

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.

יערוף כמטר לקחי תזל כטל אמרתי

"May my teaching drop like rain, may my utterances flow like dew." (32:2)

Why is the Torah compared to rain and dew? Rain comes from above and is an active element in the growth process of the produce from the earth. Dew causes the earth to release its own minerals, which help the produce grow. *Torah Shebichtav*, the Written law, resembles rain, which comes directly from Above; *Torah She'ba'al peh*, the Oral Law, resembles dew. The Torah lies within each and every Jew. We need to draw out the Torah that is within ourselves to help us fulfill the will of G-d. (Avnei Nezer)

שחת לו לא בניו מומם דור עקש ופתלתל

"Corruption does not affect Him, it is His children's defect, a warped and twisted generation." (32:5)

Ma'asei avos siman la'banim – "the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children." A father is obligated to make every effort to fulfill all of the *mitzvot* in all of their details. He may not deviate from the Torah even slightly – neither to the left nor to the right – for if a father is lax about even one "light" *mitzvah*, his child will learn from it and become lax about a weightier *mitzvah*. Similarly, if a father is lax about a weighty *mitzvah*, it is likely to cause his child to abandon the path of the Torah entirely.

This is what the verse means. "*Shicheit*" – if the father is just a bit corrupt – then – "*lo, lo*" – to him, personally," the damage is not that great. On the other hand, "*banav mumam*" – his children's is the blemish – the effect upon them is likely to be much worse, and future generations might suffer even more for it, swerving from the Torah. (Chafetz Chaim)

אסתירה פני מהם אראה מה אחריתם

"I shall hide My face from them and see what their end will be." (32:20)

QUESTION: What would be the end of *Klal Yisrael* if, G-d forbid, Hashem would hide His face and not look after their welfare?

ANSWER: There is no question in anyone's mind what would happen with the Jewish people, if Hashem were to stop taking an interest in them, and it is unnecessary for the Torah to raise such a question. However, Hashem is expressing His infinite love for *Klal Yisrael* and is saying

that even in a time when it appears as if “*astirah panai meihem*” – “*I shall hide My face from them*” – yet, “*erah*” – “*I will look after their welfare and attend to “acharitam” – “their end” – i.e., everything will be well for them in the future.* (Divrei Yechezkel)

לו חכמה ישכילו זאת יבינו לאחריתם

“Were they wise they would comprehend this they would understand what their end would be.”
(32:29)

QUESTION: The word “*zot – this*” is superfluous?

ANSWER: In the prayers on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* we proclaim, “*U’teshuvah, u’tefillah u’tzedakah ma’avirin et ro’ah ha’gezeirah – repentance, prayer and charity avert the severity of the decree.*” In all *machzorim* above these words are printed in small letters, “*kol, tzom, mamon – voice (prayer), fasting, money (for charity).* The merit of the Jewish people is determined by how they excel in these three things, and the total numerical value of the three is four hundred and eight, which is also the numerical value of the word “*zot.*”

This verse, which is read usually during the High Holiday season, is alluding that “*were they wise they would comprehend – zot – the achievements that are derived through – kol, tzom and mamon.*”

Hashem challenges the Jewish people, “*U’bechanuni na bezot – test Me, if you will with “zot” (Malachi 3:10).* Meaning, perform the three things which add up to *zot – 408*, and “*see if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out upon you blessings without end.*”

Unfortunately, there are people who do not realize or refuse to recognize what can be accomplished through these three things. *Dovid HaMelech* says of such people, “*U’kesil lo yavin et zot – a fool cannot understand “zot” (Tehillim 92:7), - these three things of kol, tzom and mamon.*

(Beit Yaakov M’Sultan)

יִדְבֵר אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם הוּא וְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן נֹחַ

“And he spoke all the words of the song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea son of Nun.”
(32:44)

The letter *yud*, the smallest of all the letters, and the symbol of humility, is what *Moshe* gave to *Hoshea* and turned his name into *Yehoshua*, emphasizing the virtue of humility. However, now when *Yehoshua* was to take *Moshe’s* place as leader of *Bnei Yisrael*, *Moshe* did not want to accentuate this virtue since a leader with too much humility is a shortcoming. A leader must give off the impression as stern and strong and he must command respect. For this reason, *Moshe* began to call *Yehoshua* by his former name *Hoshea*.

(Yonasan ben Uziel)

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