


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 18 June 2010 - 6 Tammuz 5770
Sedra Chukat

TRANSFORMATIONS

A CENTRAL CHALLENGE IN OUR LIVES AS INDIVIDUALS AND IN THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE of existence is the quest to transform bad into good, the negative into the positive. This is the goal in the process of education, trying to deal with the difficult qualities of a pupil, who might be one's own child. It is also a goal in each person's continuous attempt to improve his or her own character. Further, this ideal typifies our hopes for the entire Jewish community and indeed for the world as a whole.

The Torah presents the emergence of the force of evil in the world in terms of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. The Serpent caused Adam and Eve to sin, and thus brought death and suffering into human life, which otherwise would have been free of such sorrows.

Can the Serpent really be transformed into good? The Sedra¹ this week provides an interesting hint that this is possible.

The Sedra tells of the last stages of the journey of the Jewish people through the Desert, the journey which is to bring them to the Promised Land².



In Memory of Naftali ben Yitzhak Halevi ע"ה
 10 Tammuz 5704 (1944)

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As we repeatedly see in the Torah, the people often complained against Moses and against G-d. “Why did you take us out of Egypt? We would rather be in Egypt”.

At one point, as a result of their bitter complaints, they were attacked by poisonous snakes. Many people who had been bitten by the snakes died, others were still alive but were very ill, dying. The people came to Moses and admitted they had done wrong. “We sinned by speaking against G-d and against you. Please pray for us and protect us from the snakes!”

G-d told Moses to make a serpent of copper, and put it on a pole. Anyone who has been bitten by a snake should look at this copper serpent, and they will be cured.³

This is an intriguing idea. The serpent, the source of the evil, becomes the means of the cure.

The reason for this is because at root, on the highest level, everything is good. Only when it descends to a lower level does it manifest itself as bad. When the people looked at the copper serpent on the pole, they realised that G-d is the source of everything. Through their recognition of G-d, the snake poison was neutralised and they were healed.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that this passage is not speaking only about the plague of snakes in the Desert. It is also hinting at the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. Ultimately, the evil caused by this Serpent will also be neutralised; the force of bad will be transformed into good⁴.

The attempt to achieve this on a personal level is our continuous task today. Through improving the many aspect of our lives which need improvement, step by step, and by helping others to do the same, we make the negative into a stepping stone to the positive. The key to achieving this is by focusing our gaze on G-d and His Torah. Through this we will achieve the ultimate goal: the transformation of the Serpent, when for all humanity, the world will become a Garden of goodness in every aspect of life.

1. Numbers 19:1-22:1. 2. In the Sedra two weeks ago (Shelach) they were condemned to spend forty years in the Desert. This week's Sedra moves to the end of that period of time. 3. Num.21:5-9 4. See *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 10 p.17.

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SEDRA CHUKAT

AARON SISTERS

"You idiot" screamed Josh at Michael. "Oh yes?" said Michael. "But *my* mother lets me go to sleep after 9:30". With that, the boys who were siding with Michael burst out laughing.

It was a split in the class. Josh and his six friends, against Michael and his friends. The split was getting dirtier by the day: name calling, tripping each other up 'by mistake'. On Tuesday there had almost been a full fist fight, but the teacher on duty during break noticed the fight brewing and sent them to different sides of the playground.

Now it was evening and Michael was on the phone with his friend Benjamin, they were planning on making a sleep-over in one of their homes. Obviously only those who were part of Michael's gang would be invited.

Leah, Michael's sister had been overhearing the phone conversations that her brother had been having with his friends in the recent days. She understood that Michael was in a terrible feud with his class mate Josh.

The next morning in school, Leah approached her good friend Debbie who was Josh's sister. She told her what she had picked up from all her brother's phone conversations.

"You know", said Debbie, "I also picked that up from what Josh was saying. It's a really dirty fight."

"Well, we've got to stop it" said Leah.

“I know” said Debbie “these boys are so crazy. They could do something really terrible.”

Later in the Sedra class, Leah and Debbie were both listening intently. It was quite interesting. Rabbi Levine was saying that in the Sedra, Aaron passed away. Rabbi Levine said that everybody was very sad, even more sad than when Moses passed away. “And the reason was” explained Rabbi Levine, “because Aaron made peace between people who were angry with each other.

“And do you know how he made peace?” asked Rabbi Levine.

“Yes” answered Rebecca. “He told one person that the other one was really sorry for what they had done, and then he told the other person the same thing. Really neither of them had said that they were sorry. But they ended up making friends again, because each one thought that the other one had already said he was sorry”.

As Rebecca finished speaking, Leah looked at Debbie and whispered “I’ve got an idea how to stop our brothers fighting”.

The next day in school, Michael came over to Josh and said “I got your message from your sister, and I am sorry also”.

“Which message?” asked Josh.

“You know” said Michael, starting to blush, “that you want to stop the fight”.

“I never said that to my sister” said Josh, “but, you know what, I guess it’s true. I am sorry, we should stop fighting.” With that they gave each other five. It was as if they had got rid of a load from their hearts.

“Do you want to come for a sleep-over in my house?” Michael asked Josh, as they were walking into class together...

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