

CHABAD
DED
RESEARCH UNIT

5774

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 10 January 2014 - 9 Shevat 5774
Sedra Beshalach - Tenth of Shevat

RETURNING TO THE GARDEN

THE SEDRA¹ TELLS OF THE SPLITTING OF THE SEA, A REMARKABLE EVENT IN WHICH the veil between physical reality – represented by ‘dry land’ - and the spiritual dimensions of existence – represented by ‘the sea’ - was removed. The usually hidden ‘sea’ was suddenly made accessible, like dry land, and the Jewish people could walk through it safely.

This is not only an experience in our collective past. It relates closely to the present of every individual. We need access to the spiritual dimension of Torah – our own, personal Splitting of the Sea - in order to understand what we are trying to achieve in our lives. A key presentation of this in our time is the two volume series of discourses taught over a forty year period by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, all focused on the last discourse of his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak, the sixth Rebbe, who passed away on the Tenth of Shevat, the date of this Shabbat. Here we explore a point from this modern classic of Jewish thought.

The Midrash tells us that when the Sanctuary was built by Moses, G-d said ‘I have come back to My garden, My origin..’² For at the beginning of Creation the Divine Presence dwelt with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But on account of the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, it departed to the first Firmament away from the world. Then came other sins. Eventually, the Divine Presence was remote from the world, at the seventh Firmament.

Then arose seven Zaddikim, beginning with Abraham, who drew the Divine Presence one stage closer, and after him Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kehot,

Amram and then finally Moses, the seventh – and all sevenths are precious – who was able to achieve the main goal of drawing the Divine Presence back into the world, by building the Sanctuary. At this point G-d said, so to speak “I have come back to My garden...”

The Divine Presence, Shechinah is in the Sanctuary, but it is also in the heart of every Jew. The task of life is for each person to reveal the Divine Presence within them. We can understand this from the verse “For a portion of G-d is His people, Jacob is the cord of His inheritance”³. The two halves of this verse concern two aspects of the soul. Let us look at the second part, the ‘cord’.

We can understand the cord as representing the soul, which joins the person in this physical world to the exalted reaches of the Divine, through the Torah and its laws. The Sages tell us our physical body is composed of 248 limbs and 365 sinews, 613 aspects in all. The soul too has 613 aspects, and the cord has 613 strands, linking with the 613 Mizvot of the Torah. If a person’s spiritual life is fulfilled and healthy, his or her personal connection between this physical world and the Divine reality beyond is sound. Now, sometimes, some of the strands of the cord are cut, through breaking one or other law of the Torah. Sometimes just a few strands are cut. Sometimes many. Sometimes, it seems that the whole cord is cut through.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s teaching emphasises that the Essence of the Soul, beyond the fragile ‘cord’, is always pure. This higher level of the Soul is described in the first half of the verse: “the portion of G-d is with His people”. The Essence of the Soul is connected to G-d, whatever errors the person might have committed. The challenge of life is to link with this inner Essence, beyond the level of the possibly damaged ‘cord’. We do this by taking a positive step forward, in any aspect of life. Sometimes this means going an extra mile, or going against the tide....

Moses is the one who helped the Jewish people achieve this, bringing us out of Egypt, and building the Sanctuary. So too, through the generations, the Moses of each age helps every Jew connect with his or her Essence, and reveal the Divine in their personal Sanctuary. This leads directly to the goal that the Sanctuary-Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, so that the Divine Presence can indeed return to the Garden of the world⁴.

1. Exodus 13:17-17:16. See chs.14-15. 2. Midrash Rabbah on Song of Songs 5:1. 3. Deut. 32:9. 4. See *Bosi LeGani*, and the Rebbe’s discourse of 10 Shevat, 1954. For the online text of *Bosi LeGani* see www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/115093/jewish/Basi-LGani.htm

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



SEDRA BESHALACH

SANDWICHES FROM HEAVEN

'Moom!' five year old Lisa whined from the back seat. 'Yes sweetie?' Mom replied from next to Dad in the front seat. 'I'm hungry!' Lisa sobbed. 'I know sweetie, I'm sorry, we didn't bring enough food and there is no kosher food to buy on the way'. 'But I'm hungry!' Lisa carried on whining. 'Isn't there a kosher restaurant somewhere near?'

We were on the motorway on the way back to London; we had just visited our cousins who live in Leeds. I was hungry too, but I had some schoolwork to revise, so my mind was distracted from food. Well, except that I was reading about the Manna the Jews received in the desert.

'What are you reading, Rebecca?' Lisa stopped grumbling for a moment to ask me. 'I'm reading all about miracle food', I said. 'Can I have some?' Lisa asked. I laughed, Lisa was so cute sometimes. 'Well Lisa, this miracle food was called Manna. When the Jews came out of Egypt they travelled through the desert for forty years and because nothing grows in the desert G-d sent down Manna from heaven.'

Lisa looked very interested. 'If it came from heaven, what type of food was it?' she asked.

'The Sages tell us it was very special', I said. 'When a person would eat it, it would taste just as he wanted. He could wish it to taste like ice cream, and that's what it would taste like!'

Lisa's eyes glistened at the sound of ice cream. 'But we are also travelling,' she said, 'why doesn't G-d send some Manna down from heaven for us?'

Just then we turned off the motorway. 'Kids, we are stopping to get petrol and we will have a few minutes here', Dad announced as he slowed down.

Soon we were poking around the shop in the petrol station. 'Hey Mom, look what I found!' Lisa said excitedly, she was pointing to some very tasty looking sandwiches.

'Lisa, you know you can't have those, they are not kosher', Mom said patiently. 'But they are, I promise!' Lisa exclaimed pointing at the sticker on the side of the package.

'Let me have a look,' Mom said, looking doubtful, taking the package off the shelf. Her eyes opened wide. It was true, she could clearly see the familiar 'Kosher London Beth Din' emblem right where Lisa had pointed. With it was a second sticker: 'Bracha (blessing) Mezonot'. 'You are right Lisa, how amazing, these are perfectly kosher, let's get a pack for each person!'

'Yaaay!' Lisa jumped around merrily.

Soon we were on our way once again, only this time happily munching away at our newly found kosher sandwiches.

'Rebecca', Lisa whispered to me, 'I think G-d sent us some Manna from heaven...!'

'You're right,' I said. 'G-d saw you were going to be hungry, so He made the shop buy these sandwiches, which is very unusual on the motorway, and then He made us stop for petrol, and then made you notice them...'

'I said the bracha with real feeling...' said Lisa.

'So did I,' I answered... and it was true.

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