

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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Ruvane & Stephanie Vilinsky in memory of Tzvi Ben Yakov & Shimon Ben Pinchus z"l**

ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם

"And I will take you to Me for a nation." (6:7)

Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov tz"l explains the first letters of the words **ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם** – "And I will take you to Me as a nation" – are the same letters as in the word **אלול** – the month during which we become close to Hashem through our prayers and repentance. This alludes to the promise that Hashem makes that if we do sincere *teshuvah*, He will indeed take us to Him as His chosen nation. (Torah Tavlin)

This is the first time that Israel's future destiny is mentioned. It even precedes the announcement of the possession of a national land. Israel belongs to Hashem even without land or territory. Moreover, the words of this verse reflect the specific character of Judaism, which has often been misunderstood. Israel is the people of Hashem, meaning that Israel is directed, inspired and governed by Hashem in every aspect. Thus, Israel's relationship with Hashem differs from that of other religious communities wherein G-d is directly encountered only in the place of worship or by priests and ministers. As the prophet *Yirmiyahu* (7:22) states: *For on the day that I brought you out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this I commanded them, saying: 'Listen to My voice, and I will be your G-d, and you shall be My people'.*

While other nations are bound by a common land, Israel's bond lies in the worship of one G-d. Israel's national existence is not dependent upon the possession of its land. On the contrary, possession of land is directly dependent on the faithful performance of Israel's mission as a nation. The land is referred to as *morasha*, heritage (v. 8) – the land was already given in spirit to our forefathers, and we will receive it only as their heirs. (Rabbi Shimshon Rephael Hirsch)

ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה

"And I shall give it to you as a heritage." (6:8)

The Hebrew term **מורשה**, *heritage*, appears twice in the Torah. It is first mentioned in this verse, in reference to the Land of Israel, and later in *Sefer Devarim* 33:4, in connection with the

giving of the Torah. The Torah that *Moshe* gave us is a heritage, as stated in the expression מורשה קהילת יעקב, *the heritage of the Congregation of Jacob*. The term מורשה is used in two places to teach us that the heritage represented by the Land of Israel can remain ours only if we commit ourselves to keeping the *mitzvot* of Hashem. (Torah Gems)

ומשה בן שמונים שנה ואהרן בן שלש ושמנים שנה

“And Moshe was eighty years old, and Aharon was eighty-three years old.” (7:7)

Some periods in Jewish history are dynamic. Great miracles happen and the Jew attains great heights. Other periods are passive. The Jews spent hundreds of years in Egypt in anonymity; the Torah did not record the details of Israel’s sojourn there. The dynamic period of history began when *Moshe* was eighty years of age and *Aharon* was eighty-three. Before that, the Torah tells of only two episodes from *Moshe’s* youth: that with the Egyptians and that with the two Jews. Those were years of patient waiting, years in which the Jewish people, then as well as today, must display great conviction. (Rabbi Soloveitchik)

תנו לכם מופת

“Show a sign for yourselves...” (7:9)

We would expect the text to state, “*Show a sign for us.*” When a sorcerer casts a spell or performs a magic act he astounds and enraptures his spectators. The sorcerer himself is not impressed, for he knows that his performance is based on illusion, deception, and sleight of hand.

By contrast, when Hashem performs a miracle through His prophet, the prophet is only Hashem’s messenger and he himself marvels at this manifestation of Divine Power. This is implied by the phrase: “*Show a sign for yourselves.*” Show me a true miracle, one which shall be a wondrous sign for you too. (Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk)

ולא שלח את בני ישראל

“And he did not send out the Children of Israel.” (9:35)

This designation of “*The Children of Israel*” replaces the more derogatory term, “*the people,*” which was used up to now. The active state of slavery had stopped at the end of the third plague. Since that time, the dignity of the Israelites became more and more apparent to the Egyptians. (Vilna Gaon)

SHABBAT SHALOM

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