

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, Vedebartha 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 Dov Wasserman, The Vilna Gaon, and Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin.

כי תצא למלחמה על איבך

“When you will go out to war against your enemies...” (21:10)

QUESTION: Instead of “*ki teitzei lamilchamah*” – “when you will go out to war” – it should have said “*ki tilcham im oyvecha*” – “when you will be at war with your enemy”?

ANSWER: This *parsha* is read during the month of *Elul*, the quintessential time to do *teshuvah*, and it is not only discussing a physical war but also alluding to man’s ongoing spiritual battle. With man there is a *yeitzer tov* – good inclination – and a *yeitzer hara* – evil inclination. Each one fights to take control and dictate man’s direction, and it is extremely difficult for man to overcome his powerful *yeitzer hara*. However, our Sages (*Shabbat* 104a) have declared that “*haba litaheir mesa'im oto*” – “the one who wants to purify himself (improve his ways) is assisted from heaven.”

Likewise, the *Midrash Rabbah* (Song of Songs 5:2) states that Hashem says to the Jewish people, “Make a small opening (of *teshuvah*) like the opening of a needle, and I will open for you entrances through which caravans can pass.”
(*Videbartha Bam*)

איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו

“He does not listen to the voice of his father and his mother.” (21:18)

According to the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 71a), the laws of the *unruly and rebellious son* only apply if the voices of the father and mother are equivalent. If the father and mother differ in their ways and the son is witness to this kind of fighting between them, it is unfair to judge him for he is not at fault for having become *unruly and rebellious*.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky points out that the behavior of parents within the home is the most fundamental educational lesson that a child receives. When a child sees his father and mother acting in a manner that is totally consistent with the beliefs that they profess and which they urge him to follow, then there is reason to assume that this child will follow in their paths. But if all he sees is fighting and hypocrisy, not only will he not follow them, but we have no right to judge him for he is not at fault.
(*Torah Anthology*)

לא תראה את חמור אחיך או שורו נופלים בדרך

“You shall not idly observe your brother’s donkey or ox falling on the road...” (22:4)

Rabbeinu Bachya points out that in the parallel version in *Parshat Mishpatim*, the Torah refers to a donkey or ox that belongs to an enemy while here it refers to an animal that belongs to a brother. He explains that by fulfilling the mitzvah of extending help, one can transform his enemies into his brothers. (Torah Anthology)

הקם תקים עמו

“Lift it up with him...” (22:4)

Sfas Emes notes that the greater the effort that one makes on behalf of another, the more positive will be the effect that this mitzvah has on one’s character development. This is alluded to in the verse where we read that one is to *lift it up with him*; i.e. by providing assistance to a friend, one *lifts* oneself up as well.

Chazal pointed this out when they commented (*Vayikra Rabbah* 34:10): The pauper does more for the wealthy man than the wealthy man does for the pauper. (Torah Anthology)

לא תחרש בשור ובחמר יחדו

“You shall not plow with an ox and donkey together.” (22:10)

Da’as Zikeinim explains a reason for this commandment that since an ox chews its cud and a donkey does not, the donkey will suffer the pain of envy when it sees that the ox has food in its mouth and it does not.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz commented: This is a great lesson in how sensitive we need to be not to cause others the pain of envy. If we must be careful with the feelings of an animal, all the more so of a person. Note that the ox is not really eating any more than the donkey; the donkey only thinks this but is mistaken.

Be very careful not to boast about your accomplishments or possessions if others might feel envious. Do not praise someone in the presence of a person who might feel envious of that person. (Growth Through Torah)

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק

“Remember what Amalek did to you.” (25:17)

QUESTION: Why is the command of remembering the viciousness of Amalek written in singular, and not “*Zichru...lachim*” etc., in plural?

ANSWER: Amalek attacked the Jews when they camped in Refidim. The word “*refidim*” (רפידים) is related to the root word of “*pirud*” (פירוד) – “disunity and separation” (see *Kli Yakar Shemot 17:8*). When the Jewish people are not united, it is possible for Amalek to creep in.

Therefore, the Torah says in the singular “*Zachor* – remember – what Amalek did *lecha* – to you – to stress that Amalek attacked when there was disunity and when everyone was concerned only about himself. By remembering this, all will live in harmony and thus prevent a renewed attack by Amalek.

(Rav Simcha Bunim of P’schischa)

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