

## 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.*

### ושני לוחת הברית על שתי ידי...ואתפש בשני הלחת...

**“And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hand...And I grasped the two tablets...” (9:15,17)**

One notes a discrepancy between the two verses. The first time it is written “the two tablets of the covenant,” but the second time it merely says the “two tablets.” What explanation can be given?

The *Midrash (Tanchuma, Ki Tisa* Chap. 26) informs us that when *Moshe* saw the golden calf which the Jews made, the writing on the tablets disappeared, and the tablets became heavy, and he threw them down. The *Midrash* elucidates the choice of words used. The first verse describes *Moshe* before seeing the golden calf, thus referring to the Ten Commandments as the “tablets of the covenant.” But the later verse describes the tablets immediately after *Moshe’s* seeing the golden calf, and the disappearance of the letters, thus only warranting being called “tablets.”

(*Gan Raveh*)

### ועשית לך ארון עץ

**“And you shall make a wooden Ark for yourself.” (10:1)**

Here it is written that *Moshe* was instructed to personally (ועשית) make the Ark. Earlier, in *Parshat Terumah* (25:10), it is written that they (ועשו) – the Jewish people, should make the Ark. The *Gemara (Yoma 3b)* notes this discrepancy and explains that a lesson is being taught by this. When the Jews were observant of the laws of the Torah, then it was considered as if they were the ones who constructed the *Mishkan*. But if they were not, then it was considered as though *Moshe* alone built it.

*Ramban* is of the opinion that *Moshe* was instructed to build the *Mishkan* before the sin of the golden calf, but he only relayed the message to the Jews afterwards. This view enhances the above-mentioned *Gemara*. The incident in *Parshat Terumah* occurred before the sin of the golden calf, when the Jews were still fully observant of the Torah; thus, the plural *v’asu* is used. The command in this *parsha* was said after the sin. Therefore, the singular *v’asita* is used.

(*Techeiles Mordechai*)

### למען תחזקו ובאתם וירשתם את הארץ

**“You shall observe the mitzvot...so that you grow strong and come and inherit the land.” (11:8)**

The *Ohr HaChaim* observes that the Torah links the fulfillment of *mitzvot* to the conquest of the Land of Israel to belie those who try to convince us that we must put the Torah aside when

conquering the Land. On the contrary, he explains that it is only through our fealty to the Torah that we have the strength to defeat our enemies. (Ohr HaChaim)

### והיה אם שמע תשמעו

**“And it will be if you will listen...” (11:13)**

The *Sfas Emes* points out that the word “*v’hayah*” always has a connotation of happiness. In this instance, the Torah tells us that there is a correlation between the level of happiness that we evidence when fulfilling the Torah and *mitzvot* and the level of the understanding of the purpose of the *mitzvah* that we will be granted. This concept is similar to the dictum that “*schar mitzvah mitzvah*” – the reward for the performance of a *mitzvah* is the opportunity to fulfill another one.

(*Sfas Emes*)

### ולעבדו בכל לבבכם

**“And serve Him with all your heart...” (11:13)**

Prayer is referred to by *Chazal* as the service of the heart. On the surface, it seems that they used this expression because prayer is an expression of the heart’s intent. *Rav Binymanim Diskin* offers another insight. A servant can be identified in one of two ways: One, when he does his master’s bidding and two, when he demonstrates that he is entirely dependent on his master. A master has no real obligation to his servant. He could theoretically force him to work without providing for his needs – even though such a course of action might be merciless and despicable. Thus, a servant is truly dependent upon his master’s generosity. How grateful would a servant be if when he approached his master and asked him to provide for his needs, the master told him, “Not only will I give you what you want, I will even pay because you honored me by asking!” Surely a servant who was given that kind of response would serve his master with great enthusiasm!

It was this attitude that *Chazal* were referring when they spoke of “service of the heart” – i.e., service that is rendered in happiness. This type of service is prayer – i.e., when man stands before G-d and asks that he be provided with his needs. Not only is his request granted, but he also receives reward for asking.

(*Parsha Anthology*)

### ולמדתם אתם את בניכם

**“You are to teach them to your children...” (11:19)**

The word “*otam*” – “them” is referring here to the words of Torah. But when read without vowels, the word can also be read “*atem*” – “you”, suggesting that the Torah warns us not to merely rely on the Torah of the children. Rather, *you*, the fathers, must be learned as well – as it states in *Pirkei Avot*: “*Ime in ani, mi li – If I am not concerned for myself, who will be concerned for me?*”

(*Vilna Gaon*)

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