


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday night* קדש

Friday 9 May 2014 - 9 Iyyar 5774
Sedra Behar

THE SACRED LAND

OUR HOLY LAND OF ISRAEL CONTINUES TO BE IN THE NEWS. A TINY AREA when compared with most other countries, with hardly any natural resources which might make it important commercially, Israel has a compelling power to attract attention. Why?

Some of the clues are in the Sedra¹ of the week.

Israel is a sacred land. Compared with other countries it is holy, rather in the way that the Jewish people, compared with other nations, is holy. The Jewish people have to keep the Sabbath, every seven days. The Sedra tells us that the physical Land of Israel, the actual earth, has to keep a ‘Sabbath for the Land’ every seven years. It is different to other lands. It is holy.

Such ideas are difficult to comprehend in a time of widespread collapse of hierarchies, when everything and everyone is, in theory, considered equal. In modern society every individual is significant, and rightly so. Indeed, according to Jewish teaching, each individual is the equivalent of the whole world². Nonetheless, some individuals – for example, each and every Jew - have something



In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin
 (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772
 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'

special about them. A thousand years ago the great Spanish Jewish poet Judah Halevi called it 'a Divine quality'.

This quality gives the Jews special responsibilities, such as the imperative to observe the 613 Commandments of the Torah, and also the duty to care for the spiritual wellbeing of all humanity. This special Jewish quality bonds the Jews together as a people round the globe, together with those notable figures through the generations who have joined them as proselytes, such as the parents of Rabbi Akiva.

The Land of Israel is also different from other countries in the world. It is holy, and it has a special relationship with the Jews, even though at various times other peoples have lived there.

Our collective relationship with the country Israel goes back to Abraham. G-d told him that he and his descendants through Isaac would be given this land. When he bought a burial ground for his wife in Hebron, paying 400 pieces of silver, the Sages calculate that in effect he was doing far more: Abraham was acquiring a square cubit of land in Israel for every member of the Jewish people, for all time³.

The holy Land, Israel, is the inheritance of the holy people, the Jews. The Sages, commenting on another passage in our Sedra, warn us not to sell our inheritance, especially in Israel⁴.

Miraculously, today, as a people, we have possession of our land. For our part, said the Lubavitcher Rebbe, we must hold on to it and not let go. The Torah itself supports our claim to our inheritance.

When we ourselves are firm in this resolve, we will succeed, and through this we will protect the maximum number of lives of all people, including both Arabs and Jews. Further, our own awareness of the importance of our spiritual role in the world, and that of our Holy Land, will help bring closer the time when all nations will be unified, their attention focused on Jerusalem and the rebuilt Temple, and on G-d the Creator and Guide of all existence.

1. Leviticus chrs. 25-27. 2. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5. 3. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 12 p.257 quoting *Pane'ach Raza*. 4. *Likkutei Sichot* vol.12, 257, quoting Sifra 5:1 to Behar, Lev. 25:25.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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SEDRA BEHAR – SECOND PESACH

NEVER TOO LATE

Some brown hair slowly began to appear out of the jumbled mass of eiderdown on the bed. His mother sat silently near the bed, while his father tip-toed out of the room.

David began his story in a sad voice. "It all began last week in the football game. I kept messing up with the ball, and I could feel that it was getting every one upset... Then on Monday I had an argument with one of the boys in the class and I said some really nasty things.

"And now not one person in the whole class likes me... it's so hard like this when I had to change schools in the middle of the year. But I've really messed everything up....".

"Oh David," said his mother. "We know it must be so hard for you... But still, I think we can take a lesson from a little festival which is going to happen this coming Wednesday (14 May). It is called "The Second Pesach", which comes a month after the first Pesach.

“When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, each year the Jewish people would make Pesach by going to Jerusalem and bringing a Pesach offering to the Temple. But sometimes a person would be away, or didn’t manage to get to Jerusalem for some other reason.

“They might feel they had messed things up and had missed out on something important. In fact the Torah tells us that there is a second chance, called ‘The Second Pesach’. Anyone who missed the first Pesach, for whatever reason, could come to Jerusalem and celebrate the second Pesach. They would bring the Pesach offering to the Temple and they would eat Matza.”

“So how does that help me?” asked David.

“Now comes the important point. The Sages tell us that we can all learn something from this idea. We learn that ‘it is never too late’. You can always make up what you missed, somehow. So if you spoiled things by saying nasty things to the boys at school – don’t worry. You can put it right. So that is what the ‘Second Pesach’ teaches us: it really is never too late to change things for the better”.

A smile slowly began to appear on David’s face...

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