

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.

וידבר משה אל ראשי המטות לבני ישראל לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה ה'

“Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of Israel saying, this is the matter that Hashem has commanded.” (30:2)

Why did *Moshe* refer to the leaders as “*roshei hamatot* – heads of the tribes?” Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to refer to them as “*nesiei Yisrael* – princes of Israel? Perhaps the following can be suggested: *Moshe* is speaking to a group that will have the authority to compel the Jewish people to follow Hashem's law. They will have the power to enforce judgments handed down from the *beit din* as well. By using the phrase “*roshei hamatot*,” the Torah is saying, even though you will be the ones with the sticks (*matot*) – in other words, the authority to compel the Jewish people – resorting to physical violence is not the right way. Rather, *speak* to them, use *words* and reason and kindness – not raw authority. (Rabbi Nisson Alpert)

איש כי ידר נדר לה' או השבע שבעה

“If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears an oath...” (30:3)

The difference between a vow and an oath is explained by *Ramban*, with reference to the *Talmud*. In a **vow** one dedicates a specific *object or creature* to Hashem, and thereby prohibits himself from deriving benefit from it. In contrast, an **oath** is an obligation taken upon *himself* rather than imposed upon the object. That obligation may require him to abstain from doing something or from gaining some benefit. The *Sifrei* teaches that a vow is valid only if it forbids that which is otherwise permitted. Also, an oath which either affirms or opposes an action required by the Torah is null and void. (Ramban)

נקם נקמת בני ישראל מאת המדינים

“Avenge the vengeance of the children of Israel from the Midianites...” (31:2)

Many Sages wonder why *Moshe* was commanded to fight the *Midianites* just before his death. An answer could be that if *Moshe* had not fought the *Midianites*, and favored them over the other enemies of *Bnei Yisrael*, people would have suspected that it was because of his stay in *Midian* and his marriage the daughter of *Yitro*, the priest of *Midian*. Therefore, Hashem commanded *Moshe* to avenge *Bnei Yisrael* before his own demise and in this way remove any doubts or skepticism among the people. (Meshech Chochmah)

“And they journeyed from Mitkah and pitched in Chashmonah.” (33:29)

The Sages comment: חשמנה is the 25th of the 42 journeys of *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert. There is a hint here to the holiday of *Chanukah*, which is on the 25th day of *Kislev* and which was declared after *Mattityahu* the *Chashmonite* and his sons conquered the Greeks and with the help of Hashem claimed victory over their enemies and purified the *Beit HaMikdash*.

The Sages make an additional comment explaining the verse in *Bereshit*, ויאמר אלקים יהי אור – *And Hashem said, let there be light*. The word יהי is numerically equal to 25 and the word אור is the 25th word of the Torah, alluding to the light of *Chanukah*. (Parparot La'Torah)

Something to Ponder:

In the entire *parsha* of *Masei*, the letter “*zayin*” is not written, alluding to the fact that *Bnei Yisrael* did not travel on *Shabbat* – the seventh day. It also alludes to the fact that *Bnei Yisrael* did not have need of כלי זיין – weapons. (Ahavat Torah)

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