


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 26 July 2013 - 19 Menachem Av 5773
Sedra Ekev

NOT ON BREAD ALONE

IF YOU ASK SOMEONE THE QUESTION “WHAT IS LIFE?” they are likely to respond with a smile. ‘Life’ is very complicated, or very simple, or cannot be defined. You are born, you are here; you eat, you live... What else do you want me to say?

Jewish teaching says more. Life can be seen as a kind of dialogue with G-d, which reveals the depths of our own Essence, and gives us intimations of the Essence of the Divine. Each one of us, every man and woman, and indeed every particle of existence, every blade of grass, is part of that conversation. It is like a kind of melody. G-d reaches to us, and we respond; we reach to G-d, and He responds. Together we are trying to express something beyond words...

This idea is the inner theme of the entire Torah, which describes all existence as emanating from G-d, and then being in a state of dialogue with Him. A line in the Sedra¹ emphasises the point. Moses tells the Jewish people “G-d fed you with Manna... in order that you should know that man does not live on bread alone, but on that which comes from the mouth of G-d...” (Deut. 8:3).

What is it that makes a person live? Is it simply food, the physical nutrition and the digestive process? The Sedra is emphasising that our

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

physical existence is based on a special relationship established by G-d. If G-d so wants, we live by eating bread, wheat grains harvested from the fields and ground into flour and baked. If G-d wants, we live from Manna which comes from Heaven and settles like dew on the ground overnight.

What is there in the bread, or indeed in the Manna, which makes us live? The kabbalists tell us that within everything that exists there is a Divine life-force. This is “that which comes from the mouth of G-d”, the breath of Divine life which is breathed into everything and which makes that thing exist, whether it is a planet or a rose-petal.

On account of the Divine life-force in the bread, we live. And this is what the Torah means to say: we do not live on bread alone, on the physical bread; we live on the spiritual inner quality of the bread which - according to Divine decree - gives us life².

This means that eating is itself part of the dialogue with G-d. For this reason we say blessings before and after eating³. G-d is giving us His life-force - and we respond by recognising Him, by serving Him and loving Him.

The tensions and gaps in this process provide the paradoxical dimension of life.

G-d forbid, there might be poverty, war, illness, suffering - times when ‘life’ is difficult, when it hangs by a thread.. Yet, Jewish teaching affirms, this too is part of the process, part of the dialogue.

When the dialogue with the Divine reaches beyond the tensions of concealment to a boundless realm of unity - the paradoxes are resolved, reaching an infinitely exalted level of Divine revelation. Then G-d’s love to us, and our love to G-d reach true fulfilment. We can sometimes glimpse this today; but it will ultimately be revealed in the time of the Messiah.

1. Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot* vol.2, p.463. 3. See in our Sedra 8:10, the verse which is the Torah source for Grace after Meals. The Sages added blessings before eating.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL



SEDRA EKEV

TEACHING CHILDREN

Rina was lying curled up on the couch deeply engrossed in her book when David found her. "Guess what!" he said gloomily. Rina looked up.

"He's coming. Today. With no warning."

"Don't speak like that, David. Why is cousin Davey coming? Is Aunty Ruth also coming?" Ruth asked.

"Uncle Ben's mother is ill so they're flying to New York and they're leaving little Davey with us to look after until they come back. And he's sleeping in my bedroom".

David did not sound as though he was enthusiastic over the idea of his four year old cousin coming to stay,

"I don't know why you're so upset. Davey really is quite cute, and you both have the same name!"

David made a face and went upstairs to prepare his bedroom for the guest.

A few hours later his aunt and his cousin had indeed arrived. Aunty Ruth was in the middle of her goodbyes. "Oh David, there you are! You will take care of my little darling, won't you?"

“Sure.” Davey slipped his little pudgy hand into David’s and they went outside together.

After supper Davey went to sleep while David sat at the desk in his bedroom trying to do his homework. He was supposed to be writing an essay about the Mezuzah for his Hebrew-school teacher, Mr. Levy.

David had next to him a little Mezuzah scroll that Mr. Levy had lent him. “What’s dat?”

Little Davey had come out of bed and was now standing by David’s side.

“This is a Mezuzah”, David explained. “Inside is written the Shema. We hang it up on the doorpost” - he pointed to the doorpost of the bedroom where a Mezuzah was fixed - “and it reminds us that G-d is watching us, and taking care of us.”

“Oh” said Davey, as he clambered back into his bed, “so we don’t have to be scared of monsters, right?”

“Right” said David with a smile. He was now remembering something else that Mr. Levy had said about the Mezuzah. Inside, in the Shema, it also speaks about teaching children. Also, the second paragraph of the Shema, also in the Mezuzah, is in this week’s Sedra.

David had his pen in his hand, and looked as if he was writing his essay. But actually he was thinking:

Maybe he would be able to teach and help his little cousin with some of the things that he himself had learned.

Maybe it wouldn’t be such a bad visit after all.

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