

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.

איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו

"He does not listen to the voice of his father and his mother." (21:18)

According to the *Talmud* (*Sanhedrin* 71b), the laws of the *unruly and rebellious son* only apply if the voices of the mother and father are equivalent. If the father and mother differ in their ways and the son is witness to this kind of fighting between them, it is unfair to judge him for he is not at fault for having become *unruly and rebellious*.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky points out that the behavior of parents within the home is the most fundamental educational lesson that a child receives. When a child sees his father and mother acting in a manner that is totally consistent with the beliefs that they profess and which they urge him to follow, then there is reason to assume that this child will follow in their paths. But if all he sees is fighting and hypocrisy, not only will he not follow them, but we have no right to judge him for he is not at fault.

(*Torah Treasures*)

כי יקרא קן תפור לפניך

"If a bird's nest happens to be before you..." (22:6)

Rambam regards this command as teaching us to show kindness and consideration to animals. If our search for food requires killing an animal, then it should die in the easiest most humane manner possible, not in torment. By the same token, the mother and its young must not be killed on the same day (*Vayikra* 22:28) so that the mother not see the death of her offspring. The assumption is that to a limited extent, animals share certain basic feelings with man, included among them is the love of a mother for her offspring. The precept of sending away the mother bird from the nest has a similar reason, since it spares her witnessing the taking of the young. Now, if the Torah takes into consideration the sensitivities of birds and four-legged creatures, how much more so is it concerned about the feelings of human beings!

(*Something to Say*)

Midrash Tanchuma (1) explains the precise placement of *shiluach haken* in the Torah (in the midst of a listing of many other Torah commandments) teaches us a lesson about the concept of *mitzvah gorret mitzvah*, that the performance of one *mitzvah* leads to another *mitzvah* (*Pirkei Avot* 4:2). Specifically, *shiluach haken* precedes a list of several other *mitzvot* in order to indicate that one who performs this *mitzvah* with the mother bird will merit the items and *mitzvot* that

immediately follow in the text. Now, this is quite a reward, as what follows is the mention of a new house, a vineyard, animals, beautiful garments of wool and linen, the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit*, and a wife and children!

לא תחרש בשור ובחמר יחדו

“You shall not plow with an ox and donkey together.” (22:10)

Da’as Zikeinim explains a reason for this commandment that since an ox chews its cud and a donkey does not, the donkey will suffer the pain of envy when it sees that the ox has food in its mouth, and it does not.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz commented: This is a great lesson in how sensitive we need to be not to cause others the pain of envy. We must be careful with the feelings of an animal, all the more so of a person. Note that the ox is not really eating any more than the donkey; the donkey only thinks this but is mistaken. Be very careful not to boast about your accomplishments or possessions if others might feel envious. Do not praise someone in the presence of a person who might feel envious of that person. (Growth Through Torah)

ארבעים יכנו

“Forty shall he strike him...” (25:3)

This number has special significance (see commentary to *Bereshit* 7:4). It is the number of days that the Flood lasted; it also corresponds to the number of days needed for a child to form in the womb. *Maharal* explains that thirty-nine days suffice for the physical growth of the fetus (*Sotah* 2b) and that on the fortieth day the soul enters the body (*Gur Aryeh*). The lashes, which involve thirty-nine strokes, are meant to purify the human body. The soul is then freed and thereby becomes exempt from the punishment of *karet*, spiritual excision. Hence the number forty once again appears, indicating a renewal and rebirth after a chastening through punishment. Similarly, purification in a *mikveh* requires forty measures of natural water; the spiritual development of Israel in the Wilderness took forty years; and *Moshe* was raised to the perfect ideal of the Torah by staying on *Har Sinai* for forty days. (Recanti)

Rav Shmuel Alter zt”l would say: “The title *ben sorer u’moreh* could be translated as ‘son and wayward teacher.’ It is not enough that the son chooses a path of indulgence, but he also teaches his peers to act likewise. This is indeed a great danger.

SHABBAT SHALOM!

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