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### ENTERING THE INNER LAND

**T**HE EPIC NARRATIVE OF THE TORAH STARTS WITH CREATION AND CONCLUDES with the Jewish people poised on the Eastern bank of the Jordan, opposite Jericho, about to enter the Holy Land. The opening words of this week's Sedra<sup>1</sup> speak of the Jewish people coming into the Land, entering it and truly dwelling in it.

We can read this passage as regarding events which took place thousands of years ago. This itself is important, as regards our understanding of our role in the world today, and our relationship with the sacred Land of Israel. However there is also another way to read the Torah: it is speaking directly of each of us, today, as individuals. The Land of Israel is our inner sacred Land, our inner spiritual being, and the Torah is speaking about an individual entering his or her Land, being there totally.

Each one of us has an inner self and an outer self. The inner self is our true inner being; the outer self is what we show other people. The Sedra is speaking about a person seeking to live up to his or her inner reality. When we strive for this then everything else we do has more resonance and meaning.

How do we do this?

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Our inner Land is a world of Torah and Mitzvot, a Jewish reality. The Torah is suggesting that we enter that realm totally, as a person enters a ritual pool, a Mikveh, without even a hair sticking out. We are still able to live successful lives as professionals, businessmen and women, academics, artisans, shopkeepers, writers, musicians, artists and homemakers – but we do so with a clear sense of who we ourselves are, as human beings and as Jews.

It is deeply appropriate that the Shabbat when we find this idea in the Sedra is also 18 Elul, the birthday of two great luminaries of Chassidism: Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), the founder of Chassidism, who mapped out its general principles, and Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1813), who created the Chabad path which shows a person how to express those principles in the details of his or her life.

Chassidism seeks to help a person access their own inner reality. The Chassidic path emphasises the power of thought, of inspiration and contemplation, and also of feeling: love, awe and joyfulness. Through Chassidic teachings and insights, all other aspects of Torah study and observance, and of every detail of life, are highlighted and revealed as more meaningful and inspiring.

The Baal Shem Tov, who passed away 250 years ago, taught the significance of this inward approach to Judaism and life; Rabbi Shneur Zalman provided techniques which ordinary individuals can apply. One could say that the Baal Shem Tov helped us enter our inner Land in general terms, while Rabbi Shneur Zalman showed how to settle in it and dwell there<sup>2</sup>.

Through each person striving to enter his or her inner Land, we pave the way for the Jewish people as a whole, in real terms, to enter and dwell in our beautiful Land of Israel, rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, in a way which all peoples will recognise as the fulfilment of the purpose of Creation. Then the epic story of the Torah will really begin.

1. Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8. 2. Freely based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.19 p.244 ff.

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### SEDRA KI TAVO

#### **WHAT IS MONEY FOR?**

“Could we buy that bicycle?” Michael asked his father, as they strolled round a department store together. “I don’t think so” answered his father. “Look, it seems rather expensive to me.”

They both peered at the price tag. “Oh, okay” said Michael, “you are right, that is a lot. But it looks a very good bike...”

Later the whole family was sitting round the supper table. “You know, Sukkot is coming in a month, I need to start looking for a nice Etrog” said Michael’s father. “Yes, I remember last year you bought a beautiful Lulav and Etrog set,” said Leah.

“It was really good. The Etrog had a lovely fragrance.” said their mother. Then she turned to her husband. “You know, Aaron, there are going to be a lot of expenses for the festivals this year.”

“You are right,” he replied. “We have to repair the Succah, after those terrible storms in the Spring. I need to get some new timber for it. We also have to buy the laurel leaves to put on top. Then there’s the Lulav and Etrog.”

“I hope I’ll be getting a new dress for Rosh Hashana!” said Leah. “And last year you promised me a nice new Machzor with an English translation.”

“Not to mention food!” said his wife. “There will be about twenty big festival meals, including Shabbat, and I’m hoping we will have some guests at each meal.”

“How much does a Lulav and Etrog cost?” asked Michael.

“Well, you can get a set for twenty five pounds,” said his father. “But some people look for a really special Etrog and spend much more”.

“Dad” Michael said “I don’t want to be cheeky, but how come we will spend so much money on the festivals, when you didn’t want to buy me that bike. I mean, the festivals come and then they are gone. But a bike, that lasts all year long, in fact, much more than a year if it’s a good one like the one we saw in the shop...”

“First of all,” said his father “In nine months time we hope to buy a really nice bike for you, when you get to your Bar Mitzvah”. “Oh really. Thank you,” Michael said, pleased. “But also,” his father continued “we do spend a lot of money on festivals and Mitzvot, because we have to give the best to G-d. We also have to give Tzedaka to other people as well. Our festival wouldn’t be complete without that.”

“Yes,” said their mother. “And through giving Tzedaka and spending on the festivals, everything else is blessed...”

“Oh, I know what you mean,” said Michael. “Our teacher was talking about it. In this week’s Sedra it tells us about the farmers living in Israel in the time of the Temple. They would bring the first ripe fruits to the Temple, in a beautiful basket. He said this means that the first place where your money goes is...”

“G-d” said Leah, finishing the sentence for Michael. “And that means the festivals, not a bike,” she added. “What about your new dress?” retorted Michael. “Is that so holy?”

“A modest dress *is* holy, so there!” she answered. “And anyway, Mummy just said everything else gets blessed. So when it comes to your Bar Mitzva, I know what you will say, that your new bike will also be part of the Mitzva...”

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