationship with the Land of Israel?
4. The Rashbam's explanation about "seed" and the Covenant Between the Parts highlights the significance of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. In what ways does this concept relate to the Noahide community, and how might they view their role or connection to the Land of Israel?
5. The text mentions that many claim descent from Abraham but emphasizes that it is descent from Isaac that qualifies one for a portion in the Land of Israel. How might the Noahide



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perspective on Abraham and his descendants influence their understanding of the Land of Israel's significance?

6. The material suggests that the struggle for the Land of Israel has not ended. In what ways do you see this struggle continuing in contemporary times, and how might this resonate with the Noahide community as they consider their relationship with the Land of Israel?
7. How does the idea that "G-d always seeks the good of the pursued" resonate with the history and experiences of the Jewish people in their connection to the Land of Israel, and how can the Noahide community draw inspiration or insights from this principle?
8. What does the phrase "and He shall lead us upright to our land" mean to you in the context of the Jewish homeland, the Land of Israel, and how might it be relevant or inspirational for the Noahide community?
9. Reflecting on the material, what are your personal thoughts and feelings regarding the importance of the Land of Israel in Jewish identity and history, and how might this relate to the Noahide perspective on the Land of Israel?
10. How can the message of the Land of Israel and the struggle for it, as discussed in the material, serve as a source of unity and inspiration among Jewish communities and the Noahide community? How can it foster a sense of shared purpose and identity for both groups?

Feel free to use these questions for group discussions or personal reflection to explore the deeper meaning of wealth and its role in your spiritual and personal growth.

Shabbat Shalom!