

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.

ארץ חטה ושערה

“A land of wheat and barley...” (8:8)

Tur (Ohr HaChaim 167) writes that it is customary to place both hands on the bread when reciting the *beracha*, for the ten fingers on the hands are symbolic of the ten *mitzvot* that are associated with bread production: 1) Not plowing an ox and donkey harnessed together 2) Not mixing different grains in a single field 3) *Leket* 4) *Shikchah* 5) *Pe'ah* 6) *Bikkurim* 7) *Terumah* 8) *Ma'aser Rishon* 9) *Ma'aser Sheini* 10) *Challah*.

Allusion to these *mitzvot* can be seen from the ten words in the *beracha* made on bread, as well as from then ten words in our verse and in other verses about produce: *Tehillim* 104:14 and 145:15 and *Bereshit* 27:28. (Parsha Anthology)

ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך

“And now Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you but to fear Hashem, your G-d.” (10:12)

Our Rabbis derive from this everything is in the hands of Hashem except for the fear of Hashem (*Rashi*). When one prays to Hashem to fulfill a request of his, one cannot be certain that his prayer will be answered. The decision is entirely in the hands of Hashem. But such doubts are not relevant when an individual prays to Hashem to inspire him with the fear of Hashem. In that case, he may be sure that his prayer will be answered. (Ohel Torah)

בשבעים נפש ירדו אבותיך מצרימה ועתה שמך ה' אלקיך ככוכבי השמים לרב

“With seventy souls did your ancestors descend to Egypt, and now Hashem, your G-d, has made you like the stars of the heaven for abundance.” (10:22)

Not all seventy souls that descended to Egypt had a role in producing the abundant nation that was created in Egypt. Jacob's 12 sons did not have more children in Egypt; it was the other 58 family members that produced the vast Jewish nation that eventually left Egypt. Interesting that the numerical value of כוכבי, *stars*, is 58. (Kol Dodi)

ולמדתם אותם את בניכם לדבר בם בשבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך

“And teach them to your children to speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road...” (11:19)

The phrase to teach them to the children is in the plural, but the rest of this verse is written in the singular. This led *Rabbi BenTzion Zaks* to draw a powerful lesson in Jewish education. The opening phrase places an obligation upon the entire Jewish community to provide and properly fund Torah schools for all the local Jewish children. The second phrase presents a second obligation upon each parent to make sure that the teaching of the school is reinforced at home, and when the family travels to other places (“on the road”).

By placing both ideas in one verse, the Torah emphasizes that the successful implantation of Torah values in the young generation requires complete harmony between the education received in school and the atmosphere in the home. How often children become confused and rebellious when they see that the principles they are taught in school by their teachers, are mocked or trampled upon by parents at home. The greater the reinforcement in the home, and lovingly done, the more parents can feel assured that their children will grow into positive, observant members of the Jewish people. (*Rabbi Menachem BenTzion Zaks*)

ולמדתם אתם את בניכם

“You are to teach them to your children...” (11:19)

The word “*otam*” – “them” is referring here to the words of Torah. But when read without vowels, the word can also be read “*atem*” – “you”, suggesting that the Torah warns us not to merely rely on the Torah of the children. Rather, *you*, the fathers, must be learned as well – as it states in *Pirkei Avot*: “*Ime in ani, mi li – If I am not concerned for myself, who will be concerned for me?*” (*Chafetz Chaim*)

SHABBAT SHALOM!

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