

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.

השיב את חמתי מעל בני ישראל בקנאו את קנאתי בתוכם

“(Pinchas) has turned My anger away from Israel by zealously avenging Me in their presence...”
(25:11)

Even though *Pinchas* was so zealous for Hashem, he remained “*in the midst of them*”; he remained part of the people of Israel, refusing to set himself apart from them in any manner.

(*Rabbi Isaac of Warka*)

לכן אמר הנני נתן לו את בריתי שלום

“Therefore, I am hereby giving him My covenant of peace...” (25:12)

Even though zeal is the opposite of peace and may indeed be equated with open controversy, the Torah states that honest zeal on behalf of a sacred ideal leads to peace.

(*Kotnos Or*)

ושם איש ישראל המכה אשר הכה את המדינית

“The name of the Israelite man who was killed, who was killed along with the Midianite woman...” (25:14)

If G-d was so interested in our knowing the names of the people *Pinchas* slew, why did the Torah not report this at the time it reported the deed in the last *parsha*?

G-d has made it a rule not to belittle even the wicked unless there is a compelling reason. We know that in the case of the person who collected wood on *Shabbat* and who was subsequently executed, the Torah did not reveal his name at all.

(*Torah Gems*)

אלה בני דן למשפחתם...ארבעה וששים אלף וארבע מאות

“These are Dan’s descendants according to their families...sixty-four thousand, four hundred.”
(26:42-43)

Even though *Dan* only had one son – who was deaf – his descendants multiplied within 210 years to a staggering 64,000 men. On the other hand, *Binyamin*, who had ten sons, multiplied to 45,600 men. This demonstrates that a person with limited strength can accomplish more than several people with greater strength! This can be applied to wisdom too. Sometimes one who possesses limited wisdom can accomplish more than someone smarter than him. Sometimes one is poor is happier and more content than someone who is wealthy. We cannot ever be disheartened by our lot, because Hashem can maximize our potential.

(*Chafetz Chaim*)

“The name of Asher’s daughter, Serach...” (26:46)

Why was *Serach* singled out and specifically mentioned here? *Rashi* explains she was still alive, and the Torah mentions her to note her remarkable longevity. Yet, we must still clarify why the Torah chose to point out that she was still alive. The *Midrash* tells us that at the time of the Exodus, *Serach* was the only person still alive who had seen and known *Yaakov*. It was *Serach* who preserved the traditions of the Patriarchs and was able to recognize by *Moshe’s* manner of speech that he was indeed the promised redeemer who would lead them out of Egypt. In other words, it was essentially on *Serach’s* “recommendation” that the people put their trust in *Moshe*.

(*Torah Treasures*)

תתן להם אחזת נחלה בתוך אבי אביהם

“Give them a double portion of inheritance along with their father’s brothers...” (27:7)

In referring to the daughters of *Tzelophchad* in this verse, the Torah uses the word “*lachen*,” the masculine, rather than “*lachen*,” the feminine form of them. This is correct, because according to the *Tosefta* (*Bav Batra* 115), when a woman assumes an inheritance, she is like a man for all legal purposes. Therefore, since G-d commanded that the daughters of *Tzelophchad* were to be given an inheritance as if they had been men, this verse refers to them in the masculine rather than in the feminine gender.

(*Tifereth HaGershuni*)

וביום הבכורים

“On the day of the first fruits...” (28:26)

The holiday of *Shavuot* is also known as “*Yom HaBikkurim*” – “*The day of the first fruits*,” partly because farmers were not permitted to bring their first fruits to the *Beit HaMikdash* before *Shavuot*. What is the connection between *Shavuot* and the first fruits?

For the answer to this, we must understand the lesson of the first fruits. The first produce to appear in the field is special only to the farmer. It is the long-awaited reward for all his hard labor; all year long he had been eagerly awaiting its appearance. By bringing it to the *Beit HaMikdash*, a farmer acknowledges that it is Hashem who constantly provides him with the energy to toil in the field, and to do all that is necessary to grow his food. To show appreciation, a person brings the first fruits – the fruit that is special only to the one who worked for it – to the *Beit HaMikdash*. What is it that imbues a member of *Klal Yisrael* with the ability to reach this level of understanding? Only the Torah, which was given on *Shavuot*. We can see, therefore, that *Shavuot* is a day of thanksgiving, not only for Hashem’s spiritual gift of the Torah, but also for all His material blessings. Without the Torah, we would not truly understand the debt of gratitude we owe Him for all that He gives us. *Shavuot* is therefore known as יום הבכורים, for the letters of בכורים also spell ברוכים, *blessed*.

(*Rabbi Dovid Feinstein z”l*)

This week’s Divrei Torah are sponsored by the Goldberg Family in commemoration for the first yahrtzeit of their son and brother Elliot Goldberg z”l. For future sponsorship opportunities or to receive this publication, please call Steve Zuckerman at 516 652 5266 or email zkster@aol.com or Rabbi Lichter at ilichter@gns.org. Sponsorships in memory of or in honor of someone are \$50.00 per issue.