

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.

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה

“And Yaakov departed from Be’ersheva and went to Charan...” (28:10)

Why both verbs? Why not simply state, “Yaakov went from Be’ersheva to Charan?” The *Dubner Maggid* answers: For some travelers, departure is their primary goal. For instance, when the angel asks *Hagar* from whom is she fleeing and where she is headed, she responds, “I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarah” (16:8) – i.e., her destination is irrelevant! In contrast, other travelers concentrate on where they’re going rather than where they’ve come from. In *Yaakov’s* case, both are significant! Because *Eisav* plans to kill him, he must flee – hence, “Yaakov departed.” And because *Yitzchak* tells him where to seek a wife, his destination is equally important – hence, “he went to Charan.”
(*Ohel Yaakov*)

[According to *Chazal*, rather than proceeding directly to *Charan*, *Yaakov* attended the *Yeshiva* of *Shem v’Ever* for fourteen years. This detour also justifies the two verbs, for a single statement would have implied a direct move from one town to the other.]

The *Steipler Gaon* considered the *Maggid’s* concept especially relevant today. For in the previous generation, children were sent to distant *yeshivot* not to escape their own environment – the sacred Jewish centers of Europe and Russia – but only to receive the best education. It was strictly a *vayeilech* (and he went to) situation. Nowadays, however, when foolishness, vanity and worse surrounds us, we must send away our sons not only for education’s sake but to provide them with a Torah environment. Like *Yaakov*, our children are involved in both *vayeitzei* – and he departed and *vayeilech*.
(*Rabbi Yaakov Kaniefsky*)

ויחלם והנה סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה

“He dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward.” (28:12)

The ladder in *Yaakov Avinu’s* dream was a metaphor for life. Every person is on a ladder, either headed up or down. The rungs on the ladder are weak. If one does not go up a rung in a short period of time, the rung breaks and he falls down one step. At all times one must be focused on traveling up the spiritual ladder.
(*Chafetz Chaim*)

ונתן לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבש

“And if you will provide me with bread to eat and clothing to wear...” (28:20)

Bread and clothing refer allegorically to the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*, respectively. When we study Torah, G-d’s wisdom becomes part of us, just as the food we eat

becomes part of us. When we perform a *mitzvah*, we are enveloped by an external, transcendent feeling of inspiration, much as a garment surrounds and warms us. In this context, “*returning to my father’s house untainted*” alludes to our return to the domain of holiness after venturing out temporarily into the mundane world in order to refine and elevate it to holiness. (Likutei Sichot)

וכל אשר תתן לי עשר אעשרנו לך

“Whatever you will give me, I shall repeatedly tithe to you.” (28:22)

This sounds illogical. Would anyone say to his neighbor, “*Give me a thousand dollars, and I will give you a hundred in return?*” When people give to G-d (charity), they do so loudly and boastfully, trying to publicize their deed as much as they can. When G-d provides for a man’s livelihood, He does so discreetly, in so natural a way that it is easy to think that we have done it all ourselves.

Even those who believe that G-d is responsible for all success are sorely tempted to keep their wealth for their own children, rather than giving it to others, saying, “*Charity begins at home.*” Therefore, whoever says to G-d with complete faith, “*Whatever You give me, I shall tithe,*” has demonstrated righteousness on two counts: his acknowledgement of the wealth’s true source, and his willingness to be truly charitable. *Yaakov* did something that few possess the wisdom to emulate. (Rabbi Sorotzkin)

עתה הפעם ילוה אישי אלי כי ילדתי לו שלשה בנים

“Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons...” (29:34)

The Commentary of the Elders gives the following odd explanation to this passage: When a woman has one child, she holds it in both her arms. When the second infant arrives, she holds one in her right arm and the other in her left. But when there are three small children, her husband must help her hold them. Thus, when *Leah* held her third son, she said: “*Now this time my husband will be joined to me: Now my husband will have to help me, because I have borne him three sons and I cannot hold them all by myself.*”

ותקרא שמו יששכר

“She called him Yissaschar.” (30:18)

The *Talmideo Chachamim* – the true possessors of the Torah – are known as *Yissaschar*. From the tribe of *Yissaschar* came “those who know how to calculate the seasons” – as they relate to the Jewish calendar. From the tribe of *Yissaschar* came two hundred heads of the *Sanhedrin*. Now, we see that *Yissaschar*’s very conception and birth was made possible through items of monetary value – the *dudaim* – jasmine flowers that *Leah* gave to *Rachel* (*Breishit* 30:14-18). This teaches us that without backers of Torah – those who support the student of Torah with their money – there is no way for Torah to survive. (Chafetz Chaim)

This week’s publication is dedicated by Drora & Dr. Paul Brody, in loving memory of Drora’s Abba - beloved Saba of the Brody Bunch - ליל יום הולדת 87, whose 8th Yartzheit will be this coming Thursday, י"ד כסלו. For future sponsorship opportunities or to receive this publication, please call Steve Zuckerman at 516 652 5266 or email zkster@aol.com or Rabbi Lichter at ilichter@qns.org. Sponsorships in memory of or in honor of someone are \$50.00 per issue.