

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.

ושמרתם ועשיתם כי היא חכמתכם ובינתכם לעיני העמים

“And you shall observe and fulfill them for this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations.” (4:6)

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 85a) explains that the phrase “*wisdom and understanding*” refers to the knowledge necessary for intercalating the calendar. *Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky* writes that a purview of history indicates that the nations were unable to reach the level of knowledge referred to in the Talmud, for on numerous occasions, they have revised and changed their calendars to ensure their accuracy. It is a source of amazement to the nations that *Chazal’s* calculation (*Rosh Hashana* 25a) that the moon cycle is precisely twenty-nine days, twelve hours and seven hundred and ninety-three *chalakim* has been corroborated by recent astronomical studies. (*Tallelei Orot*)

כבד את אבירך ואת אמירך

“Honor your father and your mother...” (5:16)

The Talmud (*Ketubot* 103a) states that the extra “*vav*” in the word “*v’et*” indicates that an elder brother is also included (i.e., must also be honored).

It seems to me that this is because the eldest brother spends a longer time than his siblings with his father and mother (simply because he is older than the others). Consequently, he must know better than his siblings how to follow his parents’ ways, habits, and wishes. Therefore, when they honor him, they are inevitably learning to go in their parents’ way and to honor them.

This is similar to *Chazal’s* teaching that the verse “*You shall fear Hashem your G-d*” includes reverence for *talmidei chachamim* (*Pesachim* 22b). Part of the reason for this is that a Torah scholar knows better than an ignorant person in how to walk in G-d’s ways and do His will. So, by honoring him and imitating his behavior, they are indirectly honoring G-d and learning to do His will.

(*Oznayim L’Torah*)

ואהבת את ה' אלקיך

“You shall love Hashem, your G-d...” (6:5)

This is the positive commandment to love Hashem with all of one’s heart and all of one’s soul. We cannot fulfill this *mitzvah* with one’s mouth alone. It is not unlike the *mitzvah* of wearing *Tefillin*, about which we read in this *parsha*: “*You shall bind them as a sign.*” The essential *mitzvah* is

to don the *Tefillin* and wear them. Even if we read this verse a hundred times, if we do not bind the *Tefillin* to our head and our arm and wear them, we have not fulfilled the obligation. So it is, regarding the *mitzvah* to love Hashem, as it is not enough just to read the verse, “*You shall love Hashem...*” Rather, we must fulfill the *mitzvah* through our deeds and actions. (Vilna Gaon)

ושנתם לבנך ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך

“You shall teach them to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you go on the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” (6:7)

QUESTION: It should have first said “*vedibarta bam*” – “you shall speak of them” and then “*veshinantam lebanecha*” – “you shall teach them to your children”?

ANSWER: It is the fervent wish of every parent to see his children immersed in Torah study. The Torah is offering sound advice to see this wish come to fruition, and therefore tells us, “*veshinantam lebanecha*” – if you want to teach Torah to your children and inspire them to study it diligently, the way to do this is through, “*vedibarta bam*” – for them to see *you* speaking of them, “when *you* sit in your house and when *you* go on the way and when *you* lie down and when *you* rise up.” Parents must always remember that they are a mirror for their children and that their children try to emulate them. (R’ Yosef Greenwald)

וכתבתם על מזוזת ביתך ובשעריך

“And write them on your doorposts of your house and upon your gates.” (6:9)

QUESTION: What is the significance of the "ש" on the exterior of a *mezuzah* and why is the *mezuzah* affixed to the doorpost in a leaning position? (See *Yoreh Dei'ah* 289:6)

ANSWER: On the exterior of every *mezuzah* is a “*shin*” which stands for Hashem’s name “ש-ד-י”. This name is written on the *mezuzah* because it is an abbreviation for “*Shomer Daltei Yisrael*” “the protector of the Jewish (doors) homes.” The *mezuzah* protects the home and its inhabitants not only when they are at home, but even when they are away.

For a home to have the proper atmosphere, *shalom bayit* – harmony and peace – must prevail among all those who dwell in it, and this is achieved by promoting a spirit of cooperation. Putting the *mezuzah* on a slant instead of upright is thus a message that all those who enter the home must be willing to bend in conflicts with other people. (Vedebarta Bam)

SHABBAT SHALOM!

For future sponsorship opportunities or to receive this publication, please call Steve Zuckerman at 516 652 5266 or email zkster@aol.com. Sponsorships in memory of or in honor of someone are \$50.00 per issue.