

## 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.*

### בחדש השביעי בעשור לחדש תענו את נפשתיכם

**“In the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall afflict yourselves.” (16:29)**

Why was the tenth day of the seventh month (*Tishrei*) chosen as the time of atonement and forgiveness? *Pirkei D'R' Eliezer* (ch. 46) explains: On the first day of *Elul*, Moshe ascended *Har Sinai* to receive the second Tablets of the Law. He remained on the mountain forty days and came down on the tenth of *Tishrei*. That was the day that Hashem accepted his prayers and forgave the sin of the Golden Calf. Consequently, this day was established for all generations as a time for sins to be pardoned. (*Wellsprings of Torah*)

### קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם...אני ה' אלקיכם...אני ה' אלקיכם

**“You must be holy, for I, Hashem your Lord am holy...I am Hashem your Lord...I am Hashem your Lord.” (19:2-4)**

The three opening verses of *Parshat Kedoshim* all end with the phrase “*am Hashem your Lord.*” There is a good reason for this, for the three verses reflect three distinctly different categories among the Jewish people.

In the first verse, the Torah addresses the pious and G-d fearing people who meticulously observe all *mitzvot*, whether big or small, telling them, “continue to live your saintly life, thus you will merit the nearness of Hashem.”

The next verse is directed at the average Jew who properly observes the major *mitzvot*, such as honoring one’s parents and observing the *Shabbat*, telling them, “Every person must fear his father and his mother, and observe *My Shabbat*, I am Hashem your Lord.” As a reward for fulfilling the prominent *mitzvot* you will be enveloped by the Divine Presence.

Finally, in the third verse, the Torah turns to the borderline Jews who attachment to Judaism is very tenuous, calling out to them, “Do not turn aside to false gods. I am Hashem your Lord.” Although you abandoned the path of Torah and the *mitzvot*, don’t sever the thin thread that still binds you to your people. Do not renounce the faith of your fathers. Thereby, you too will remain an inseparable unit of the nation of G-d.” (*Rabbi Chaim M’Volozhin, Parparot LaTorah*)

**“Man shall fear his mother and father...” (19:3)**

The *Ksav Sofer* notes that the verse stresses the word “*ish*.” This teaches us that even when one has matured, married, established his own home and is no longer dependent upon his parents, the commandment of honoring and fearing one’s mother and father is no less obligatory than it was when he was young. No matter what age or station one has reached, the honor due one’s parents is still incumbent upon him.

The *Netziv* observes that the Torah uses the formal “*ish*.” Even if a person is considered great and has achieved status, he is no less obligated to hold his parents in awe than he was before. The *Shelah* points out that the verse begins with the singular “*ish*” and then uses the plural “תיראו.”

He explains that the verse alludes to the fact that parents should be careful that they never place their children into a position wherein it becomes difficult for them to pay the proper respect to their father and mother. (*Torah Anthology*)

The word תיראו is written in the plural, to stress that whoever fulfills the *mitzvah* of respecting and honoring one’s mother and father faithfully, serves as a hereditary example for his own children. If the roots of holiness lodge within the future parent, the offspring will inherit this trait as well. It is thus proper to say מצוה גוררת מצוה, *one good deed attracts another*.

(*Pirkei Avot* 4:2, *Ohr HaChaim*)

**לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך ואהבת לרעך כמוך**

**“You shall not hate your brother in your heart...you shall love your friend as yourself...” (19:17-18)**

*Rav Chaim Vital* explains the commonality of purpose expressed in the *mitzvah* of loving one’s neighbor. All of Israel must be seen as limbs and organs of a common body. When one of the limbs transgress, all of the other limbs are responsible for what has been done. It is for this reason that when we recite *vidui* – confession – in *Tachanun*, we use the plural *chatanu* – we have sinned – rather than the singular *chat’ati* – I have sinned. Even if one is praying alone, he must still use the plural form, for as the *Arizal* points out, the fundamental basis of Judaism is the unity expressed in this *mitzvah*. (*Torah Anthology*)

**Rabbeinu Aharon Berachiah zt”l of Modena** would say: If Hashem’s intention in giving the *mitzvah* was only that we perform them and not to allude to important lessons and hidden concepts that are contained within, then we would have very little left of the Torah. Fortunately, this is not the case. Besides the action that every *mitzvah* involves, each *mitzvah* also has a ‘*Torah*’ – a teaching. Even if we cannot perform certain *mitzvot*, we can still learn the lessons they teach.

(*Torah Tavlin*)

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