

## 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.*

### אל מול פני המנורה יאירו שבעת הנרות

**"Toward the face of the Menorah shall seven lamps cast light..." (8:2)**

QUESTION: There is a wondrous *Midrash* that states in connection to this verse "*Peitach devarecha ya'ir*" – "Your opening words illuminate" (*Psalms* 119:130). What is the meaning of this *Midrash*?

ANSWER: The *Menorah* had 7 branches, 9 flowers, 11 knobs, and 22 cups, and according to the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 28b) it was 18 *tefachim* (handbreadths) tall. The *Midrash* by quoting the verse "Your opening words illuminate" is alluding that the "opening words," i.e. the first verse of each of the five *Chumashim*, have a connection to a part of the *Menorah*. The first verse of *Bereishit* contains 7 words, corresponding to the 7 branches of the *Menorah*. The first verse of *Shemot* contains 11 words, corresponding to the 11 knobs. The first verse of *Vayikra* contains 9 words, corresponding to the 9 flowers. The first verse of *Bamidbar* contains 17 words and counting the entire verse as 1 (known in *gematria* as "*im hakolel*"), corresponds to the *Menorah's* height. Lastly, the first verse in *Devarim* contains 22 words for the 22 cups of the *Menorah*. (Aderet Eliyahu)

Alternatively, though the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 28b) says that the *Menorah* was 18 *tefachim* tall, it was actually only somewhat over 17 *tefachim*. Thus, the first verse of *Bamidbar* has one word for each full *tefach* of the *Menorah's* height.

Alternatively, the first letters of the opening verse of each of the five *Chumashim* (בראשית, ואלה, ויקרא, וידבר, אלה) add up to 21, which is also the numerical value of Hashem's holy name "א-ה-י-ה" – "I shall be". This hints that Torah, which is His divine and infinite wisdom, "shall be" the Eternal illuminating power. (Pardes Yosef)

### או יומם ולילה

**"Or for a day or for a night..." (9:21)**

The Torah does not say, "*And the cloud would rise up in the morning,*" because it also refers to cases when the cloud rose up at night, when the people had to get up in the middle of the night and embark. ("*Sometimes the camp embarked at night*" – *Menachot* 95a.) Nevertheless, whenever "the cloud would be lifted...they would journey." The Torah is telling us that even though it was time for rest and sleep, in all circumstances – whether campsites were pleasant or difficult, whether embarking times were easy or hard, whether they tarried for days, months, years, or even just a few hours – "*According to the word of Hashem would they encamp, and according to the word of Hashem would they journey.*" (Insights in the Torah)

**“Silver...hammered out...” (10:2)**

The Torah first mentions the material and then the method of production: כסף מקשה, “Silver...hammered out.” In speaking of the *Menorah*, however, the Torah used the reverse order: first giving the method of production and then the material: מקשה זהב, “hammered out gold” (8:4).

Although the order is different, the Torah’s method is the same in each verse – delineating the essential factor before the non-essential one. The *Menorah* must be “hammered out” but does not have to be gold (*Menachot* 28). The Torah, therefore, says: “hammered out gold.” The trumpets must be silver, but do not have to be “hammered out” (*ibid.*); therefore, the Torah writes: “Silver...hammered out.”

(*Insights in the Torah*)

**בלתי אל המן עינינו**

**“We have nothing to anticipate but the manna...” (11:5)**

*Manna* in the morning, *manna* in the evening” (*Rashi*). It appears that the people were complaining about the monotony of their diet. However, it is possible to interpret their complaint differently. The verse literally says: “Our eyes are towards nothing but the manna.” This meant that when they sat down to a meal, they saw nothing except *manna* before them. Although it tasted like any food they wished (except for the five kinds of mentioned in the previous verse), their situation was comparable to that of a blind person, who does not enjoy his meal as much as a sighted person, because he misses out on the visual allure of the food.

(*Insights in the Torah*)

**ותסגר מרים מחוץ למחנה שבעת ימים**

**“And Miriam was incarcerated for seven days outside the camp...” (12:15)**

*Chazal* (*Zevachim* 101b) ask: Who placed her in this confinement? Only a *kohen* can confirm a case of leprosy, so it could not have been *Moshe*. It could not have been *Aharon* either, for he was her brother, and relatives cannot confirm leprosy.

The obvious question arises: Why find a separate reason for disqualifying *Moshe*? They both were her bothers! *Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk* answers: *Halacha* disqualifies relatives as witnesses in both cases of monetary disputes, and cases of life and death. But if the second party agrees, a witness may testify in monetary cases. This is because men are masters of their assets and can waive their rights. In matters of life and death, G-d is the “other party” and He does not grant the right to a relative. But *Moshe* was unique in that G-d proclaims, “In all My house, he is faithful.” Since G-d has absolute faith in *Moshe*, he is the exception to the rule about disqualifying relatives. Hence, the technical reason had to be used.

(*Kotzker Rebbe*)

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