

CHABAD  
**DED**  
RESEARCH UNIT

ג

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 29 January 2010 - 14 Shevat 5770  
Sedra Beshalach - New Year for Trees

### SINGING A SONG AS ONE

**W**HAT IS THE GREAT NEED OF OUR TIME? MANY WOULD SAY: UNITY. To achieve unity among the different factions of the Jewish people, unity between the varied members and non-members of the community, unity in families, joining husbands and wives, parents and children. Unity among the Jewish people will surely have an effect on society as a whole, leading towards the Messianic goal of peace for all humanity.

The Sedra<sup>1</sup> gives us an insight about how unity was achieved - at least temporarily - in the past, which may help us also for the present and the future.

The climax in the Sedra, from any point of view, is the description of the Jewish people crossing the Red Sea which miraculously split. Then, when the Egyptian chariots tried to follow them, the waters returned and the violent pursuers were drowned. This meant that the Jews were finally free of Egyptian slavery for ever.

In praise of G-d, Moses and the Jewish people now sang a song, called the Song of the Sea<sup>2</sup>. During the reading of this portion, which is chanted in a special tune, the congregation stand. The song begins: "I will sing to G-d for His great victory..."



In Memory of Meshulam Scharfstein V"g - 10 Shevat  
Dedicated by his daughter Dr Jutta Singer ח"י ,

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

The Talmud<sup>3</sup> discusses the way this was originally sung by the Jewish people. There are several different opinions, but all agree that Moses began the song, or sang the whole of it line by line, and the rest of the Jewish people responded.

Now we come to an insight on this by the great Moroccan Sage, Rabbi Chaim ibn Atar (1696-1743), author of the Or HaChaim commentary on the Torah. He points out that instead of saying “We will sing to G-d...” , the song is in the first person singular: “I will sing..”. Rabbi Chaim says that this shows the remarkable spirit of unity which inspired the Jewish people at that moment. They felt so much at peace with each other that they all declared “I will sing”, as if the whole nation were one person.

Chassidic teachings emphasise the importance of this sense of unity. Really the entire Jewish nation *is* one, from the point of view of the soul. All the souls are connected together and rooted in G-d. Only the bodies are separate<sup>4</sup>. When we feel the immediacy and the reality of the soul, then we also feel a sense of deep unity with everyone else.

What triggers off this awareness of the soul? Moses himself, the leader of the Jewish people. He has the power to inspire them to the point that their own soul and spiritual dimension become dominant, joining them together with every other Jew. Hence according to all opinions, Moses led the song. Everyone else felt so much at one that they could follow his lead and respond in the singular: “I will sing...”<sup>5</sup>

The quest for this sense of connection with other people relates also to the fact that this Shabbat is 15 Shevat, the New Year for Trees. Each person is described as ‘a tree in the field’ (Deut.20:19). We should try to care for every other individual, just as one nurtures a tree: making sure that it grows healthily, producing wholesome fruit. This means caring for others both physically and spiritually. One person needs a loan, another requires help in obtaining a Mezuzah, another needs a kind word. Inspired by our Sages, the Moses of each generation, we will sing the Song of Life together, as one...

1. Exodus 13:17-17:16. 2. Exodus 15:1-19. 3. Sota 30b. 4. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Tanya, ch.32. 5. Based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot*, vol.31, pp.69-76.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

***SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL***



SEDRA BESHALACH

### **AQUARIUM JOURNEY**

"We are almost there" said Michael and Leah's father, as he screeched round the corner into the car park of "The Seabed Aquarium". Impatiently they queued up for a short time, then got their tickets. They entered the aquarium and soon agreed it was amazing! You walk through a high tunnel made of glass, and behind the glass walls there were dozens of different types of fish.

First they saw the tropical fish: so many fish, with different colours and shapes, red, green, multi coloured, and then even the flat fish which changed colour according to the colour of the surface over which it was gliding. It was dizzying!

Then they went into section of the tunnel where there were the sharks. A shark came speeding towards Leah. "Aaahhhh" she screeched "it's going to attack me!" "I don't think it could, there is a thick glass wall protecting you" Michael said, half laughing. Sure enough, the shark turned away.

"You know something," said Michael, "this is probably a bit what it looked like when the Jews crossed the Red Sea, when they were running away from Egypt". "You are right" said Leah "it must have been such fun if they could see all the fish, and it was as if they were walking in the sea, but it was dry!"

There was a cool, eerie light in the aquarium tunnel. For a while they walked quietly. "Do you think they were frightened?" asked Leah.

“Well, they knew Hashem had split the sea for them. They must have trusted in Hashem, that He was looking after them as they went between the walls of water” answered Michael.

“It’s a bit scary here,” said Leah. “Imagine what would happen if the glass would break.” “Don’t worry,” said their father, trying to calm her. “The glass must be made to a specially strong specification.”

“Still,” said Leah, “anything could happen. Being here, I can understand how the Jewish people sang a song to Hashem after they came safely out of the sea. They must have been relieved that they were safe”.

“Well,” said Michael, “they also knew that the Egyptian army which had been trying to catch them had been destroyed in the sea. They thanked G-d for protecting them from the Egyptians.”

“You know, everyone felt very close to G-d,” said their father. “Going through the sea on dry land was an experience which the Sages compare to prophecy. It was an incredible feeling for everyone.”

“Yes,” said Leah. “And the women were extra happy. The men sang with Moses, but when the women sang with Miriam, they also had tambourines and they danced.” “Yes, and that’s a reason why the Haftorah this week is not the song of a man, but the song of a woman, the prophetess Deborah’s Song”, said their father. “The women were extra grateful to Hashem.”

At that moment they came to the exit of the aquarium. After going through a door, up some steps, and then through another door, they were in the bright sunlight outside.

“Daddy, that was really good,” said Leah. “Thank you for taking us, and I’m sorry I was nervous. Now, where’s my tambourine?”

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