


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* שקדש


Friday 4 May 2012 - 12 Iyyar 5772
Sedra Acharei-Kedoshim

SIMPLICITY

THE FIRST OF THE DOUBLE SEDRA¹ DESCRIBES THE SERVICE in the Temple on Yom Kippur. The central point is the moment when the High Priest, representative of the entire Jewish people, enters the innermost part of the Temple, the Holy of Holies. This is the one time in the year when any person enters this most sacred place. Inside is the golden Ark, with the Tablets of sapphire on which the Ten Commandments were engraved.

Most important, it is here that the Shechinah, the Divine presence, is revealed. The High Priest enters with a pan of fragrant incense in his hands. It is an intimate coming together of G-d and the Jewish people. Through this intense meeting, errors and transgressions are washed away. We are spiritually cleansed, forgiven.

Pesach, Shavuot, Yom Kippur - and all the festivals, each in its own way, express the way we the Jewish people bond with G-d. Each festival and every detail of Jewish life reminds us of how lucky we are to have our beautiful Torah, and stirs us to live up to our responsibilities as Jews. At the same time, the Torah reading teaches us something which is always relevant to our lives. This is the importance of Simplicity.



In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin
 (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772
 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי

It is well known that the High Priest normally wore splendid clothes. The weave included gold thread, and there were large precious stones in gold settings on his shoulders and on the Breastplate of Judgement. By contrast, the other ordinary priests wore simple white linen clothes.

At the moment of entering the Holy of Holies, the High Priest did not wear his splendid garments of gold². He wore the simple white linen garments worn by the ordinary priest. Rashi comments that the gold would be reminiscent of the Golden Calf, and therefore was unsuitable at a moment when forgiveness was being sought.

A further point is that in order to come close to G-d, the High Priest had to forget his splendour and glory and achieve the simplicity of ordinariness. This applies not only to the High Priest in Temple times, but also to us. In order to reach the inner and most significant part of our being, of Judaism and of life, we forget our self-importance and discover the power of simplicity.

Through simplicity we are able to enter the very heart of the Torah. This enables us to improve the quality of our own lives, and also of the lives of those around us. How do we achieve this in our daily lives? One way is through making a little step forward in acceptance of some detail of the laws of the Torah. By making this little step we surrender our self to G-d. Of course, we do not lose anything, indeed we gain in every way. Yet the fact that we make this step of acceptance in some area of our lives expresses the idea that we are not the ultimate master of our lives: G-d is the master.

This idea is useful at this time of year. The period between Pesach and Shavuot is a time when we are trying to improve ourselves, in preparation for the receiving of the Torah. Little steps forward in observance of Jewish law help us do this. On Shavuot, in about three weeks time, we will be reliving the way G-d and the Jewish people met at Mount Sinai. The effort we make now will help to make that a truly significant meeting. The path is simplicity...

1. Leviticus chs.16-18. 2. Lev.16:4.

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SEDRA ACHAREI KEDOSHIM

PROTECTION

Rafi walked into the living room. His sister Debby was lying on the floor with a large pad of lined paper, and several open books piled one on the other. Her hands and face were stained from the leaking ball-point with which she had been writing. As Rafi surveyed the scene, his sister leaped up, exclaiming “finished!” She beamed at her brother. “We had to find a story relating in some way to the Sedra. I looked and looked and last I found one. Do you want to read it?”

Rafi looked at the ink stained paper. For a few moments he read. Then he said: “I can hardly read it. Surely you are going to write it out again. But anyway, this story seems to have to do with Pesach, which has already passed weeks ago. Soon it will be Shavuot. What does it have to do with the Sedra?”

“Don’t you know?” asked Debby. “The first Sedra this week speaks about not eating blood.”

“Oh, I forgot,” said Rafi. “You’re right. But I still can’t make it out”. “I’ll read it to you,” said Debby. Raffi nodded.

“There was once this king, and among his subjects were many Jews. One day, an advisor came into the palace, demanding an audience with the king. The advisor told the

king of a horrible plot that was taking place. The Jews, he claimed, were using the blood of Muslim children to bake their Matzot for Pesach. The king was shocked. Of course the Jews would have to be punished severely for this.

“The advisor left, and the king sat thinking about this horrifying news. Being a fair person though, he felt that he had to check with his Jewish minister, to see what the Jews thought about this. After all, he knew that there had been many false accusations against the Jews before. But this sounded too incredulous to be fabricated.

“The Jewish minister was called in to the king. After hearing the news from the king, the minister suggested that a small experiment be carried out. A Jewish woman was called in. The minister requested the woman to prepare an egg for frying. An egg and a small bowl were brought in to the room. The woman, however, asked for a glass. She cracked the egg into the glass and raised it up looking at it from all angles.” Debby picked up a cup to illustrate this point in the story.

“The king could not contain his curiosity. ‘What are you doing?’ he asked. The woman explained that she was checking the egg to see if there were any spots of blood inside it, because Jews are forbidden to eat blood. The king was impressed. At this point the minister spoke up. ‘Surely, your majesty, it is obvious that a people who are so scrupulous in not eating blood would certainly surely not use blood for their Matzot.’ The king had no choice but to agree.” That was the end of what Debby had written.

“Cool story,” said Rafi. “You know, G-d protected us then. In fact, all the way through history, He goes on protecting us.

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“You know what,” said Debby. “I’ll add that in, and that’s how I’ll end the story. Thanks.”

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