

CHABAD
DED
RESEARCH UNIT

58

שבת..... *for Friday night*..... קדש

Friday 12 June 2009 - 20 Sivan 5769
Sedra Beha'alotech

MOSES, THE SANHEDRIN AND THE PEOPLE

EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIVINE. PRAYER, SPEAKING TO G-d, or asking G-d for help, is a universal phenomenon. Further, G-d makes demands on each human being through the Seven Noachide Laws, and on each Jewish man or woman through the 613 Mitzvot. The key moment in the relationship of G-d with the Jewish people took place at Sinai, when G-d was revealed to every individual in an unprecedented way. That event is the basis of all Jewish law, including the universal Noachide Laws.

But how do we know what the Laws are, and how they are to be applied? At Mount Sinai there was an intense experience and we heard the Ten Commandments. The details of how to keep Shabbat or Kashrut or any other aspect of Jewish teaching come through a chain of transmission described at the beginning of Ethics of the Fathers: "Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders and the Elders to the Prophets..." and so on. Eventually the Torah teachings reached us.

The step in which Moses transmitted his authority to Joshua as the single leader and guide of the Jewish people is found later in Sedra Pinchas¹. However in our Sedra² there was another famous step of transmission from Moses. This was the establishment of the Sanhedrin: seventy elders who share the responsibility of leadership³.

The context of the founding of the Sanhedrin was a new outburst

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

of complaint by the Jewish people. Why do they have to eat only the Manna? Couldn't they have meat? The Sedra describes Moses saying to G-d that he cannot cope with them any more, he needs help. At this G-d responded that Moses should gather seventy elders and stand with them at the Sanctuary. Then G-d would speak with Moses, and transfer some of his "spirit" to the elders, so that they too will share in the responsibility of leadership.

The Sages discuss the question whether or not this transfer diminished Moses in any way. Sometimes a teacher might reach down so far towards his pupil, that he himself is dragged down. However, Rashi presents the image that Moses was like "a candle on a candlestick, from which all are able to light"⁴. This conveys the idea that all can take a flame, but the original candle is not diminished.

Moses was the greatest of all Prophets, as attested at the end of our Sedra and at the conclusion of the Torah⁵, and therefore had the power to give illumination to all without being adversely affected⁶. Indeed when two extra people⁷, apart from the seventy of the Sanhedrin, became obviously 'inspired' Moses said: let the whole Jewish people be granted the Divine spirit!

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that Rashi does not say that only the members of the Sanhedrin take a flame from Moses' candle. He says 'all'. There is a sense in which every Jew does so and continues to do so throughout time. The chain of rabbis define the Torah laws, but every individual discovers his or her own reality in their subtle depths.

The Sanhedrin became the channel for communicating Torah teaching to the Jewish people through the generations, later transmitted through the Mishnah, Talmud and the Code of Law. This process gives illumination to all: the Torah and its teachings belong to every Jew, ultimately helping all humanity bond with the Divine.

1. See Numbers 27:15-23. 2. Numbers chs.8-12. 3. Num.11:16-17, 24-25. 4. See Rashi to Num.11:17, and a contrasting image in Ramban. 5. Num. 12:7-8; Deut. 34:10. 6. See the discussion in *Likkutei Sichot* vol.8 pp.75-81. 7. Num.11:26-29.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care
SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL



'RAISING' THE LAMPS

"Please turn the light on, Sara," Sara's mother called from the bottom of the basement stairs. "And let's look for a duffel bag for you to take to camp."

Sara flicked the light switch at the top of the stairs and headed down to the basement. Camp wasn't for a while yet, but Sara was so excited about it that she had asked her mother to help her get ready early. It was a special camp. The camp had an amazing program where each girl was paired with a young camper who had never been to camp before. Sara remembered her first time at camp and how scary it was, and she was excited to have the chance to help someone else!

"Thank you for turning on the light, Sara. Now let's see where that duffel bag might be..." Sara's mother opened a big cupboard filled with all kinds of odds and ends.

"Wait! Mom? You just said 'turning on the light', right?"

"Yes dear?" Sara's mom paused with one hand on the cupboard door.

"Well, I *knew* something was bothering me in school today, and now I know what it is! The name of the Sedra! Why would G-d tell Aaron the Priest to light the Menorah in the Temple using the word *beha'alotecha*? That word means 'to raise up'?! Why doesn't it say, '*light* the Menorah' instead of '*raise up*'?"

Sara's mother smiled. "Imagine if I asked you to 'raise up' the light on your way to the basement!"

"Exactly!"

"There are two ways to light a candle, Sara. One way, you strike the match and hold the fire to the wick for just a

moment. You hope that the wick will catch the flame. The other way is to hold the match to the wick until the wick is burning on its own. Which do you think Aaron did?”

“If he was commanded to ‘raise up’ the flame and not just ‘light’ it... I think he was supposed to hold the match there until the wick was going up on its own. Until it was ‘raised up’!”

“That’s right!” Sara’s mother started sorting through the closet as she talked. “Now, when you’re at camp, you’re a lamplighter, just like Aaron. There are two ways to help the girl who is your partner, right?”

Sara thought about the first time she was in camp. At first she didn’t want to go anywhere alone and stayed with the counselor everywhere. But, slowly, the counselor helped her feel more confident. “I guess I can help her in a way that she can learn to help herself, right?”

“Right!” said Sara’s mom as she pulled a big duffel bag out from the back of the closet. “If you do that, you will be *raising up* a light.”

“And then that girl will be able to help other girls too! Thanks Mom!” Sara took the bag from her mother. This was going to be an amazing Summer.

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