

INSIGHTS from the SEDRA

Insights from the Sedra is a project of the Scholar's Kollel of Great Neck. It aims to provide several questions and answers about the Sedra, culled from various commentaries, including the following: Baal Haturim, Darash Moshe, Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, Torah Treasures by Dov Furer, Wellsprings of Torah by Alexander Friedman, and Kol Dodi by Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Great Torah Lights by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Goodman, Something To Say by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, The Vilna Gaon, Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin and The Call of the Torah.

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת

"You shall count for yourselves, from the day after the rest day..." (23:15)

QUESTION: Unlike all other *Yomim Tovim*, *Shavuot* is not a set date on the calendar, but rather it is always fifty days from the counting of the *Omer*, which begins on the second day of *Pesach*. We make the *bracha* "Al Sefirat HaOmer"; why is the counting called "Sefirat HaOmer"? Being that we are counting towards *Shavuot*, the time of our receiving the Torah, it would seem to be more appropriate that the *bracha* should include wording related to *kabbalat HaTorah*.

ANSWER: We start counting *Sefirat HaOmer* on *Pesach* to acknowledge that the main reason that we were taken out of Egypt was to accept the Torah. The entire world was created for *Klal Yisrael* to receive the Torah. We are supposed to count *Sefira* each day with an anticipation of approaching the day of *Matan Torah*. A person should work on improving and elevating himself in order to be worthy of receiving the Torah. (Sefer HaChinuch)

ולקט קצירך לא תלקט

"And you shall not gather the gleanings of your harvest..." (23:22)

Leket, the gleanings of the harvest that fall during the harvest, is a gift that the Torah commands us to leave for the poor. The numerical value of לקט, gleanings, equals that of אחי סמך, supporting my brother. For the Torah commands that we support our brethren who are less fortunate than we are. What reward will we receive for this support? The letters of לקט also spell קלט, refuge, and קטל, death. The word alludes to the dictum that מציל ממות תציל, charity rescues from death (Mishlei 10:2) In return for supporting the needy in our midst, our acts of charity will act as a refuge from death. (Kol Dodi)

כל מלאכה לא תעשו חקת עולם לדורותיכם

"You shall not do any work; it is an eternal decree throughout your generations." (23:31)

In regard to *Yom Kippur*, the Torah ordains that *you shall do no work and you shall cause your soul to suffer*. When speaking of the *mitzvah* to refrain from work on *Yom Kippur*, the Torah adds that [this is] an everlasting law, whereas when referring to the *mitzvah* of causing ourselves discomfort, the Torah does not add this phrase. This would seem to suggest that the second *mitzvah*, which includes the requirement to fast on *Yom Kippur*, is not obligatory forever.

The *Meschech Chochmah* explains that this indeed is the case. We find that the *Talmud* (*Moed Katan* 9a) recounts that in the year that *Shlomo HaMelech* consecrated the *Beit HaMikdash*, the people refrained from work on *Yom Kippur*, but did not fast. Thus, the phrase, *an everlasting law*, is only applicable to the requirement to desist from work but could not be used when speaking of the requirement to fast on *Yom Kippur*. (Parsha Anthology)

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדור

“You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the *etrog* tree...” (23:40)

QUESTION: What is the beauty of the *etrog* tree?

ANSWER: Man is compared to a tree of the field (*Devarim* 20:19). Many lessons have been derived from the trees to guide man in his development.

The uniqueness of the *etrog* is that on the bottom, it has an *ukatz* – the stem by which it is connected to the tree – and on the top grows a stem with a *shoshanta* – rosette blossom. Should one of these fall off, the *etrog* is no longer considered a beauty.

The lesson of the *etrog* tree is that a beautiful person is one who is connected with the past and who has also accomplishments of his own. A descendant of a fine family, who continues the family tradition, and who does not rest contented with the family's prior glories and goes forth to blossom on his own, is indeed a *hadar* – a very beautiful person. (*Vedebarta Bam*)

כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל

“That I caused the children of Israel to dwell in booths...” (23:43)

The 480 years from the time that *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt until the building of the *Beit HaMikdash* were a period during which the nation's status in the land was, in a sense, temporary. They could not be considered permanent residents until the Divine Presence would have a permanent dwelling place among the people, something that would not happen until *Shlomo HaMelech* built the *Beit HaMikdash*. For this reason, Hashem says that, upon taking *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt, He caused them to live in סכות, booths, symbolizing a temporary status, for 480 years – the numerical value of סכת. (*Kol Dodi*)

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