

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.

וירא ישראל את היד הגדלה אשר עשה ה' במצרים וייראו העם את ה' ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו
“Israel saw the great hand that Hashem had inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem and they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe His servant...” (14:31)

This verse immediately precedes the *Shirat HaYam*, and it comes to tell us what it was that inspired them to this great height of spiritual expression. It was the fact that they had now seen the *yad hagedolah*, the great hand. What is the significance of the word “*yad*”? It alludes to the ability to see everything as a whole, as a complete picture, not as “fingers” but as a “hand.” For the Jewish people, the past, the present, and the future now came into focus as a single, unified image.

Prior to this, in Egypt, what the Egyptians had seen was “merely” the *etzbah* (the finger), but not the *yad*. What this means is that while they bore witness to many great miracles, they could appreciate them only for their immediate impact. They recognized the greatness of what was occurring at that moment but were not able to take the broader view and see G-d’s plan in its entirety.

Bnei Yisrael, however, could now perceive what the Egyptians could not. The Jewish people declared, “*Zeh Keili v’anaveihu - This is my G-d and I will build Him a sanctuary*” (regarding the present); “*Elokei avi v’aromemenhu – the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him*” (regarding the past); and “*Hashem yimloch l’olam va’ed – Hashem shall reign for all eternity*” (regarding the future). Everything was one, all due to Hashem’s *yad hegedolah*, through the direct intervention of the Master of the World, all because of His *middah* of goodness. Which He lavished upon them.

(Rabbi Alpert)

מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן

“Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aharon...” (15:20)

Miriam is the only woman the Torah calls a prophetess, although *Sarah* was one as well. The reason *Miriam* merited this honor is that she was *Aharon’s* sister. *Chazal* say, “A firstborn daughter bodes well for future sons, for she will raise them” (*Bava Batra* 141). Born three years before *Aharon*, she did raise him, and the results, as seen in *Aharon*, G-d’s sacred one, attest to the excellence of the nursemaid. She did not, however, raise *Moshe*, for he was taken to *Pharaoh’s* palace as an infant. She is therefore called the sister of *Aharon* rather than of *Moshe*.

The verse mentions that *Miriam* is the sister of *Aharon*, but not *Moshe*. The Torah is stressing that even before *Moshe’s* birth, when she was just *Aharon’s* sister, she was already a

prophetess, for she would say, 'My mother is destined to bear a son who will save Israel' (*Megillah* 14). The Torah chooses to make this point here, because only with the total salvation at the Red Sea was her prophecy fulfilled, making her worthy to be called a prophetess. (*Oznayim L'Torah*)

ויאמר משה בתת ה' לכם בערב בשר לאכל ולחם בבקר לשבע בשמע ה' את תלנתיכם אשר אתם מלינים עלי
"And Moshe said, 'When Hashem will give you in the evening, meat to eat, and bread in the morning to be satisfied, for Hashem hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him.'" (16:8)

Why did *Bnei Yisrael* cause an uproar and ask for bread and meat? Although they had *manna* which had all the flavors they could possibly desire, nevertheless, they were not happy with taste alone, they wanted something tangible. (*Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk*)

Why did *Moshe* change his words and say that *Bnei Yisrael* are complaining to Hashem when it was written "And the congregation of *Bnei Yisrael* murmured against *Moshe* and *Aharon* in the wilderness" (16:2). *Moshe* intentionally swayed their complaints towards Hashem, to lessen the severity of their crime. Crimes toward fellow men are dealt with more harshly than crimes of man to Hashem. (*Rabbi Itzile of Volozhin*)

ויאמר משה אל יהושע בחר לנו אנשים וצא הלחם בעמלק...ומשה אהרן וחור עלו ראש הגבעה
"Moshe said to Yehoshua, 'Choose people for us to go do battle with Amalek'...Moshe, Aharon and Chur ascended to the top of the hill.'" (17:9-10)

The verse starts off by saying that *Moshe* told *Yehoshua* to choose men for battle, which implies that the battle would be victorious through the efforts of these men. Then the verse changes to singular and says "v'tzei" – and you (singular) shall go out to do battle. *Moshe* was telling *Yehoshua* that although there would be many going to battle, the victory will come through the *Torah*, which *Yehoshua* represented. (*Chafetz Chaim*)

QUESTION: Why was it necessary to have a team consisting of *Moshe*, *Aharon*, and *Chur* to fight *Amalek*?

ANSWER: Under normal circumstances, when the Jewish people behave properly, *Amalek* is unable to attack them. However, he attacked the Jews in the city of *Rephidim*, whose name indicates two reasons for their vulnerability to attack: a) *Ripu atzman midivrei Torah* – their involvement in *Torah* weakened (*Sanhedrin* 106a). b) *Pirud* – lack of unity (see *Kli Yakar*).

The first letters of the names *משה*, *יהושע*, *חור*, *אהרן*, *יחיה* form the acronym for אחים – brothers. *Moshe's* call to the Jewish people was to act as brothers, live in brotherly harmony, and be united in the study of *Torah* and observance of *mitzvot*. This would assure that *Amalek* would be unable to penetrate the Jewish camp. (*Yalkut Reuveini*)

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