


CHABAD

 RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday night* קדש

Friday 3 February 2012 - 10 Shevat 5772
 Sedra Beshalach

בג

DOUBLE LIFE

THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF RELATING TO LIFE. ONE IS TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS happening at that moment and experience it to the full. For example, one enjoys the Shabbat meal together with one's family, when there is a feeling that the Divine Presence, the Shechinah, is there in one's home. Another approach is to view what one is doing as a preparation for something even more important which lies ahead.

The Splitting of the Sea, the central topic in the Sedra¹, has both these qualities. On the one hand it was an astonishing revelation of G-d's power. More than any of the ten Plagues, this event showed that G-d is master of nature, and that He is the protector of the Jewish people. After the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Sea, for several centuries the Jews did not have to worry about Egypt as a political force.

Another aspect of the Splitting of the Sea is that it was a preparation. For what? For the Giving of the Torah, which is described in next week's Sedra.

The Sea represents the realm of that which is hidden. Splitting the Sea, and revealing the dry land on which the Jews could walk, expresses the idea that the hidden, spiritual realms become in some way revealed and accessible.



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

Precisely this kind of revelation of the hidden was what was going to take place six weeks later at the Giving of the Torah. The Torah comes from the inward Hiddenness of G-d. The fact that G-d revealed His Will in the Ten Commandments and the 613 Mitzvot was a remarkable event, unique in the history of the world. The Hiddenness of G-d was made accessible to humanity, through the beautiful laws of the Torah. Splitting of the Sea, revealing the Hidden, was a preparation for this².

In a similar way, our lives now have both aspects: through following the teachings of the Torah, we express our sense of connection with G-d, at this moment. At the same time, every step of our lives is a preparation for the Redemption, in which the truth of G-dliness will be revealed to all humanity. We live a wholesome double life, with every moment full of meaning.

“I HAVE COME INTO MY GARDEN”

One of the most remarkable Jewish tracts ever written is a work called *Bati LeGani*, meaning ‘I have Come in to My Garden’³. It was taught by Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe (1880-1950), whose Yahrzeit was Friday 10th Shevat, and his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson.

Bati LeGani gives an account of the history of the world in terms of its spiritual purpose: to achieve a dwelling for the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, in our physical realm.

This began to be achieved at the time of Adam and Eve; but due to their sin, the Shechinah receded from the world. The task of the Jewish people is to bring the Shechinah back, to dwell in each individual’s inner Sanctuary, the Temple in one’s heart, through study of Torah and observing its laws. Through this, ultimately, the Messiah will come and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, where the Shechinah will be truly revealed, bringing peace to all humanity, fulfilling the purpose of Creation.

1. Exodus 13:17-17:16. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot* vol.3 p.968-9. 3. Song of Songs 5:1. Midrash Rabbah explains this verse in terms of the Divine Presence returning to the world when the Sanctuary was built by Moses.

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SEDRA BESHALACH

BREAKING THE ICE

Debbi gazed out of the classroom window at the sky. There was a cloud that looked like a car - and that one looked like a person... "Debbi!" It was her teacher calling her. "Debbi, are you listening? What am I saying?"

"Er, about the Jews crossing the Sea of Reeds when it split?"

Miss Goldwater sighed. "No Debby, that was five minutes ago. Now we are talking about Amalek. Do you remember who they were?"

"Aren't they people who are descended from Esau, Jacob's brother?" Debbi said, hoping this would get her out of trouble. It worked. Her teacher smiled approvingly at her, and continued what she had been saying:

"Amalek were a people who came and attacked the Children of Israel in the desert, in a place called Rephidim. But, with G-d's help, they were defeated. However, afterwards, G-d told Moses that Amalek's memory must be wiped out for what they had done."

Leah raised her hand and asked: "But Miss Goldwater, other people besides Amalek attacked the Jews in the desert. They weren't the only ones. Why are they so bad?"

“Good question. Who thinks they can answer that?” Miss Goldwater liked making her students think.

Esther, the shyest girl in the class, said: “Is it because the Amalekites were the first, maybe?”

“Excellent, Esther! Because the Amalakites were the first to attack the Jewish people, therefore they were the worst.”

“What’s wrong with being the first?” Debbi wanted to know.

“I know!” Rachel said, “Because when you’re the first you make it much easier for the people after you. Like when we went to the old age home.”

During Chanukah, Miss Goldwater had taken her students to visit a home for elderly people. This was their first time doing such a thing, and at first, the girls had stood there shyly, not knowing what to do. But then Esther had plucked up the courage to go over to one old lady and had begun talking to her. When her classmates had seen how easy it was, they all joined in.

“Oh, that’s right,” Leah remembered, “When Esther began, it wasn’t so hard for us to carry on.”

“So Esther is to be praised - (Esther blushed red) - for being the first in something good, but G-d was angry with Amalek for being the first in something bad - because when the other nations saw the Amalakites attacking the Jews, they decided to do the same. So, what do we learn from this?”

Debbi put up her hand: “To be the first to do something good.”

Mrs Goldwater smiled, and at that moment the bell rang. It was break. The girls happily filed out into the playground, and Debbi went back to looking at the clouds.

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