

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.

כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט
“For I have singled him out that he may instruct his children and household after him, that they may keep the way of Hashem to do righteousness and justice...” (18:19)

A good educator makes use of the happenings of daily life to inspire or reprove his students. Actual instances of reward for good deeds or punishment for evil provide him with impressive object lessons by means of which he can urge his students to avoid evil and choose good instead.

Thus, the destruction of *Sedom* provided *Avraham* with an excellent object lesson for his endeavors to teach men “to do righteousness and justice,” for it was a visible demonstration of the results of evil and injustice. (Wellsprings of Torah)

ואת שני בנותיך הנמצאת
“And your two daughters who are found...” (19:15)

Since the Torah already taught that *Lot* had two daughters at home (19:8), why does this verse repeat the word שתי, two? Our verse refers to the daughters of *Lot* as those who are found. In *Tehillim* (89:21), Hashem says of *David HaMelech*: מצאתי דוד עבדי, I have found David, My servant. The *Talmud* teaches that the use of the word found in connection with both *David HaMelech* and the daughters of *Lot* indicates that it was here in *Sedom* that Hashem found *David*, for he descended from *Lot's* daughter, the ancestress of *Ruth*, the grandmother of *David* (*Yevamot* 77a). From the destruction of *Sedom* to the birth of *Ruth*, 710 years elapsed – exactly the numerical value of the apparently redundant word שתי. (Parsha Anthology)

ויאמר אברהם כי אמרתי רק אין יראת אלקים במקום הזה והרגוני על דבר אשתי
“And Avraham said, ‘I thought surely there is no fear of G-d in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife.’” (20:11)

Do not believe that even if a man does not fear G-d, that he can still be noble and decent in his relationships with his fellow man. Where fear of G-d is lacking, human qualities cannot exist, and people will commit the grossest murder and inhumanity, in order to gratify their lusts. Only faith in G-d and the fear of Him will keep man from doing evil to their fellow man. (Malbim)

ותרא שרה את בן הגר המצרית אשר ילדה לאברהם מצחק

“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, born to Avraham, making sport...” (21:9)

Rashi explains *making sport* to mean worshipping idols. According to another explanation, the expression refers to immoral conduct. And according to still another interpretation, it refers to murder.

A little joking, a little fun may seem so harmless, yet such “sport” can lead to grave sin, including idolatry, immorality and murder. Some of the worst crimes had their beginning in seemingly harmless “sport.” (Avnei Ezel)

נאחז בסבך בקרניו

“Caught in the thicket by its horn...” (22:13)

QUESTION: Why do we need to know by what the ram was caught?

ANSWER: The “horn” was a message to *Avraham* of Hashem’s limitless love for the Jewish people. Throughout the year, Jews are caught up in sin’s clutches and led astray by their troubles. Nevertheless, on *Rosh Hashana*, when they hear the sound of the *shofar*, they repent and attain forgiveness. Thus, through the *shofar* they will be redeemed from the clutches of their evil inclination.

Additionally, *Avraham* was told that there would be a period in history when the Jews would be entangled in exile. Ultimately, they will be redeemed by *Mashiach* whose coming will be heralded by the blast of the *shofar* which Hashem will sound (*Zechariah* 9:14). Since the horn is an allusion to two purposes of the *shofar*, it says “*bekarnov*” – “its horns”, in plural. (Kli Yakar)

כי ברך אברכך והרבה ארבה את זרעך ככוכבי השמים

“I will greatly bless you and will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens...” (22:17)

The blessings that Hashem bestowed on *Avraham* after *Akeidat Yitzchak* were unconditional. Hashem did not say, “If you follow My statutes,” or “If you heed My voice,” or “If you are willing and obedient...” Such prefaces communicate, “If so, yes. But if not, then no.”

This is what is meant toward the end of the *Tachanun* prayer that we say during *Shacharit* on Mondays and Thursdays, “Hear our voice and be gracious...remember what You swore our forefathers: ‘I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens’ – remember that You swore without attaching even one condition.” In other words, although we may be undeserving, You remain obligated to fulfill that oath You took long ago. (Chafetz Chaim on the Torah)

SHABBAT SHALOM

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