

CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

הנה

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 10 August 2012 - 22 Menachem Av 5772
Sedra Ekev

DYNAMIC JUDAISM

THERE ARE STATIC SYSTEMS AND DYNAMIC SYSTEMS. THE STATIC SYSTEM is likely to have a strong and stable structure, but - by definition - it does not change. However, after a time, because it is static, it may well start to decay and even to crumble. By contrast a dynamic system is one of movement, change and discovery.

If you were evaluating a business set up, you might ask yourself. "Static? Or dynamic?" This might affect your decision whether or not to join the firm as a director, or, if you were a banker, whether or not to lend it money. You might think in the same way about a community. "Static? Or dynamic?" Is there an atmosphere of healthy dynamism, of spirit, of excitement? Or is it rather boring, and young people are moving away...

Now, the same question can be asked about a person's Jewish life. We can be in a static mode, unmoving. We are in a particular pigeonhole: we keep this, but we do not keep that. Certain Jewish things we do, quite regularly; other Jewish things we don't do. Anyway, we might say, we never did do them, so why should we start now? Those things don't matter anyway, they are only minor issues.



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

JUDAISM FOR TOMORROW'S WORLD
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“Minor issues”? That is just what the Sedra¹ is telling us about, right at the beginning. In fact, as explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Sedra presents us with a challenge to become more dynamic in our approach to Jewish life.

The beginning of the Sedra states: “As a result of obeying these Laws, guarding and keeping them, G-d will keep for you the covenant and the love which He promised to your forefathers”.

This sounds straightforward. As a result of us keeping the Laws, G-d will look after us. It is an idea repeated many times in the Torah. We may sometimes have questions about it, but in itself, it is an idea which seems easy to understand.

However, the Hebrew word *Ekev*, here translated “result”, actually has more than one meaning. It is as if, on the computer, you click on the word with the cursor and it opens up to something else. *Ekev* also means “heel”.

Rashi takes this meaning of the word and explains it in context: “If you keep the minor laws which people trample under their heels” - then G-d will give you His special love. So this means, a Jew has to keep not just the major rules, but also the minor ones. Okay. So, there are lots of rules to keep, major and minor!

Now the Lubavitcher Rebbe asks a question. Why do we call some rules major and others minor? Because we see a nice firm structure of Judaism and we tend to put ourselves at a certain level of that structure, immovably. We say to ourselves: I keep the major rules; the rest do not matter.

However, says the Rebbe, Judaism is dynamic. We always have to be moving forward. What we thought was “minor” in fact is very important: one should break out of one’s pigeonhole and start something new. It might be regularly putting on Tefilin for a man, going to the Mikveh for a married woman; studying more Torah for anyone. Rashi is explaining to us that this dynamic step forward in our conception of ourselves and, indeed, of Judaism as a whole, will bring us G-d’s promise and His love....²

1. Deut.7:12-11:25. 2. Based freely on *Likkutei Sichot* vol.19 pp. 89-93.

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SEDRA EKEV

FEELING CARED FOR...

It was a scorching hot summer day and Chavi lay under the green leafy oak tree in the Cohen family's back garden. She was deeply engrossed in her book and did not notice the bees buzzing around her head. However, a distant voice was beginning to penetrate through. Her sister Rina suddenly appeared.

"Gosh, Chavi, I've been calling you for ages! Couldn't you hear me?"

Chavi shrugged and put down her book. Her sister sighed and said, "Mummy wants you to try on your school uniform to see if it still fits you. Come now, please".

School was not beginning for a few weeks and Chavi was definitely not interested in thinking about it now. Of course she would be excited to see her friends again, but right now she wanted to enjoy every bit of her holiday without thinking about any of the work that school entailed. She followed her sister indoors and went upstairs with her mother.

Chavi tried on her school skirt. "No" said her mother shaking her head. "Definitely too short. You've sprung up

this summer!" Her jumper sleeves barely reached her wrists, but her mother thought her shirts still fitted her, although it was too bad that the paint stains had not quite come out of one of them, which she had worn for Art club. The stains didn't really show, but Chavi still looked upset.

"Hey, Chavi" Rina laughed, "it's a shame that we can't take you back to the *Midbar*, the desert in the Torah!" Chavi looked insulted.

"No, I didn't mean it badly, but you remember what Daddy was saying about the clothes of the Jewish people in the desert. It says in Rashi's commentary that they never had to wash them because the Clouds of Glory kept them clean, and as the children and teenagers grew bigger, the clothes miraculously grew with them. That would probably save Mummy all this fuss now!"

Her mother smiled and nodded. "Yes, and just imagine what it would feel like knowing that all the time G-d was looking after you!"

"But He looks after us now as well - He just doesn't make our clothes grow with us," said Rina.

For a moment their mother was silent. She was thinking about where the money was going to come from, to pay for all the new clothes that would be needed in the family before Rosh Hashanah.

"You know what", she said. "G-d does usually make sure that we are able get new clothes when we need them. So in a way He is making our clothes grow with us".

"And hopefully making them look new!" said Chavi.

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