

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, Vedebarata 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.

וצוה הכהן ולקח למטהר שתי צפרים חיות טהרות ועץ ארז ושני תולעת ואזב

“The Kohen shall command to take for the person being purified two living clean birds, cedarwood and crimson thread and hyssop.” (14:4)

QUESTION: Why were two birds used to purify a *metzora*?

ANSWER: One of the causes of leprosy is *lashon hara*. When someone conveys *lashon hara* to a person about his friend or to a husband about his wife, he replaces friendship or marital harmony with enmity and strife. The word צפור – “bird” – has the numerical value of 376, the same numerical value as the word שלום – “peace.”

The Torah is alluding that for the leper punished for *lashon hara* to be forgiven, he must first make peace between the friends or the husband and wife. Thus, two birds correspond to the two estranged people who need to be conciliated. (Iturei Torah)

Rashi explains on this verse that the plague came as a punishment for arrogance. What is the remedy he shall use in order to be healed? Let him, abandoning arrogance, regard himself a slowly as a worm and a hyssop.

If the purpose of this ceremony of purification is to have the leper abandon arrogance, what is the function of the cedarwood, which symbolizes pride? To teach the leper attitude. Humility and submission do not mean that the body must be bowed. They imply that inner spirituality or contriteness which can be present even while the body stands erect and unbowed. As the *Ba'al Shem Tov* explains it: “*And all that stands before thee shall bow – one can bow even while one appears to be standing erect.*”

The cedarwood is used to teach the sinner that he need not think he is required to go about bent over and cringing in abject humility. He can stand erect as a cedar and still be as “bent” and humble in spirit as hyssop. (Avnei Nezel)

והיה ביום השביעי יגלח את כל שעריו את ראשו ואת זקנו ואת גבת עיניו

“And it shall be on the seventh day, he shall shave off all his hair: his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows.” (14:9)

QUESTION: If it states, “*all his hair,*” why are three areas of hair then singled out?

ANSWER: There are three causes for leprosy: 1) *ga'avah* – arrogance; 2) *lashon hara* – evil talk; 3) *tza'arat ayin* – stinginess or having no desire to help people in need.

The shaving of the hair reminds the *metzora* that he must be extremely careful in specific areas to prevent the recurrence of the spiritual illness that leads to leprosy. Shaving his head reminds him never again to walk around with his head up, looking down at other people. Cutting the hair of his beard remind shim to open his mouth to utter *lashon hara*. Cutting the hair of his eyebrows, warns him to henceforth use his eyes to look at another Jew with kindness. (Kli Yakar)

Shabbat HaGadol

The Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter zt"l (Sfas Emes) would say: "Until *Ayetziat Mitzrayim*, *Shabbat* was the symbol of one thing alone; that the worlds was created by Hashem in six days and He rested on the seventh. But since that time, *Shabbat* has gained an additional meaning. It also recalls how we left Egypt, as it states: *Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem, your G-d, took you out of there...therefore Hashem commanded you to celebrate the Shabbat day (Devarim 5:15)*. Thus, *Shabbat* has a higher status, since it bears double witness, both to the creation of the world and to our redemption from the house of slavery. It is fitting, then, that the first *Shabbat* to have gained this double meaning should be called *Shabbat HaGadol – The Great Shabbat*."

Why is the *Shabbat* before *Pesach* called "*Shabbat HaGadol*?"

The *Pesach*-offering and the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* emphasize the *mitzvah* of "*ve'ahavta le'eiacha kamocho*" – "love your fellow as yourself." The *Pesach*-offering is a communal get-together. Not only does the family share, but also neighbors gather to partake in the offering, as the Torah states, "*He and a close neighbor...Everyone according to what he eats shall be counted for the lamb*" (*Shemot 12:4*) *Ahavat Yisrael* is also demonstrated by the special *mitzvah* of *ma'ot chitin* – extending financial assistance for *Yom Tov* to enable everyone to celebrate the holiday properly.

Regarding the *mitzvah* of "*love your fellow as yourself*", *Rabbi Akiva* says, "*Zehu klal gadol ba'Torah*" – "This is a **great** rule in the Torah". Thus, the *Shabbat* is called "*Shabbat HaGadol*" because on this *Shabbat* the **great** *mitzvah* of loving your fellow as yourself is emphasized.

Alternatively, the Jews were liberated from Egypt in the year 2448 after creation. They had their first real taste of freedom on the *Shabbat* before *Pesach*, when they prepared the sheep for the *Korban Pesach*. The words "שבת הגדול" remind us of the redemption: "ש" stands for *Shabbat*, "ב" = 2,000, "ת" = 400, and the word "הגדול" has the numerical value of 48. (Iturei Torah)

SHABBAT SHALOM!

This week's Divrei Torah are sponsored by Dr. Paul & Drora Brody and the Brody Bunch in memory of Paul's dear father, Harvey Brody ז"ל, ו"א יוסף ז"ל, on his 22nd Yahrzeit, י"א ניסן. May his נשמה have an עליה. 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@gns.org. Sponsorships in memory of or in honor of someone are \$50.00 per issue.