


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT
 שבת..... *for Friday night*..... קדש
Friday 6 June 2014 - 8 Sivan 5774
Sedra Beha'alotecha


FACETS OF THE MENORAH

THERE ARE SEVENTY FACETS OF THE TORAH¹. THIS FAMOUS SAYING OF THE SAGES gives us a measure of the depth of Torah teachings. It means that for every sentence, or even word, in the Torah one can find seventy different explanations, lessons or meanings.

This combines with another idea that every Torah concept has four *levels* of meaning, from basic to esoteric². The Talmud also tells us that Rabbi Akiva, the leading teacher of Torah in his generation, could explain not only every letter of the Torah but even the little “crowns” that adorn the letters in the handwritten Torah scroll³.

This aspect of the Torah means that it is a constant source of teaching, in every epoch, and applying to every aspect of life, both practical and spiritual.

Take for example the Golden Menorah, the lighting of which is described at the beginning of this week's Sedra⁴. We might think this law only relates to the time of the Temple. However, the Torah is speaking to our generation as well. The following points are among the “seventy facets of Torah” relating to the Menorah:

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'
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The Menorah had to be made from one block of gold; no welding, no bolts and no dovetail joints⁵. However, the Menorah had *seven* lamps, not just one. Chassidic teachings tell us that this aspect of the Menorah signifies the diversity of Jewish people - seven branches, from the far left to the far right.

The fact that the Menorah was made of *one* block of gold emphasises the fact that despite the diversity, really we are all one⁶.

Concerning the flame of the Menorah: this consists of three things: the fuel (olive oil), the wick and the flame itself. The wick represents the physical body. The flame, striving ever upward, represents the spiritual radiance achieved by the person in daily life.

But in the case of the lamp, the wick needs fuel to replenish the flame. Likewise in the life of a Jew: the fuel for the flame is the observance of the Torah and its laws. Without the fuel of Torah observance the Jewish spirit cannot achieve its task of bringing spiritual illumination to the world⁷.

A third point concerns the lighting of the lamps. This job was carried out by a Priest every day in the Temple. Rashi tells us that his task was not complete until the flame burned properly, of its own accord⁸. It was not enough just to touch the wick and let a nascent flickering flame struggle for survival.

The lesson here concerns our relations with others. Each of us has, at times, the role of a “priest”, giving light to someone else’s wick⁹. When helping a person find his or her feet in both material and spiritual matters, it is not enough merely to be of momentary aid. Help should continue until the person can stand on their own feet⁹.

For this reason the highest mode of giving charity to the poor is to set the needy person up in business¹⁰, while in spiritual matters the goal is to ignite the flame of the person’s “lamp” so that he or she can then ignite and inspire others⁹.

1. Midrash Bemidbar Rabbah 13:15. 2. These are Pshat, the basic level, Remez, hint, Drush, deeper dimension, Sod, the esoteric, forming together “Pardes”, the ‘orchard’ of Torah. See Hagigah 14b. 3. Menahot 29b. 4. Numbers chs.8-12. 5. Rashi to Numbers 8:4. 6. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot* vol.2, p.314 ff., vol. 28 pp.65-66. 7. See Tanya I ch.35. 8. Rashi to Numbers 8:2. 9. See *Likkutei Sichot* vol.2, p.314 ff. 10. Rambam, *Yad*, Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 10:7.

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SEDRA BEHA'ALOTECHA

TAKE CARE WHEN YOU SPEAK...

Rachel was sitting in class. The teacher had gone out of the room to get a book from the staffroom, and most of the girls were talking quietly to their neighbours.

Rachel could hear the two girls behind her talking a little more loudly than the others.

“She’s such a liar! I know that she doesn’t have a laptop of her own. It belongs to her older brother and she just pretends it’s hers whenever anyone comes to the house. He doesn’t know because he’s away most of the time.”

“You’re right! In fact last time I was visiting her she was showing it *off* and saying she got it as a present from her father... What a liar she is!”

Rachel listened gloomily. Each of the two girls behind her were really good friends of hers. She enjoyed going out with them and having them visit her home. But she felt very upset to hear the way they were talking about her very best friend Sarah.

Yes, it’s true, she thought to herself, Sarah does tend to exaggerate. The laptop does really belong to her brother. But then when her father had bought it he said ‘This is for the

children'. Rachel had actually been there when he said it. Sarah's brother had claimed it as his and used it most of the time when he was home. But it still at least partly belonged to Sarah.

So why did her two other friends have to talk against Sarah like that? Isn't that *Lashon HaRa*, the Evil Tongue, that their teachers and parents keep warning them about?

'Why don't I tell them off?' Rachel asked herself. 'I should tell them straight out they are talking *Lashon Hara!*'

Suddenly Rachel began feeling angry about herself. 'I'm a coward!' she muttered under her breath. 'That's why I won't say anything to them. I'm a horrible coward. I know they'll start making fun of me - so that's why I don't say anything. I'm just a coward!' Rachel shut her eyes. She kept whispering over and over to herself 'I'm a coward!'

Miss Goldstein, their teacher, had come back into the class, having found her book. "Now girls, this is an interesting book all about the laws of *Lashon HaRa*. In this week's Sedra we learn how even such a great person as Miriam fell into the trap of speaking *Lashon HaRa*. It could happen to anyone. So we all have to be very careful."

Rachel looked up. Maybe the girls behind her would take note of what Miss Goldstein was saying!

"It says here," continued Miss Goldstein, "that just as one shouldn't say *Lashon HaRa* about others, so too one should not say it about oneself."

This took Rachel by surprise. The girls behind her had been talking *Lashon HaRa* about Sarah, and she, Rachel, had been saying *Lashon HaRa* about herself!

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