

## 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.*

### את הברכה אשר תשמעו...והקללה אם לא תשמעו

**“The blessing that you will listen to the mitzvot...and the curse if you do not listen...” (11:27-28)**

The *Gemara* states that Hashem rewards a person for merely intending to do a *mitzvah* but does not punish one for intending to do a sin – with one exception. Idol worship is punishable for the mere intent (*Kiddushin* 40a). This engenders a novel explanation of this passage. Hashem says that He will bless the Jews for “listening” to His laws. This means that even if they listen, i.e. intend to perform the *mitzvot*, but ultimately are not able to perform them, they will still be blessed. But the curse of “not listening” will only befall them even if they only *intend* to “follow gods of others,” i.e. worship idols. Only that sin warrants punishment for mere intent. (*Tiferes Yehonasan*)

### אלה החקים והמשפטים

**“These are the decrees and the ordinances...” (12:1)**

It is interesting to note that the חקים, *decrees*, are mentioned first. These are the laws that such as the sacrifices, which are not based on rational explanations. Thus, the mystical aspect of Judaism is highlighted from the start. (*Vedebarta Bam*)

### לא תתגדדו

**“You shall not cut yourselves...” (14:1)**

The *Midrashic* interpretation for this phrase is that you shall not split yourselves up into conflicting sects and cliques. *Chafetz Chaim* was asked why there were so many divisions among Jews, e.g. the *Misnagdim*, the *Hasidim*, and their numerous factions. Some learn Torah more than they pray. Some pray more than they learn. Some spend time singing, others dancing. Why can't they all come together in one group? To this, he said, “Instead of asking me this question, why not ask it of the Emperor of Russia? Why does he need to have different armies? Why infantry, cavalry, artillery, navy? Why not have one unified army with one commander? But he needs all his various forces to wage war against his enemies. Each group has its particular task, and since he does not know where his enemies have concentrated their forces, he needs these diverse armies with their specialties. Variety is welcomed as long as it is not self-destructive.

So, it is also with the war against human passions. Each group has its mission to accomplish, and as we do not know where the enemy will attack, we need armies with all of their specialties.

What we need to do is marshal the legions of Hashem against the enemy and to avoid destructive conflict among themselves. (Kol HaTorah)

**לא תאכלו כל נבלה לגר אשר בשעריך תתננה ואכלה או מכר לגר**  
**“You shall not eat of a carcass. Give it to the stranger in your gates that he may eat it, or sell it to a gentile...” (14:21)**

The Torah here tells us how we should dispose of meat that has not been slaughtered in a *halachically* acceptable manner. We should preferably *give* it (i.e. for free) to a “stranger” (i.e., a *ger toshav*), or sell it to a non-Jew. But why does the Torah tell us that we should give it “to the stranger...that he may eat it”? What difference does it make to us what he does with the meat we give him?

*Rav Chaim* explained that the Torah’s *mitzvah* of giving things to the *ger toshav* is based on the concept that we are obligated to provide assistance and support for needy *gerim*, as the *Talmud* explains (*Pesachim* 21b). Thus, it is only if the *ger* needs food *to eat* that we must supply him with this meat which is at any rate forbidden to us. If, however, the *ger* intends to sell it or use it for other purposes, the Torah does not require us to give it to him. (*Toras Chaim*)

**איש כמתנת ידו כברכת ה' אלקיך אשר נתן לך**  
**“Every man according to what he can give according to the blessing which G-d your G-d gives you.” (16:17)**

QUESTION: The words “*ish kematenat yado*” – every man according to what he can give” – are extra. It could have just said “*tein kevirkat Hashem Elokecha*” – “give in accordance with what Hashem blessed you”?

ANSWER: According to our Sages (*Eiruvin* 65b) the character of a man is evident in three things: *kiso* – purse, *koso* – cup (drinking), and *ka’aso* – anger. Thus, one of the ways to recognize a man’s true character is to observe the way he conducts himself with his money. Does he give graciously and with a congenial disposition, or does he make the receiver feel unworthy and uncomfortable?

This verse alludes to this by telling us “*ish*” – (you can tell the character of the) man – “*kematenat yado*” – by the way he conducts himself when he gives, and particularly, if the amount he gives is commensurate with “*kevirkat Hashem Elokecha*” – the blessing that Hashem has bestowed upon him. (*Rabbi Shimshon Rephael Hirsch*)

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