

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.

לא ירפך

“He will not release you...” (31:6)

As *Rashi* explains, this verse means that even when we sin, Hashem will not forsake us. Instead, He will forgive our sins and permit us to remain close to Him. Our verse alludes to this, since the letters of ירפך, *release you*, also spell יכפר, *he will forgive*. (Kol Dodi)

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף

“Assemble the people, the men, and the women and the children...” (31:12)

Rashi comments *the men came in order to learn, and the women in order to listen and the children, why did they come? For no other purpose than to reward the one who bring them.*

By going through the trouble of bringing their children, the parents demonstrate their desire and firm resolve to have their children remain true to *Yiddishkeit* and heed the words of the Torah.

It is in direct proportion to the efforts *Bnei Yisrael* are willing to put into the *chinuch* of their children, that Hashem will help them so that their efforts bear fruit. (Sfas Emes)

ובניהם אשר לא ידעו ישמעו ולמדו ליראה את ה' אלקיכם כל הימים אשר אתם חיים על האדמה

“And their children who did not understand will hear and will learn to fear Hashem, your G-d, all the years that you are living on the land...” (31:13)

The *mitzvah* of *Hakhel* teaches us the importance of educating our children properly. Every child requires a good Torah education, no matter how old or young he is. Therefore, a parent must educate his child *al pi darko* – “according to his way” (*Mishlei* 22:6), for the benefit of the child and to realize his unique strengths. Maintaining high standards in Jewish education is necessary in order to guarantee the success of Torah in the next generation. (Wellsprings of Torah)

ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדה את בני ישראל

“So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel...” (31:19)

QUESTION: At the end of many *chumashim* it is written that in the Torah, there are a total of three hundred and four thousand, eight hundred and five letters. How does this correspond with what the Kabbalists (*Megaleh Amukot*) say that there are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah,

and that in fact the name of the Jewish people – ישראל – is an acronym for, יש ששים ריבוא אותיות, לתורה – “there are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah?”

ANSWER” In addition to the basic letters of the words of the Torah, there are the letters י, ו, ה, א, which are fill-in letters, and which are replaced by the *nekudot* – vowels. For example, the “*kamatz*” takes the place of an א. Were it not for “*kamatz*” the word ברוך would be spelled בארוך, and many words would have a "ה" at the end of them were it not for the vowel under the final letter, such as ידעת – which would be spelled ידעתה. The “*chirik*” takes the place of a "י", and the “*shuruk*” or a “*cholam*” takes the place of a "ו". Thus, in addition to the written letters, there are many letters that one must visualize in his mind when reading the Torah. The total of the written letters together with these letters in six hundred thousand. (Likutei Torah)

This is the last *mitzvah* of the Torah – to *write* the Torah. It comes just after we read, “*And I will surely conceal My Face on that day because of all the evil they will have done.*” Its placement here teaches us that this “*song*” – the Torah – has the power to save us from all suffering and woe, even when Hashem “*conceals His Face,*” such as in our generation. Despite the great darkness, the Torah casts its holy light, and in that light we shall walk, in keeping with the *Gemara’s* parable about the verse in *Mishlei* (6:23), “*Ki ner mitzvah v’Torah ohr* – For a *mitzvah* is a candle, and Torah is light.” Our Sages teach, “Just as light protects the world, so too, the Torah” (*Sotah* 21).

Especially in our troubled times, when it can surely be said about our nation, *Outside, the sword shall bereave and within the chamber shall be terror* (*Devarim* 32:25), we must firmly attach ourselves to the Torah’s strength. By doing so, we cause light to shine in the unparalleled, deep darkness that has fallen in the wake of Hashem’s “*concealing His Face.*” (Chafetz Chaim)

SHABBAT SHALOM AND SHANA TOVA!

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