

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.

אלה מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים לצבאתם

"These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who went forth from the land of Egypt according to their legions..." (33:1)

Bnei Yisrael journeyed to forty-two places in the *midbar*, representing the *Shem Hashem* that has forty-two letters. For every place that *Bnei Yisrael* journeyed in the *midbar*, they merited a letter of the *Shem Hashem*. They were climbing up the ladder of *kedushah*, step by step. This is similar to this world; when one is born, he is on the bottom level. His mission in this world is to ascend his spiritual ladder step by step until he elevates himself all the way to the *Kisei HaKavod*.
(*Pri Tzaddik*)

The *Malbim* asks, "Seemingly, the verse should say, 'These are the journeys of the children of Israel who traveled to the Land of Israel.' After all, was not the purpose of these journeys to bring them to the Land of Israel?"

In order to enter the Land, they had to make all these journeys. One encampment after the next, with each new journey, they distanced themselves even farther from Egypt's impurity and depravity. Accordingly, each successive journey was even more of an exodus from Egypt, and all of these "steps away" were needed. Therefore, the verse states, "These are the journeys of the children of Israel who left the land of Egypt."
(*Parsha Anthology*)

ויסעו ממדבר סיני ויחנו בקברת התאווה

"And they journeyed from the Sinai Desert, and they camped in Kivrot HaTa'avah." (33:16)

The *Har Zvi* writes that the verse hints to the idea that Hashem gave man the "problem" of an evil inclination but gave the Torah as its "cure." The verse says that when they traveled from Sinai – where the Torah was given – the Jews came to a place whose name means "*Burial place of physical desires*." As soon as a man moves away from "*Sinai*" – distances himself from Torah – he immediately finds himself in the grips of physical desires. So strong is the evil inclination which pulls a person towards physical lusts, a person has no means to combat his self-serving desires unless he learns Torah. Leaving Torah means becoming "encamped" in one's physical desires.

(*Parsha Anthology*)

ויסעו ממתקה יחנו בחשמנה

“And they journeyed from Mitkah and pitched in Chashmonah.” (33:29)

The Sages comment: חשמנה is the 25th of the 42 journeys of *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert. There is a hint here to the holiday of *Chanukah*, which is on the 25th day of *Kislev* and which was declared after *Mattityahu* the *Chashmonite* and his sons conquered the Greeks and with the help of Hashem claimed victory over their enemies and purified the *Beit HaMikdash*.

The Sages make an additional comment explaining the verse in *Bereshit*, ויאמר אלקים יהי אור, – *And Hashem said, let there be light*. The word יהי is numerically equal to 25 and the word אור is the 25th word of the Torah, alluding to the light of *Chanukah*. (Parparot La'Torah)

והורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה

“You shall rid the land and you shall settle it.” (33:53)

There is a positive *mitzvah* from the Torah that obligates *Klal Yisrael* to reside in *Eretz Yisrael* and inherit it. Hashem gave it to us, and it is improper to reject it. (Ramban)

The verse says “*v’horashtem*” first and then “*v’y’shavtem*.” Even according to the *Ramban* that says it is a *mitzvah* to live in *Eretz Yisrael*, that is only where *Klal Yisrael* can possess the land, “*v’horashtem*.” Only when one can provide an atmosphere of *kedushah* is there a *mitzvah* to settle the land. (Ta’am V’da’at)

והקריתם לכם ערים ערי מקלט תהיינה לכם

“And you shall prepare for yourselves cities of refuge...” (35:11)

In commanding us to prepare *Arei Miklat*, cities of refuge to protect those who kill inadvertently, the Torah does not use the term *zimun*, to prepare, but instead uses the word *hikritem*, meaning an event which occurs by chance, without preparation.

The Torah’s intent is to teach us that if we hear that a Jew has killed someone, we must realize and acknowledge that this act is foreign to the Torah’s view of society. We must not allow our minds to accept such an act as a part of life in society. Such news is to strike us as “unprepared,” so to speak, since occurrences like these are to be considered foreign to our Torah-dictated *Weltanschauung*. (Pirkei Torah)

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