

## 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.*

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Reuvan & Stephanie Valinsky in memory of Tzvi Ben Yakov & Shimon Ben Pinchus z"l**

**ואברם כבד מאד...ויקרא שם אברם בשם ה'**

**"And Avram was very wealthy...Avram called on the name of Hashem..." (13:2,4)**

Why did Avraham have to amass so much wealth? Since he called on the name of Hashem, he spread the words of Hashem throughout the world and in order to be heard he had to be a wealthy man of great prestige. If not, no one would pay him any mind. The wisdom of the wretched is contemptible. (Bris Avrohom)

**אל נא תהי מריבת ביני ובינך...הפרד נא מעלי**

**"Please, let there not be any friction between me and you...please separate yourself from me..." (13:8-9)**

A person should always try to avoid partnerships, for partnerships are a primary cause of argument and slander. The friction mentioned in the verse started not between Avraham and Lot, but between their shepherds. Due to the quarrel between the shepherds, however, Avraham was forced to part ways with Lot.

Avraham concluded by saying, "if you will go left, then I will go right; and if you go to the right, then I will turn you to the left." (Picking up on Avraham's use of the word causative verb *אשר* which does not mean "I will go to the left"). The *Medrash Rabbah* offers a powerful parable that teaches us always to choose the way of the right, as it is written, "the wise man's heart inclines him to his right" (*Kohelet* 10:2). (Chafetz Chaim)

**ויוצא את החוצה...ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך**

**"And He took him outside...and He said to him, so too, will be your descendants." (15:5)**

*Rashi* cites the Talmudic statement (*Nedarim* 32a) that Hashem told Avraham to discount the effects of astrological influence. Even if there is a sign in the stars that you will not have children, you will rise above this and merit having children. From here, the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 156a) states, "There is no *mazal* for the Jewish people." This then is one meaning of the latter half of the verse, "So too, will be your descendants." The Jewish people needs not fear any negative predictions in the stars.

Some people become nervous if someone predicts a negative future for them through astrology, chiromancy (palm reading), cards etc. Trust in Hashem and awareness of His unlimited power will free a person from any fears of such predictions. Prayer and the merit of good deeds will be able to change a negative destiny to a positive one. *(Megaleh Amukos)*

### והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה

**“He believed in Hashem, and He considered it to him as righteousness...”** (15:6)

Our Sages tell us that *Avraham* attained recognition of the Creator on his own. They compare him to a man knowing through common sense that if a castle has a light burning inside of it, the castle must have an owner. Nevertheless, in the Torah, *Avraham* is praised for his pure faith: *“He believed in Hashem.”* This teaches us that of all the principles of *Yiddishkeit*, the most important is *emunah*. As the prophet *Chavakuk* puts it *“v'tzaddik be'emunato yichyeh – a tzaddik shall live by his faith”* (*Chavakuk* 2:4).

The concept of holding fast to faith – first and foremost – can be likened to a person drowning in the sea who suddenly sees a tree floating in the water beside him. He tries to grab onto its trunk not its branches. And indeed, the Torah has always been, and will always be, *a tree of life for all who take hold of it* (*Mishlei* 3:18). *Emunah* – faith in Hashem and His Torah – is our tree of life. Let us hold firmly onto it and never let it go. *(Something to Say)*

### והיית לאב המון גוים

**“For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations...”** (17:4)

In the *Shema*, the command of *אתם את בניכם* – *and you shall teach them to your children*, is not interpreted literally. Rather, the *midrash* states that *your children* are referring to your students – a teacher is in a very real sense a father as well (*Sifri, Devarim* 34). When *Avraham* taught the basic concept of monotheism to the world, he became a teacher to the entire world, and hence a universal father. This is the meaning of the phrase *אב המון גוים* which is the reason for the expansion of the name *Avram* to *Avraham* (17:5). The *halacha* therefore states that one who refers to *Avraham* by his former name has violated a negative commandment (*Berachot* 13a), since by doing so, he denies *Avraham's* universal fatherhood. *(Chumash Mesoras HaRav)*

## SHABBAT SHALOM!

*This week's publication is sponsored by Susan & Jimmy Frisch in memory of Jimmy's sister, Golda bat Moshe Yitzhak z"l, whose first yahrzeit was last week. For future sponsorship opportunities or to receive this publication, please call Steve Zuckerman at 516 652 5266 or email [zkster@aol.com](mailto:zkster@aol.com). Sponsorships in memory of or in honor of someone are \$50.00 per issue.*