

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, Vedebarta 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 Dov Wasserman, The Vilna Gaon, Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin and The Call of the Torah.

Introduction

Endowed with vision as they were, the Sages foresaw the coming of an era of utter spiritual decadence, when heresy and unbelief – the *tzara'at* of the spirit – will gain control of the body of the Jewish people. Afraid that the Jews might despair, they left a message of comfort, pointing out that when all our merits would have vanished, that would be the time when all our cleansing, when Hashem will have mercy on His people and send *Mashiach*, the scion of the House of *Dovid*, to deliver us.

(*HaDerush Ve'Haiyun*)

וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו

“On the eighth day of the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised...” (12:2)

QUESTION: At a *brit milah* it is customary for all present to proclaim: “Just as he is entered into the covenant, so may he enter into Torah, into marriage and into good deeds.” Why do we associate these three things with the *brit milah*?

ANSWER: The circumcision done at a *brit milah* is permanent. Once it is performed, it cannot be changed in any way. Those present at the *brit milah* express a threefold blessing and prayer for the child. First, as the *brit milah* is of everlasting nature, likewise his connection to Torah should be everlasting. Second, the person he marries should be his companion for life. The third and concluding blessing is that throughout his lifetime he should constantly perform good deeds.

Alternatively, the first *mitzvah* in which the child is involved is *brit milah*. Due to his young age, his parents must take an active role in planning and preparing for the *brit milah*. When it comes to *Yiddishkeit*, many parents have a tendency to say, “When our child becomes older, he will make his own decisions.” Therefore, all present at the *brit milah* call to the attention of the parents: “*Kesheim she'nichnas labrit*” – just as at the *brit milah* the parents were actively involved – “*kein yikaneis leTorah ul'chupah ul'ma'asim tovim*” – so too, when the son reaches the age of Torah study, marriage and good deeds, the parents should be actively involved in all of his decisions.

(*Vedebarta Bam*)

Everyone who reads this Torah section must wonder why the law of circumcision on the eighth day appears here, in the midst of a passage about the law of ritual contamination and purity.

After all, the Torah already stated; “At the age of eight days, every one of your males shall be circumcised” (Bereshit 17:12).

It seems to me that just as the Torah gave two signs to distinguish the pure from the impure among animals – (split hooves and chewing the cud) and fish – (fins and scales); the Torah also gives two signs to distinguish the most excellent type of human being. These two signs – circumcision and immersion in the *mikveh* – identify the man who belongs to “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Shemot 19:6). At *Har Sinai*, before Hashem could make a covenant with our forefathers and give them the Torah, they had to undergo circumcision and immersion (*Keritot* 9). Similarly, a non-Jew who wishes to join the holy nation does not become a convert until he has undergone circumcision and immersion (*Yevamot* 46). (Oznaim La’Torah)

The day of *milah* is considered the day of birth. (Perhaps that is why we have the *minhag* to name a baby at the *bris*. This fits beautifully with the commentary of the *Chasam Sofer* in *Vayera* (21:8), ויעש אברהם משתה גדול ביום הגמל את יצחק, – “Avraham made a party each year on the day that Yitzchak had his *bris* because that was his “birthday.”) (Maharshal)

The *gematria* of the phrase בשר ימול בשם - “On the eighth day the flesh shall be circumcised” (1067) is equal to the phrase שכל היום יהיה כשר למול – “The entire day will be acceptable for circumcision.”

וראה הכהן את הנגע

“And the priest shall look at the plague...” (13:3)

The *Mishna* (*Negaim* 2:45) Man sees any plague except for those on himself and even those on his relatives. A man can immediately see the faults of others, but not his own, and he finds the fault of strangers more readily than those of his own kin.

בדד ישב

“He shall sit in isolation...” (13:46)

The *Talmud* (*Arachin* 16b) teaches: He caused discord by speaking *lashon hara* between man and his wife, between man and man, the Torah therefore said: “He shall sit in isolation.”

Ramban in his commentary (*Bereishit* 19:17) notes that the impure person causes damage everywhere he goes. The Torah, therefore ordained that he be quarantined outside the camp so that his impurity does not spread and cause even more damage. The *Sabba* of *Kelm* commented that if this is true of the damage caused by *tzara’at* which comes about because of *lashon hara*, it is surely true of the damage that *lashon hara* itself can do. (Tallelei Orot)

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