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הב

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 8 June 2012 - 18 Sivan 5772
Sedra Beha'alotecha

MENORAH IMAGERY

THERE ARE MULTIPLE MEANINGS TO THE TORAH. THE SAGES TELL US THAT EACH WORD of the Torah has seventy different facets, seventy different explanations¹. Take the beginning of our Sedra², for example. Here is a depiction of the Golden Menorah, the Seven Branched Candlestick, which was in the Sanctuary and later in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Menorah is fascinating. It was placed in the Holy section, leading to the Holy of Holies. In that part of the Temple there was also a small Golden Altar on which incense was burned. Usually, only the Priests would enter that fragrant hall of the Temple. Yet every Jew knew about the Golden Menorah.

The Sedra tells us that Moses was shown the Menorah by G-d, while he was on Mount Sinai. There was something special about it, which was difficult to understand. In fact, the Sedra tells us that the entire Menorah was made of one block of gold. Given its shape, a central stem with three branches extending from each side, we would expect it to be made of different pieces attached together. Instead it had to be carved and beaten out from one single block. There is even a view that this was so difficult that it was made miraculously, by G-d.



Celebrating the birth of Shaina תחילת Loewenthal
Melbourne - 7 Sivan 5772
dedicated by her Grandparents תא

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They threw the block of gold into the furnace and out came the Menorah...³

The seven lamps of the Menorah burned with pure olive oil. At the top of the central stem and of each branch there was a cup for the oil, in which a wick was placed. The Priests in the Temple would clean the Menorah every morning, and light the lamps in the evening. The seven lights of the Menorah would burn all night, shedding a spiritual glow.

These details about the Menorah are part of our eternal Torah. When we study them, as expressed in the Torah and the teachings of the Sages, we are connecting with G-d, the Divine source of the Torah in all its details and subtleties. At the same time we are learning something about the ancient history of the Jewish people. We can also consider the Menorah as being relevant for us as we look towards the future, hopefully very soon, when the Temple will be rebuilt and the lights of the Golden Menorah will shine again.

However, there are ways in which the teachings about the Menorah focus on our lives today. One famous teaching concerns the unity of the Jewish people. The seven lamps represent our different spiritual qualities. In one person the dominant quality is Love, in another it is Severity. Then Mercy, Endurance. Another expresses Submission, yet another Dedication. The seventh quality is that of Fulfilment. While ideally all these qualities mingle together, each person has a different mix. Yet all are part of the same Menorah. All are one. We are different but unified, formed from one single block of gold⁴.

Another teaching concerns the individual in relation to G-d. The flame of the lamp of the Menorah is the radiance which each person achieves through his or her spiritual efforts. Viewed in this way the wick represents our own self. Yet what is the source of the radiance? The oil. This signifies the Mitzvot, the Commandments which we keep. The Commandments give us a tangible spiritual energy which illuminates our own lives and ultimately the whole world⁵.

1. See Midrash Bemidbar Rabbah 13:15. 2. Numbers chs.8-12. 3. Rashi to Numbers 8:4. 4. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Likkutei Torah* on this Sedra. 5. See *Tanya* ch.35.

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SEDRA BEHA'ALOTECHA

OVERHEARD AT A BUS STOP

“Quick! There’s the bus!” Rachel cried, grabbing her sister Dina’s hand and trying to run faster. Their mother followed behind; but all the rushing was to no avail - the bus pulled away before they reached the stop. As they sat down on the bench in the almost empty bus-shelter, Mrs Kirsh looked up in dismay at the electronic sign which told people when the next bus would be there. It told them that the next bus would be along in twenty minutes. Rachel followed her gaze.

“Oh no! Look at that!” she said. “We’re going to have to sit and wait for twenty minutes! And we have so much to do!”

“Yes, its very annoying. But don’t get SO upset, Rachel... After all, weren’t you telling me just yesterday about how the Jewish people travelled in the desert, following a special cloud which G-d sent to show the way, and how they had trust in G-d that He would lead them the right way - ? Weren’t you doing a painting to illustrate that?”

Rachel nodded. She was actually quite pleased with the painting, which was going to be displayed in the school corridor. “You’re right, Mummy. And my teacher told us that even though now we don’t have a pillar of cloud showing us where to go, we should still remember that G-d

is always guiding what we do, and what happens around us. Even if something looks as if it's not good, we should remember that we don't know the real reason why it happened, it might even be something good in disguise."

"How can it be good in disguise?" asked Dina.

"Well, for example, my teacher also told us some stories about people who were upset because they thought something bad happened to them. For example, there was a person who thought they had missed their flight because the taxi driver took them to the wrong terminal at the airport. They soon discovered this was really something good, when it turned out that the plane they were supposed to be on had been cancelled, but they were just in time for another plane from the terminal they went to by mistake... So this person felt that G-d made the taxi driver take them to the wrong terminal, just so they would catch a flight. They had to get to a wedding."

"Wow" said Dina. "I suppose that person really felt that G-d was looking after them, making sure they would get to the wedding on time." Then she continued, "I have a story like that which happened to me. I was so upset when I hurt my leg in school; but then I was happy because it meant I couldn't go swimming and the water was cold, which I don't like. Everyone else had to go and it was *freezing!*"

Her mother and sister laughed. "Yes. I suppose lots of times things happen like that but we don't often get to see the reason why." Rachel said. "But the main thing is, that we should have Emunah - which means faith in G-d, that everything He does will lead us in the right direction, like the Jews in the desert."

"I wonder if we'll ever know why we had to wait twenty minutes for this bus?" their mother said, as the elusive bus appeared in the distance. They all laughed.

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