

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.

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל

“You are standing this day, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d, your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers, indeed, all the men of Israel...” (29:9)

Whenever the need arises to take action on behalf of Judaism, to wage the good fight for the glory of G-d, the people all protest: “Why choose me, of all people? Leave it to the teachers, the rabbis, the leaders of the community. What can an ordinary citizen like myself do?”

But they are in grave error. When the need arises to act *before the L-rd your G-d*, you must be *standing, all of you*, ready for action, from your “heads and tribes” down to “the hewer of the wood and the drawer of the water” (29:10). The entire people must unite and not be content to leave the responsibility to their leaders. (Butzina BiNehora)

וישלכם אל ארץ אחרת

“And Hashem cast them into another land...” (29:27)

In the Torah, the word *vayashlichem*, “and He cast them,” is written with a large-size *lamed*. When you omit the letter “ל” from *וישלכם*, the numerical value of the remaining letters equals that of *עשו*, 376. It should be remembered that “ל” means to teach or to learn. Thus, the allusion tells us that when you abandon teaching and studying Torah, *Eisav* will become the dominant force. This confirms the dictum of the Sages that if the voice of *Yaakov* is wavering and unsure of itself, then the hands of *Eisav* wield power. (Chomas Anoch)

ואתה תשוב ושמעת בקול ה'

“And you will repent and listen to the voice of Hashem...” (30:8)

At first glance, this passage seems redundant, since six verses earlier, in verse 30:2, we read “You will then return to Hashem your G-d.” Why does the Torah reiterate “And you will repent?”

Before a person repents, he does not even realize what his failings are, as the saying goes, “he is ignorant of his ignorance.” Only after taking the first hesitant steps on the road to *teshuvah*, does he begin to gain insight into the depth and the nature of his shortcomings. As a result, he gradually rises to even higher levels of repentance. Therefore, at the outset of the *teshuvah* process it says, “*V’shavta ad Hashem Elokecha*” - “You will return to Hashem your G-d.” But this is only the beginning. As a follow-up to the initial steps of *teshuvah*, we read in verse 8, “*ve’ata tashuv*” – “and you will repent,” in a continual process of progressively intensifying repentance, climbing even higher on the ladder of *teshuvah*. (Tiferes Shlomo)

כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיר ובלבבך לעשותו

“For this is very close to you it is in your mouth and heart to fulfill it...” (30:14)

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein notes that the Torah first mentions one’s mouth and only then speaks of the heart, the seat of man’s desires – to teach us that our speech can positively influence our desires, provided that we speak truthfully.

Rav Tzvi Levinson, son-in-law of the *Chafetz Chaim*, once said that if someone is trying to study Torah but finds that his heart is preoccupied with other matters, he should not put off his studies hoping that eventually he will be better able to concentrate. Rather, even without understanding them, he should speak words of Torah. They will penetrate to his heart, especially if they are sung.

The Torah alludes to this in our verse. Even if your heart is not inclined toward learning, there is a solution. Put it *in your mouth* (sing it aloud) *and* (then it will be) *in your heart to fulfill it*.

(*Parsha Anthology*)

ראה אנכי לפניך היום

“See, I have set before you today...” (30:15)

The word “today” appears meaningless in the context of this verse. The message implied in the word “*hayom*” – today, is that each and every day anew we must make a choice between good and evil. If, in the past, a person’s life left much to be desired, then he should turn over a new leaf today. If he led a virtuous life until today, that is no assurance for future good deeds. Each new day brings new choices, each day places him at the crossroads of life and death; each day he must make an effort to choose the good.

(*Rabbi Moshe Feinstein*)

Insight into Rosh Hashana

The *Talmud* (*Rosh Hashana* 11b) states in the name of *Rabbi Eliezer* that in the month of *Tishrei*, *Klal Yisrael* is destined to be redeemed from *galut*. This idea is learned from a *gezeirat shava*: Regarding *Rosh Hashana*, the verse states “*tiku bachodesh shofar*” and regarding the final *geulah* the verse states “*yitaka b’shofar gadol.*” Just as *Rosh Hashana* is in the month of *Tishrei*, the final *geulah* will be in the month of *Tishrei*. The *shofar* represents freedom and redemption; we blow the *shofar* during the *yovel* year because that is the year that the slaves go free, and we blow the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashana* for on that day we are freed from the *satan*.

(*Maharsha*)

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