

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.

ועתה אם ישכם עשים חסד ואמת את אדני

“And now, if you intend to do kindness and truth with my master...” (24:49)

If you look in the Torah, we always find *chesed* coming before truth. This verse is a prime example. We also find this again in *Bereishit* 47:29. Why is this so?

The *Limudei Nison* explains the Torah here is telling us the order of how we should do things. A Jew's first reaction upon hearing of a problem should be to want to do *chesed*...get involved...dive in and help...ooze with compassion, etc. Only afterwards should the person use the trait of *emet* to look at the situation, decide if he can really help, if this is logical, a great idea, will it work, etc. Why not flip the order of the two traits?

The answer is that if you begin with *emet*, you'll probably never get to the *chesed*! This is because everyone has their own “issues” to deal with, and there is no limit to the number of reasons why a person might feel he should not get involved in a problem or cause. Therefore, *chesed* followed by *emet* is the correct order. (Something to Say)

אברהם הוליד את יצחק

“Avraham begot Yitzchak...” (25:19)

We see from here that the education a father gives his son must be so solid that it will impact not only the son, but also the son's sons. This is implied by the words *Avraham begot Yitzchak*. We could perhaps interpret this to mean that *Yaakov* ultimately played a part in the formation of *Yitzchak's* children.

The idea of impressing one's Torah onto succeeding generations is also expressed in the following verses from *Yeshayahu*:

– *My words that I have placed in your mouth shall not be withdrawn from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring, said Hashem, from this moment and forever (59:21).*

– *The House of Yaakov, who redeemed Avraham (29:22).* This latter verse seems to be saying that *Avraham* was redeemed because of *Yaakov*, meaning that *Avraham* was redeemed because the foundation that he gave *Yitzchak* was so strong that it carried over to *Yitzchak's* son *Yaakov*.

We also find support for this in the words of our Sages, based on *Mishlei* 17:6: עטרת זקנים – בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם – *The crown of the aged is grandchildren, and the splendor of children is their fathers.* *Breishit Rabbah* (63) quotes *Rav Shmuel son of Rav Yitzchak* said, “*Avraham was saved from the furnace of Kasdim due to the merit of Yaakov.*” (Rabbi Nison Alpert)

ויעתר יצחק לה' לנכח אשתו כי עקרה הוא
“**Yitzchak prayed to G-d opposite his wife because she was barren.**” (25:21)

The *Midrash HaGadol* explains that in fact, *Yitzchak* was also unable to have children, not only *Rivkah*. This is hinted to in this verse, where the word “she” is not spelled in the Torah in the usual manner (היא), but rather הוא, which can be read as “him”, who could not have children.
(Lubavitcher Rebbe)

הקל קול יעקב והידיים ידי עשו
“**The voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav.**” (27:22)

Bereishit Rabbah comments on this verse that whenever the voice of *Yaakov* is heard studying Torah, the hands of *Esav* are powerless against Israel. But doesn't the text imply that *Yaakov's* voice and *Esav's* hands *can* function simultaneously?

The *Vilna Gaon* notes that the phrase “the voice is the voice” is spelled קול, without the “ו” in the first word, which lends a meaning of “weak is the voice”, implying that only when the voice of *Yaakov* is weak are the hands of *Esav* “hands” (i.e. powerful).

Alternatively, submits *Avnei HaAzel*, since *Yitzchak* remarks in astonishment, “How can this be the voice of *Yaakov* and the hands of *Esav*?” *Chazal* deduced that generally the two cannot exist.

The *Talmud* debates whether *mitzvot tzerichot kavanah*, whether one who performs a *mitzvah* without intending to do so has fulfilled any commandment. *Rambam* seems to contradict himself on the matter, ruling that if *matzah* is forced down one's throat on the first night of *Pesach*, he has fulfilled the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah*, but if he hears the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashana* without intending to perform any *mitzvah*, he has not discharged his obligation!

Explains the *Magid Mishneh*: *Rambam* reasons that any *mitzvah* requiring a physical act can be fulfilled even without intention. *Shofar* is different, however, since the listener does nothing but listen, with nothing to link the *shofar*-blowing with is hearing. (The *matzah*, on the other hand, indisputably entered the stomach.)

Our verse alludes to the concept: “the voice” – i.e., any *mitzvah* of hearing – requires “the voice of *Yaakov*,” genuine Jewish *kavanah*; but “the hands” – i.e., any physical *mitzvah*, such as eating *matzah* or shaking a *lulav* – can be performed even by “the hands of *Esav*,” with no *mitzvah* thought at all!
(Toldos Yaakov Yosef)

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