

CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 8 July 2011 - 6 Tammuz 5771
 Sedra Balak

DAYS ARE COMING

ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHERS THOUGHT THE WORLD WAS ETERNAL AND unchanging. They considered Nature as the final and ultimate reality: an endless loop of joy and tragedy, always interesting but going nowhere. The legacy of this perspective deeply affects western culture.

By contrast, Jewish teaching starts with G-d, beyond Nature. G-d created the universe in order to achieve a specific purpose. The Torah tells us about the process of history which began with Adam and Eve, dwelling together with the presence of G-d, in the Garden of Eden. This was a state of beauty and holiness, which expresses both the original atmosphere of human awareness and also its ultimate goal.

As we know, Adam and Eve sinned and were banished from Eden. But this was not the end of the story of ultimate holiness. It was only the beginning. They were sent out of the Garden into a kind of long term exile, in order to make the entire world have the atmosphere of Eden.

This means that the nature of humanity, and indeed Nature in its wider sense, are not unchangeable. Today there is hideous war between nations and conflict between individuals, as well as all kinds of sickness, poverty and pain: but that is not how it is supposed to be.



Yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe ז"ל - 3rd Tammuz
 May the Rebbe's teachings help us bring Goodness to the World

117 GEORGE STREET, LONDON W1H 7HF
cru@lubavitchuk.com - www.chabadresearch.net

We have been going through stages in the long process of Exile, in which we wander through the wilderness of History. Not for forty years, but for thousands of years. But not forever.

Eventually, meaning very soon, we will reach the point mentioned in our Sedra¹: “a star will go forth from Jacob”. The prophet Balaam, the famous anti-hero of the Sedra, who is time and again forced to give us a blessing instead of a curse, finally tells of the ultimate destiny of the Jewish people: the advent of the Messiah, the descendant of King David, who will bring about the transformation of Jewish life, of the world scene and of society as a whole which we call the Redemption: *Geulah*.

This will conclude the process which began with being banished from the Garden of Eden. The Divine Presence which was together with Adam and Eve, and retreated from the plane of this physical world as a result of their sin and those of subsequent generations, will return to the Holy of Holies in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem². Through this, not just Eden, but the entire world will be seen as a Garden. There will be genuine peace, harmony and joy, imbued with knowledge and awareness of G-d.

This means our *consciousness* will change. We will see Nature and life around us in terms of the inner holiness which is the true reality of everything. And following a kind of spiritual logic, which is sometimes explained in terms of Quantum Mechanics, because our consciousness will be different, existence itself will change. Not only humanity but even cruel Nature will be transformed.

We pray for this transformation of the world in our daily prayers, in the Grace after the Meals, and at almost every step of Jewish life. Our prayers are part of the process. But so too is our constant awareness of this central theme of Judaism. Further, Chassidic teachings seek to help us reach aspects of that state of consciousness of the Divine even now, what is called the ‘Private Redemption’, which itself helps lead to the General Redemption³.

The Sedra encourages us to be aware that existence indeed has a direction: to reach the point when the process of Jewish history will be fulfilled, beginning a new dimension of life for all.

1. Numbers 22:2-25:9. See 24:17. 2. See Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn’s discourse *Bati LeGani*, ch.1. 3. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot* vol.38, p.101.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL



SEDRA BALAK

PRIVACY

“Y’know I was just thinking that Rachel’s school bag is s-o-o-o huge,” said Hannah to the girls sitting around her in the classroom.

“Yeah! It is s-o-o-o huge!” Agreed Aviva, she always seemed to agree with whatever Hannah said. “So who, like me, is wondering what she keeps in that thing and thinks we should check out for ourselves, because it’s like s-o-o-o huge?”

Aviva nodded emphatically and the rest of the group, suddenly curious to know what exactly Rachel did keep in that bag, decided to join along. Aviva was given the ‘honourable’ task of opening the bag. However Just as she began to unzip the bag, with the rest of the girls huddled around her eager to see what exactly was in the bag, in walked Rachel.

“Why are you all looking in my bag?!?” she yelled and quickly snatched it away. “Ever heard of something called privacy!?”

“Wow, she really got bothered, ” whispered Hannah so that only the girls around her could hear. Some sniggered, but Leah began to feel a little bad. After all, what right did they have to look into her bag without her permission?

It was the next day, during the science class, that things really got out of hand. “Psst Leah, check this out,” Hannah whispered from the seat next to her. “Sarah left her diary on her desk, and she’s gone for a doctor’s appointment. I am s-o-o-o curious to see what’s in that thing? She’s always writing in it.”

“We can’t look at her stuff, it’s none of our business what she writes,” replied Leah. Truth be told, she was really curious to know what Sarah was always writing.

“Fine then,” said Hannah, “after class I’ll read it and I won’t tell you what’s in it.” Suddenly Leah was dying to know what she had written. “I’ll read it with you in break,” she whispered.

Just then the bell rang. The girls put away their Science books and in walked the Jewish Studies teacher, Mrs Levi.

“This week’s Sedra is called Balak,” she began. “The Sedra talks about a man called Balaam who wanted to curse the Jewish people. But G-d made a miracle, and when he wanted to curse them, instead blessings came out of his mouth. In fact we say one of his blessings in our prayers every morning. Does anyone know what the blessing is?”

Shira’s hand shot up, “How goodly are your tents o Jacob; your dwelling places, O Israel.” “Well done, now who knows what the blessing means?”

“Balaam was praising the way the Jews’ tents were set up,” answered Rachel. “Because their tents were arranged so that their entrances did not face each other. From one tent you could not see into the others, so the people had privacy and modesty. Balaam was praising that.”

Perhaps Leah was imagining it, but she sensed that Rachel meant every word of it in a deeper way.

Suddenly, she felt terrible for opening Rachel’s bag and for planning to read Sarah’s diary. How could she breach someone else’s privacy when Balaam, who had intended to curse the Jews, blessed them for their respect for others’ privacy?

After the lesson, as Mrs Levi walked out the classroom, Leah looked at Hannah and Hannah looked at Leah.

“Umm I don’t think we should read Sarah’s diary,” said Hannah. “Maybe it’s not s-o-o-o much of a good idea.”

***Torah teachings are holy –
please treat this page with care***