

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.

ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע

“And Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun, Yehoshua...” (13:16)

A *midrash* teaches that when Hashem changed the name “*Sarai*” to “*Sarah*”, He allocated the displaced *yud* for *Yehoshua*’s name. The connection between *Yehoshua* and *Sarah* was hardly incidental. I would like to homiletically suggest that it would not have been possible for *Yehoshua* to transfer *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jewish people without first having internalized certain *hashkafot*, outlooks and values, of our matriarch *Sarah*.

In fact, these were *hashkafot* specific to *Sarah* but not to *Avraham*. What I refer to is *Sarah*’s unequivocal and clear belief that *Eretz Yisrael* is ours...and that no other individual or nation has any portion in it whatsoever. *Sarah* demanded (*Bereshit* 21:10) *Cast out that servant-woman and her son, for the son of that servant shall not share in the inheritance with my son, Isaac*. She was saying that neither *Yishmael* nor his descendants have any portion whatsoever in *Eretz Yisrael*. Nothing. Not a single *dunam* from one border to the other.

Yehoshua, who was chosen by Hashem to lead the Jewish people to conquer *Eretz Yisrael*, received part of his name from *Sarah* precisely so that he would not forget her plea to *Avraham*: that *Yishmael* be expelled and not receive any inheritance in the land. The Torah continues and says that Hashem judges *Sarah* to be correct. *Avraham* was told: *All that Sarah tells you, listen to her*.

Just as it was then, so it must be today: Let us be determined to have full faith, just like *Sarah*, that *Eretz Yisrael* in its absolute entirety is ours. And ours alone. The descendants of *Yishmael* have no right to any part of it. And, when the time comes that Hashem will be pleased with His people, we will have nothing to fear from the nations of the world. (*Rabbi Nison Alpert*)

ונהי בעינינו כחגבים וכן היינו בעיניהם

“And in our eyes, we were as grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes.” (13:33)

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni teaches, “You said that you saw yourselves as grasshoppers. Hashem says, ‘Who told you that in *their* eyes you did not appear as angels?’”

This is what happens, writes the *Chafetz Chaim*, when a person loses faith in Hashem. He will lose faith in himself and will fail to recognize his own true worth. He will think that others see him as a grasshopper, when really, he is an angel in their eyes. When people lose their self-esteem, and regard themselves as less than they really are, until they see themselves as insects or other lower creatures, they automatically feel that others see them this way, too. “In our eyes we were as

grasshoppers.” Therefore, “and so we were in their eyes.” Here is clear proof that the spies had lost their belief in Hashem.

(Parsha Anthology)

וירגמו אתו באבנים

“And they pelted him to death with stones...” (15:36)

The stoning of the man who gathered wood on *Shabbos*, is described as “*vayirgmu oto ba’anim*”, “stones,” in the plural. By contrast, in the case of the blasphemer, the stoning is described as “*vayirgimu oto aven*” – “stone” (*Vayikra* 24:23), in the singular. What is the reason for the variant forms?

One opinion in the *midrash* suggests that the gatherer of wood on *Shabbos* committed his sin for the glory of Hashem. For after the sin of the spies, when *Bnei Yisrael* were barred from entering *Eretz Yisrael*, there were many people who thought all *mitzvot* had lost their validity. To preclude this erroneous idea, he intentionally gathered wood and violated *Shabbos*, so that he would be punished, and everyone would clearly see that all the *mitzvot* were still in force.

Other disagree, contending that the *mekosheish* – gatherer of wood, had no such lofty purpose in mind. At the time of the stoning, each person throwing a stone had a different opinion of the *mekosheish*, which accounts for the use of the plural, *anim*. Conversely, at the stoning of the blasphemer, it was clear to everyone present that he meant to curse and vilify Hashem. Hence, *aven*, written in the singular.

(Rabbi Meir Shapiro)

ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זנים אחריהם

“And you shall not explore after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you stray.” (15:39)

Rashi, quoting *Midrash Tanchuma*, says that the heart and the eyes are like the body’s spies; the eyes see, then the heart desires, and the body sins. If the heart desires after the eyes see, why did the verse first warn against “*exploring after your hearts*” and then against “*straying after your eyes*”?

True, the heart does desire that which the eyes see, but what things do the eyes see? They see only those things that the heart desires them to see. Every day on his way to work, a person would pass an apple tree. Once, in early spring, someone asked him whether the apple tree had begun to blossom. “Apple tree!?” he exclaimed. “I never knew there was an apple tree on the way to work!” This person was so focused on reaching his destination that he failed to see the sights along the way. However, when someone who did appreciate nature traveled down the same road, he did notice the apple tree, because a man’s eyes see only what his heart directs him to see. Thus, the verse first warns us that “*you shall not explore after your hearts*,” and only then admonishes us not to follow “*your eyes, after which you stray*.”

(Brisker Rav)

SHABBAT SHALOM!

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.