


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 29 June 2012 - 9 Tammuz 5772
Sedra Chukat

JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

OUR EXISTENCE IN THIS WORLD IS A JOURNEY. IN PARTICULAR, IT IS a journey of the Soul. The Divine Soul originates at an exalted spiritual level, somewhere holy and very close to G-d. Then it enters this physical world, which is a realm of struggle. Through this struggle it eventually achieves something specially beautiful and pure. Through life in this world, the soul attains a higher level of holiness than when it began

This is the idea, in a nutshell. Let us see what the Sedra¹ of the Week has to say about it. For in the Sedra there is a special passage, called a Song. This is the Song of the Well². This means the Well of Miriam, which provided water for the Jewish people during their long journey of forty years through the wilderness. Near the end of their journey, on the point of entering the Holy Land of Israel when the journey of normal life would begin, the Jewish people sang this special Song about the Well.

What has this got to do with the Soul? Well, Jewish teaching is often expressed in terms of images. For example, there is the image of water: a spring of water among the gardens, a well with pure water, living waters. These images of water represent the Soul.



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

The Soul is our spiritual dimension. It links us with realms beyond the here and now, beyond physical flesh and bones, beyond earthly life. At the same time, through looking more closely at the Soul we can discover just how precious physical, earthly life really is.

The Soul before it enters our world is seen in terms of the image of a spring of water among the gardens, meaning the Garden of Eden, where the flow of water expresses the quality of the soul.

Then the water of the Soul trickles underground. Down, down, down from the Garden of Eden. It is flowing down in order to enter this world. It enters the body of a person. There are many stages. The person has to be born, and to grow up, little by little. The sacred Soul is there within, surrounded by different and unsettling forces. One is called the Animal Soul: this is filled with all kinds of passion and desire. Then there is the body itself, with its own appetites. Then there are all the events of life, ups and downs. Nonetheless, here in this world, the person tries to keep the Mitzvot of the Torah and express his or her Jewish quality. This brings out the inner nature of the Soul.

Eventually, after a long period deep underground, the water of the Soul starts to emerge: it is described as the water of a Well. It has endured many things, but now it is incredibly and beautifully pure. Its progress through life in this world has brought out an inner potential, an inner holiness, that was not apparent before. It has the quality of living waters which purify and elevate the world, making it too holy.

This is the journey of the Soul, our journey. All Judaism is in a sense a journey - ever since G-d commanded Abraham to leave his birthplace and to travel to the Land of Israel. Similarly, there is the journey of Life, step by step, for each of us. At every step forward in our earthly, physical lives, through Torah study and observance of the Mitzvot, the waters of the Soul become ever more pure, ever more holy, with a greater effect on the world, transforming it into a sacred dwelling for the Divine...³

Awesome!

1. Numbers 19:1-25:9 2. Num. 21:17-18 3. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Sefer HaMaamarim* vol. 1, p.141-3.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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SEDRA CHUKAT

A RULE IS A RULE

Everybody, including Simon, stood at the side of the pool waiting for instructions. It was Sunday afternoon, and the boys were at their swimming lesson at the local community swimming club. Simon loved swimming. It was his favourite sport, especially since he was the fastest swimmer in his age-group.

'Today,' the instructor announced, 'we are going to have races!' All the boys cheered. 'Everybody get into groups of four' he told the boys. 'I love racing!' Simon whispered to Yoni, as they all formed into groups. 'Yes,' whispered Yoni back, 'that's only because you're the fastest- swimmer'. Simon jabbed him playfully.

Soon the races were over. Simon had won first place in the final. Now they were having free time to do what they wanted. 'Simon, do you want to race me a quick length?' Simon looked up at David, his closest competitor. 'Sure, I'll just get out, I want to start with a dive', he said, as he pulled his dripping body out of the pool.

They went to the end of the pool, which happened to be the shallow end, and stood ready to begin. 'Ready... Get set...', boomed David.. 'Go!' they both shouted together, and they did racing dives into the pool and quickly both swam a length, neck to neck. 'Oh my!' said David. They had again drawn. Simon smiled at him, shaking water out of his eyes. 'Next time...' he said.

'Boys!' They both turned their heads towards the voice, it was the swimming instructor. 'I'm sure I told you not to dive in like that in the shallow end! There could easily be someone in the way, one of the younger boys, who might get hurt!'

The swimming instructor looked very angry. He was a young man who had been in the Israeli army. The boys did not usually disobey him.

'But we checked to see if anyone was there!' Simon defended himself. 'I don't care', said the instructor, 'a rule is a rule!'

'But...' began David. 'No buts, David', said the instructor. 'Didn't you learn in this week's Sedra about not asking questions about rules?' The boys shook their heads. 'Oh well, I'd better tell you then'.

'The Torah tells us about the different kind of Mitzvot. One kind we would have made up even if the Torah had not told us about it, like not to steal. Another kind we would not have made up, but it makes sense to us, like Pesach. The third kind of Mitzva is called a *Chok*, a Statute'.

'The Sedra is called Chukat', interjected David, trying to get on the good side of the swimming instructor.

'Quite right! It starts off with a Chok, a Statute, the kind of Mitzvah that people are not able to understand, and we must do it just because G-d told us to. No questions! Now, just because you don't understand why you shouldn't dive in the shallow end, doesn't mean that you can. A rule is a rule'.

Simon and David were not sure it was quite the same. A rule from G-d in the Torah is one thing, and a rule from the swimming instructor is something else. Nonetheless they politely apologised. After all, a small boy might have been swimming underwater, unnoticed.

The instructor smiled at them, 'I'm glad you understand,' he said. 'You mean,' said Simon, 'even if we don't understand, we will still keep the rule!'

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