פ' בלק תשפ"ב
Volume 44, Issue 7

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.

<u>ויגר מואב מפני העם מאד כי רב הוא</u>

"And Moav was very afraid of the Jewish people because they were many." (22:3)

It is worthwhile to note that seemingly, the Jews should be referred to in the plural. When the verse says the Hebrew word for "many," why does it say רב and not רבים? Also, why does it call the Jewish nation הוא, which is singular and not הם, which is plural? Why not say *Moav* was afraid of the people כי רבים הם instead of כי רב הוא?

The key, writes the *Yismach Moshe*, is our Sages' teaching, "If Israel is united, and all the Jews love and respect one another, no other people can rule over them or harm them." The *Midrash* provides an analogy to a tightly tied bundle of reeds. If the bundle becomes untied, each reed is left on its own. As a result, one can easily break all of the reeds. One simply snaps them in half, one by one. However, if the bundle remains tied, no one can break even one of the reeds!

(*Parsha Anthology*)

<u>הנה העם היצא ממצרים</u>

"Behold the nation that is going out of Egypt..." (22:11)

The *Kli Yakar* points out that instead of using the past tense and saying the nation *went* out of Egypt, *Bilam* here speaks in the present tense, saying a nation *is* going out. Why? The exodus from Egypt was almost forty years before!

Bilam here was criticizing our forefathers, saying that they still were acting as if only now they were leaving Egypt. When they complained, they continually mentioned returning to Egypt, for they had said (*Bamidbar* 14:3), "*Let is place a leader over us and go back to Egypt.*" They had moaned (*Bamidbar* 11:5), "*We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt.*" *Bilam* pointed an accusing finger at them, saying their thoughts were still on Egypt, as if only now they were going out!

(*Parsha Anthology*)

<u>ויפתח ה' את פי האתון</u>

"Hashem opened the mouth of the she-donkey..." (22:28)

This was to bring it home forcibly to *Bilam* that he had no cause to consider himself great because he had been endowed with prophetic wisdom. Why, even the donkey, which certainly would not be considered fit to look upon an angel, or to speak, was enabled to do both because it

was for the good of *Bnei Yisrael*. *Bilam* was no more fit to be a prophet than the donkey and was given the gift of prophecy only in order that *Bnei Yisrael* might benefit thereby. (*Kli Yakar*)

ונאם הגבר שתם העין

"And the saying of the man whose eye is opened..." (24:3)

The Sages explain that *Bilam* was blind in one eye. They point out that every human being needs two eyes; ones to perceive the greatness of the Creator, and the other to behold his own humbleness and insignificance. *Bilam* knew of the greatness of G-d as the verse states, "*and he knows the knowledge of the Most High*" (24:16), but he could not see his own insignificance and was therefore arrogant. It was clear to the Sages that *Bilam* must have been blind in one eye. (*Rishfei Esh*)

והצנע לכת עם אלקיך

"To walk modestly with your G-d..." (*Haftara, Micah 6:8*)

The *Talmud* (*Makkot* 24a) states that this refers to the dowering of brides and to the escorting of the dead. In order to know a man's true inner character, one must see how he behaves at those times of great joy or great grief when is thrown off balance and unable to disguise his real nature. Baseness and vulgarity readily come to light at time of great rejoicing when drink loosens tongues. Spiritual stamina and inner strength are best revealed at the hour of grief when the faith and integrity of lesser men may crumble.

Whether a man truly "*walks modestly with his G-d*" can be judged only when he "dowers the bride" or when he "escorts the dead" – at moments of great joy or at the time of deep sorrow. By remaining pure and honest in joy, and strong and steadfast in sorrow, he proves that he "*walks modestly with his G-d*" at all times. (*Kochav M'Yaakov*)

The Scholars' Kollel of Great Neck is happy to announce that it has an anonymous donor who will match all donations to the Kollel between now and Rosh Hashana (up to $25,000). The Scholars' Kollel, which has classes every day has successfully grown over the past few years and has become a significant source of daily adult Torah learning for the Great Neck community. It emphasizes the teaching of the wisdom of Torah and how it positively affects the daily lives of both the participants and their families. Please donate generously so that the Kollel may be able to continue to thrive.

Sincerely yours,
Steve Zuckerman

SHABBAT SHALOM!

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