

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.

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל
"Today all of you are standing before G-d; your leaders, your tribes, your elders, your officers, every man of Israel..." (29:9)

Whenever the need arises to take action on behalf of Judaism and to wage the good fight for the glory of G-d, the people all protest: "Why choose me, of all people? Leave it to the teachers, the rabbis, the leaders of the community. What can an ordinary citizen like me do?"

But they are in grave error. When the need arises to act *before the L-rd your G-d*, you must be *standing, all of you*, ready for action, from your "heads and tribes" down to "the hewer of wood and drawer of water" (29:10). The entire people must unite and not be content to leave the responsibility to the leaders. (Butzina DiNehora)

ושב ה' אלקיך את שבותך ורחמך ושב וקבצך מכל העמים
"And G-d will return your returnees and have mercy upon you, and He will return and gather you from all the nations..." (30:3)

Meshech Chochmah comments that the verse seems to be redundant. He explains that when Israel suffers from the trials of her exile, most of the nation seeks to flee from the Diaspora and ascend to the Land of Israel. To these people the Torah says: *and G-d will return your returnees [i.e., those who desire to return] and have mercy upon you*. However, there are those who are so acclimated to life in the Diaspora that they have lost the desire to return to their land. The Torah addresses them specifically and says: *and He will return you and gather you from all the nations*.

The *Malbim*, here too, is bothered by the redundancy. He explains that the Torah is alluding to the concept of G-d's returning to Israel when Israel returns to Him. Israel's repentance causes G-d, as it were, to "meet her halfway." (Parsha Anthology)

וישמענו אתה ונעשינה כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו
"So that we can listen to it and perform it...for this is very close to you it is in your mouth and heart to fulfill it..." (30:14)

What this means is, "Yes, you are correct, your sins must be addressed. It is necessary for you to accept the Torah again, this time with love. And it is important for you to unite with one another."

However, you need not reenact these two episodes the way you think. For you do not need any kind of agent. And you do not need to cross the sea or ascend to heaven. All that is necessary is that the Torah should be *"in your mouth and in your heart."* You must learn it with the greatest of dedication, your goal being that the Torah should be in *"your mouth."* And you should love one another *"in your heart"* as the verse states *"you shall not hate your brother in your heart"* (Vayikra 19:17). If you do as I say, then it will be as if you had, in fact, crossed the sea and ascended to the heavens. For your sins are not part of your essence, burned into your character. All that is needed is that you change the way you *think*. (Torah Gems)

ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע

"Behold, I have set before you today life and good and death and evil. (30:15)

The Torah speaks here in the singular language to teach us that even during times of confusion and much transgression among the people, the obligation lies within each individual to strengthen himself and know that Hashem has made a bond with him and speaks directly to him. (Vilna Gaon)

Bnei Yisrael are asked to *choose life* not for its own sake, but out of love for Hashem and a desire to *cling to Him*. Do not study in order to be regarded as a wise man or to be called a rabbi. Do so out of love for Hashem and ultimately, good will also follow. (Sifri)

The Scholars Kollel of Great Neck is happy to announce that we have received a pledge and donation from one of our supporters for \$25,000 as a matching fund gift. Every dollar that we raise in the next 2 weeks will be matched up to \$25,000. Donations to the Kollel go directly to supporting the five days a week, 50 weeks a year, schedule that the Kollel has each year. We would appreciate all the help and support that we can get to further the teaching of Torah and to maximize this generous donation.

Shabbat Shalom and a wish for a very healthy and rewarding New Year

Steve Zuckerman