

CHABAD
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שבת..... *for Friday night*..... קדש

Friday 15 April 2011 - 11 Nisan 5771
Sedra Acharei - Approaching Pesach

גמ

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HOLINESS, GO HOME

WHERE IS HOLINESS? IN THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM OR IN ONE'S HOME? It might seem an absurd question. Surely the Temple was the most holy place? In fact, the Temple and the home function as two complementary focal points of holiness, which we see both in the Sedra¹ and in the festival of Pesach, which begins on Monday night.

The Sedra starts by mentioning the startling death of the two sons of Aaron. They were pursuing holiness, and this led to them leaving ordinary life and ultimately leaving the world. The Sages point out that they were not married, because they rejected the normalcy of daily life. They thirsted for holiness. Yet this kind of thirst which leads away from the world is not the path.

It is true that the Sanctuary or the Temple in Jerusalem is a focal point of holiness, Yet at the same time G-d dwells also within the heart of every person². This suggests that there are two focal points for holiness – in the Temple, and also in the heart, which implies in one's home.

A hint to the idea of the significance of the home is seen in a further passage in the Sedra. Presenting the laws of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the one day in the year that the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies, the Torah says that he should atone “for himself and for his home”³. The Sages explain that his “home” means his wife, and they comment that the High Priest conducting the Yom

Dedicated to the Memory of
Rabbi M. M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe זי"ע
born 11 Nisan 1902

Kippur service in the Temple must be married⁴. G-d is revealed through the joining of the holiness at home and the sanctity of the Holy of Holies.

Now we come to Pesach. The first Pesach Seder night took place on the eve of the Exodus. Each family took a Pesach lamb, slaughtered it, sprinkled some blood on the doorposts and the lintel, roasted the lamb and ate it *at home*. This very first communal Jewish spiritual event took place in family groups at home.

G-d commanded them, through Moses, to eat the roast lamb together with Matza, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. While they were completing their Seder gathering, so similar to our own on the coming Monday and Tuesday evenings, the glory of G-d was revealed at midnight. The Tenth Plague destroyed the oppressive power of Egypt but protected the Jews. Pharaoh himself came to Moses and begged him to lead the Jewish people to freedom. It was a striking revelation of G-d's glory, and the focus of the revelation was the Jewish home.

At a later stage in our history, in Temple times, we would all go to Jerusalem to celebrate Pesach. We would bring a Pesach lamb, and it would be slaughtered in the Temple courtyard. Then we would bring the lamb back to our lodgings in Jerusalem, roast the lamb and eat it at the Seder night in a family group together. Again there are two focal points of holiness: the Temple, and in our family group. The Divine Presence is revealed in both: in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, and also in the heart of each individual, and particularly in their gathering together as a family⁵.

A key teaching of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, who was born on 11 Nisan, 1902, was about the importance of the Jewish home as a centre of holiness. The Mezuzot on the doors, Tzeddaka boxes, Shabbat and festival candles, harmony between husband, wife and children, with generous hospitality, all help to make each home into a focus for holiness. Through this and all Miztvot the Divine Presence will at last be revealed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, bringing unity and goodness to all humanity. So – *Next Year in Jerusalem!*

1. Leviticus chapters 16-18. 2. See the discourse *Bati LeGani*, ch.1. 3. Lev.16:6. 4. Mishnah Yoma 1:1. 5. Freely based on points from the Lubavitcher Rebbe's talks in *Torah Studies* p.188 ff, *Likkutei Sichot* vol.17 p.178, and Shabbat Parshat Acharei, 1981.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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SEDRA ACHAREI – APPROACHING PESACH

EXTRA LIFE!

Sitting on the bench, resting his injured arm, Michael watched the basketball game attentively. His eyes focused on Joe, who was bouncing the ball enthusiastically.

Suddenly Joe threw it up over the net and BOOM – it went straight through. Michael watched as his teammates jumped up in excitement. Hands flying in the air, they congratulated each other, giving Joe high-fives and shouting with joy. The energy flowing through the team was amazing. It was as if the game itself was giving them power and life.

Clutching his arm in pain, Michael's thoughts wondered to what he had learnt in Sedra class that day.

“In this week's Sedra – Acharei Mot,” Rabbi Levy had said. “It tells us ‘you shall live through them’ – meaning through the Torah and Mitzvot. We should not just do the mitzvot because we have to – we should do them with life and enthusiasm, and when we really throw ourselves into them it gives us life and energy...”

“Michael, pass the furniture spray please.” Michael was working alongside his sister Leah, trying to do Pesach cleaning. Pesach was only a few days away and there was loads left to do.

Looking at the shelves filled with books, which they had to clear, then clean, then refill with books, Michael felt he was about to faint. “I’m tired, Leah! This is insane!”

But Leah did not seem that perturbed by it. In fact she seemed really into the cleaning. Rather than making her tired, it was as if it was somehow giving her energy.

Suddenly, he remembered the basketball game, where he had watched the boys get life out of playing, and how Rabbi Levy taught ‘and you shall live through them.’ When we do the Mitzvot with life, the Mitzvot give us more life, and preparing for Pesach is a Mitzva, isn’t it?

“Hey Leah, let’s get it done!” Mindset changed, Michael grabbed the cloth and set to work, humming as he did.

“All done!” Smiling with satisfaction, Michael and Leah looked at the tall bookcase – now guaranteed Chametz free. Tucked behind all the books they had actually found some sweets and a biscuit. Now it was all clean.

“You know, I can’t believe the time went by so fast,” mused Leah.

“Yup – when you do Mitvot with life, they really give you more. Who would have guessed cleaning a bookcase could be so energizing?”

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