


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**

שבת..... *for Friday nights* ..... קדש

**Friday 7 August 2009 - 17 Menachem Ab 5769**  
**Sedra Ekev**

**BLESSINGS**

**ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN FORMS OF PRAYER IS THE “BLESSING”. We make a blessing on lighting the Shabbat candles. There are blessings on wine, on bread, in fact on every kind of food. There are blessings on fulfilment of the Mitzvot, such as the blessing said when fixing a Mezuzah to the doorpost. Within the synagogue prayers there are a great number of blessings, and there are also blessings for special occasions, such as eating a new fruit, seeing a shooting star or a rainbow, and the blessings under the Chupah when getting married.**

How did these blessings begin? In the Sedra<sup>1</sup> there is a command that we should bless G-d after having had a good meal: “And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless G-d.”<sup>2</sup> The basic idea of this blessing, the Grace after Meals, is therefore directly commanded by the Torah. All other blessings were instituted by the Rabbis.

A blessing, called *Brachah* in Hebrew, generally begins with the words *Baruch Atah..*, “Blessed Are You o L-rd, Our G-d, King of the Universe... “. The rest of the blessing varies according to the situation.

There is a blessing for almost every occasion, making daily life a process of moving from one blessing to another. At each significant moment we turn to G-d and express His praise. Through this the person is being constantly reminded of his or her individual closeness


**Celebrating the Wedding of Richard (Reuven Chaim) and Esther Hadassah Samuels 'ש' 20 Menachem Ab 5769**

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

to G-d the Infinite Creator of All.

A special series of Blessings is a central feature of the daily prayers, whether the Morning, Afternoon or Evening prayer. This is the Amidah (literally ‘Standing’), which consists of nineteen blessings one after the other, to be recited with careful concentration, standing still with one’s feet together, facing the Temple in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>. The blessings in the Amidah are recited with the sense that one is standing in the direct presence of G-d, as if in the Temple. Standing in awe before the revealed infinity of the Divine one recites a series of blessings and G-d responds by revealing His beneficence. It is as if the blessings pour from G-d through the person’s words of prayer into the world...

While the Amidah is ideally the very intense climax of, for example, the Morning Prayer, the beginning of the prayer service is often comparatively ‘cold’. A person might begin to pray with a sense of duty, rather than a feeling of inspiration. Gradually the man or woman works their way through the text of the prayers, climbing a kind of spiritual ladder, the ‘Ladder of Prayer’, relating to Jacob’s dream of the Ladder<sup>4</sup>. The angels climbing up the ladder are described as the words of the prayer, and the angels coming down are like the blessings from G-d to the person and the Jewish people as a whole. Thus too every blessing expresses a flow from G-d.

An important transition in this process is the Shema, which was in last week’s Sedra. When one declares the oneness of G-d – Hear o Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is One – for a moment one goes beyond the world, so to speak. Hence Jewish custom is to cover one’s eyes when saying these words. Then one declares one’s love for G-d, with the words “and you should love G-d.... with all your heart, and all your soul and all your might..”.

The feeling of love helps move the person from the sense of duty with which they began the prayers to the inspired mood of being in the Divine Presence during the Amidah, when one is like a channel for the blessings of the Divine<sup>5</sup>. The route from duty to inspiration is paved with love...

1. Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25. 2. Deut.8:10. 3. The Amidah is also called Shmoneh Esreh, meaning “Eighteen”, because it originally had 18 blessings. Later a nineteenth was added. 4. See Genesis 28:12. 5. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s discourse *Zion beMishpat* 5715.

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



SEDRA EKEV

### **THE LAST PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**

Josh leaned over the desk to look more closely at the puzzle. His brother Izzy had done a great job so far. There were 1,000 pieces and he had almost finished. The scene was of a rainforest and many of the animals that live there. Like any expert puzzle-doer, Izzy had started with the corners and the border. It was easier to find the pieces that had one flat side. He had also worked out most of the middle. There were butterflies and many colourful birds. The hardest part was finding the pieces for all the trees!! *How could he tell one piece from the other?* Josh thought. All the leaves looked the same to him!

As Josh looked more closely at the puzzle pieces, he started to notice that there were differences between them. The leaves on this piece were bigger than the leaves on that piece, and this piece was slightly darker than that one... Slowly, Josh became very absorbed in noticing the differences between the puzzle pieces. He started to see how some pieces were more similar than others, and he started to match them up...

Izzy and his friend walked into the room to see Josh placing the last puzzle piece. He was glowing with pride. Until he noticed his brother standing there and, blushing, realizing what he had done.

"I'm so sorry Izzy! I didn't mean to take over your puzzle! I'm so sorry. I couldn't help myself. I just started looking at the pieces and they started coming together and everything just fit

so perfectly, and I'm so sorry...." Josh trailed off as he noticed that his brother was smiling from ear to ear.

"So...you're not upset with me?" Josh asked timidly.

"Congratulations on the puzzle, Josh. It's your puzzle now."

"Ahh, ok. But I'm a little, ah, puzzled? I thought you'd be upset that I finished it for you!"

"Josh, I'd like you to meet my study partner, Moshe." Izzy sat down next to his brother. "We just finished learning the Sedra and I want to share something with you. The Torah says that ALL of the Jewish people get credit for bringing Joseph's bones out of Egypt to bury in the Land of Israel. But really Moshe did it alone! Our sages teach: Who gets credit for a mitzvah? The one who completes it! So because the Jewish people finished the job by bringing Joseph's remains into the land, and burying them in Shechem, it's as if they were all involved in fulfilling Joseph's wish all the way through the desert."

"And there's another level to this," Moshe continued. "Think about all the Torah and good deeds that were kept by the generations before us, and how holy they were. What are our deeds next to theirs?"

Josh piped up: "I learned that we are the last generation of exile. So it's our good deeds and our Torah study will complete the puzzle!"

"Yes. So even though we might not be experts in putting together puzzles, or studying Torah and doing good deeds, we are building on the achievements of the past. So our work is the clincher that will bring the Redemption."

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