

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.

שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך

“Appoint for yourselves judges and police in all your gates...” (16:18)

Every person has seven “gates”: two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and a mouth. Through these “gates” we receive all our impressions and attain our awareness of the outside world. Our verse instructs us to “place judges and police at our gates,” to be careful that no shameful and immoral perceptions enter these “gates” of yours. Let not your ears hear evil, your eyes see evil, nor your mouth speak evil. (Shelah HaKodesh)

לך תתן לך - “You shall appoint for yourself” – this is an appeal to the people who appoint the judges and enforcers not to think that being that **they** have appointed the enforcers, they are themselves not subject to their authority. The meaning of לך then is equivalent to עליך, “over yourself”.

בכל שעריך - “In all your cities” – the reason the torah writes כל, “all,” is to tell us that every single city and town in the land of Israel must have its own judiciary. *Yalkut Shimoni* on our verse states that our verse draws a comparison between the Supreme Court and the regional courts; just as the Supreme Court has the authority to deal with capital offenses and to hand down death sentences, so do the regional courts (if composed of a minimum of 23 judges.) The exegesis appears to be based on the word בכל which includes all the various courts as having the same authority.

(Ohr HaChaim)

צדק צדק תרדף

“Justice, justice, you shall pursue...” (16:20)

The Torah relates (*Shemot* 20:15) that at *Har Sinai*, “the entire people saw the voices...” What did Hashem intend to accomplish via this miracle? The *Chidushei HaRim* explains that the *mitzvah* that instructs us not to steal – “*lo (lamed-aleph) tignov*” – could be confused for the phrase “*lo (lamed-vav) tignov*”, which would mean that we should “steal for Him,” i.e. Hashem! In other words, since the phrases are identical and only vary in the spelling of “*lo*”, the Jewish people were at risk of being able to convince themselves that it’s acceptable for a person to steal so long as one is doing it “for a good cause.”

The reality is that a human being is always vulnerable to this type of warped logic, because it’s easy for a person to convince himself of things that interest him, and then incline his views accordingly. Therefore, to avoid this problem and to ensure the Jewish people would know with

100% certainty that “stealing for Him” is forbidden, Hashem caused that “the entire people saw the voices” when the Torah was given at *Har Sinai*. This would guarantee that they would literally see the difference in spelling between the words “*lo (lamed-aleph)*” and “*lo (lamed-vav)*.”

(Short & Sweet)

על פי שנים עדים או שלשה עדים יומת המת לא יומת על פי עד אחד

“By the testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses shall the condemned person be put to death, he shall not be put to death by the testimony of a single witness...” (17:6)

How marvelously a well-know *midrash* can be fused with this verse. *Chazal* state that “wisdom” was asked what should be done with a sinner. Wisdom answered, let evil pursue him. “Prophecy” was asked the same question and said, such a person should die. The Torah was asked, and it responded, let him bring a sin-sacrifice (*asham*) and be forgiven. G-d was asked, and He said, let him repent and gain his atonement.

Thus, the testimony of two witnesses (wisdom and prophecy) causes a sinner’s execution. The third witness (Torah) can only save him when there is a Temple and opportunity to bring a sacrifice. What hope is there for a sinner when the Jewish people are in exile? The verse concludes that he shall not be executed – because of the testimony of one witness: G-d Himself, who gave him the avenue of escape by *teshuvah* – repentance!

(*Mayyanah shel Torah*)

ידינו לא שפכה את הדם הזה

“Our hands have not spilled this blood...” (21:7)

Zevad Tov observes that the verse writes שפכה with a ה at the end rather than שפכו which would be grammatically correct form. He explains that the ה is an allusion to the five things that a host is required to provide for a poverty-stricken guest: clothing, food, drink, shelter and escort.

(*Torah Anthology*)

A lesson to be learned from the *eglah arufah* is that a Jew who is alien and detached from Judaism cannot simply be written off as a product of the times and a part of a statistic. It is incumbent upon all to make sure that he is spiritually “alive” as a Jew, so that we will be able to claim without any hesitancy, “*yadeinu lo shafcha et hadam hazeh*” – “we have not caused this spiritual shedding of blood.”

When *Yaakov* parted from *Yosef*, the last *halacha* he taught him was about *eglah arufah* (see *Breishit* 45:27, *Rashi*). Possibly, *Yaakov* meant to impart to *Yosef* the teaching that even though he might become leader of a mighty nation, he was always to remember that every person is important and that every person must be accounted for by the highest authorities of the land.

(*Likutei Sichot*)

SHABBAT SHALOM!

This issue is dedicated in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of Gavi Lichter. We wish a Mazal Tov the entire Lichter family. 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.