

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.

Introduction

Parshat Beha'alotcha teaching about the *Menorah* follows the *parsha* dealing with the offerings brought by the *nesi'im* of the tribes. When *Aharah HaKohen* saw that eleven tribes and *Ehpraim* brought offerings, and his tribe of *Levi* did not, he was very troubled. But Hashem told him, "On your life, your greatness will be more than theirs for you will be the ones to set up and light the *Menorah* of the *Beit HaMikdash*."

According to the *Ramban*, Hashem's promise refers not only to the *Menorah* of the *Beit HaMikdash*, but also to the *Menorah* of *Chanukah*. Hashem promised *Aharon* that one day his descendants, the *Chashmonaim*, would have a part in miracles that would bring about a second dedication at which a *Menorah* would be lit. The duty to kindle those lights would be binding on *Bnei Yisrael* even when there would be no *Beit HaMikdash*. (Great Torah Lights)

בהעלתך את הנרות אל מול פני המנורה

"When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah..." (8:2)

The *Midrash* quoted by *Rashi* derives from the word "*beha'alotcha*" that the *Kohen* stood on steps when he lit the *Menorah*. Why was this necessary? The *Menorah* was three *amot* high (*Menachot* 28b); and according to the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 31a), the height of an average person is three *amot*! It should not have been a problem for *Aharon* to light the *Menorah* without standing on steps.

The *Mishnah* states that a *Kohen Gadol* is prohibited to raise his hand above the *tzitz* which he wore on his forehead (*Sotah* 38a). In keeping with this law, *Aharon*, who was the *Kohen Gadol*, could not have lit the *Menorah* while standing on the ground; he would have had to reach above his head. Thus, the use of a step. (Panim Yafos)

ואתנה את הלויים נתנים לאהרן ולבניו

"And I have given the Levi'im, they are given to Aharon and his sons..." (8:19)

Rashi remarks that five times there is stated *Bnei Yisrael* in this verse to make known the love of Hashem for them, for their mention is reiterated in one verse as many as five times as the number of five Books of the Torah.

Since only *Levi'im* were chosen for this service in the *Mishkan*, the rest of *Bnei Yisrael* might have been distressed at their not having been found qualified to perform this service. Therefore,

the Torah emphasizes here the affection in which they are held by Hashem. Just as the Torah is comprised of five separate books, independent units, nevertheless they form one Torah. So too, *Bnei Yisrael* are categorized into *Kohanim*, *Levi'im*, and *Yisrael*, separate units, each with their own function, but all forming ONE nation, precious and cherished by Hashem. (Chiddushei HaRim)

ויהי בנסע הארון...שובה ה' רבבות אלפי ישראל

“And it came to pass when the Ark set forward...Return, O G-d, to the myriad of thousands of Israel...” (10:35-36)

QUESTION: Why are there *nunin hafukin* – inverted “nuns” – setting off the two verses of “*vayehi binso'a*”?

ANSWER: In Aramaic the word “*nun*” means fish (see *Onkelos* 11:5). The life of a fish depends in large measure on its ability to swim upstream. If it permits itself to be swept along by the current of the rapids or the tide, it will be scuttled and squashed. It is only because Hashem has endowed the fish with the precious instinct of self-preservation, whereby it is able to swim upstream against the current, that it can survive and increase.

Jews have been compared to fish. Our forefather *Yaakov* blessed his children that “*vegidgu larov bekerev ha'aretz*” – “and may they increase abundantly like fish in the midst of the earth”. His intent was that just as fish swim against the tide, so his children should swim upstream and resist the temptation to take the easy way of going with the tide of fads and crazes which lead the dissolution of our teachings and the scuttling of our people.

The message of the *nunin hafukin* – “inverted nuns” – in connection with “*vayehi binso'a ha'aron*” is that to travel with the holy Ark a Jew must be ready to go against the tide and proudly stand resolute in his convictions. (HaRav Dov Aryeh Berzon z”l)

והאיש משה ענו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה

“Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth.” (12:3)

QUESTION: The word “*ha'adam*” – “person” seems superfluous?

ANSWER: In the Torah, there were three people who excelled in humility. *Avraham* said: “*ve'anochi afar va'eifer*” – “I am but dust and ashes” (*Bereshit* 18:27). *Dovid HaMelech* said: “*ve'anochi tola'at velo ish*” – “I am only a worm and not a man” (*Tehillim* 22:7). *Moshe* said of himself: “*venachnu mah*” – “what are we [we are nothing]” (*Shemot* 16:7). The first letters of the names **משה**, **דוד**, **אברהם** spell the word **אדם**. Thus, the Torah is telling us that *Moshe* was the humblest of the three. (Shelah HaKodesh)

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