


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 31 August 2012 - 13 Elul 5772
 Sedra Ki Tetze

TWO WIVES - TWO SOULS

A ABOUT A THOUSAND YEARS AGO THE LEADERS OF ASHKENAZI Jewry, for many reasons, decided to forbid a man to marry more than one wife¹. Although this decree did not apply to Sefardi communities, in their case too there was a trend towards monogamy. A bride's family would try to obtain a written agreement from the groom that he would not take any additional wife. This trend gained impetus in modern times in the context of Jewish life in the Land of Israel. Today the monogamous principle is virtually universal throughout the Jewish people.

Despite this fact, there is a passage in our Sedra² concerning a man having two wives, and preferring one to the other. The Torah defends the rights of the children of the less favoured wife³.

Torah is eternal, yet this rule is apparently applicable only in earlier epochs of our history. What does it mean to us today?

Chassidic teachings highlight the spiritual dimension concealed in the teachings of the Torah. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), a great Chassidic leader, explains that this passage is speaking about each one of us, man or woman, married or single. Each of us



In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin
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 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'

has, in a sense, two 'wives'. They are our two Souls, the Divine Soul and the Animal Soul.

The Divine Soul is the beloved favourite wife. She inspires the person to move towards goodness and holiness. The Divine Soul prompts the person to act in a selfless way, with dedication to Judaism and to the Jewish people. It is the source of positive and wholesome thoughts and suggestions. The Divine Soul is a beautiful and dearly loved 'wife'.

By contrast the Animal Soul usually has a quite contrary effect. It tends to make a person selfish and draws him or her towards negative behaviour. It provides a constant stream of problematic and intrusive thoughts and keeps trying to drag the person into unsavoury situations. As a companion in life, the Animal Soul is rather difficult and troublesome.

Now comes an interesting point. Although the Animal Soul is so problematic - it actually has great potential! Everything has a spiritual source, and the source of the Animal Soul is very exalted. It comes from a lofty and holy realm. By a mysterious logic, that which is most exalted often falls very low. That is what has happened to the Animal Soul. The task of the individual is to do what he or she can, in order to elevate it and reveal its hidden potential . How is this achieved?

Jewish life, in all its details, provides a pathway of gradual inner refinement and transformation. It is a slow process, and one often may feel one is not getting anywhere. The difficult companion is just as problematic as ever. Yet sometimes there are successes. One suddenly realizes that one has advanced: the Animal Soul itself agrees to Shabbat, kashrut, Tefilin, mikveh, to love one's fellow and even to not losing one's temper...

These good deeds and achievements are the 'children' of the less favoured wife. The Torah tells us to appreciate them and love them. Then we will realize how wonderful their mother really is...

1. The decree was promulgated by the leading Rabbi of Franco-Germany, known as Rabbenu Gershom 'the Light of the Exile' (lived c.1000 CE).
2. Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19.
3. Deut. 21:15-17.
4. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Likkutei Torah* on this Sedra, 37d.

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SEDRA KI-TETZE

DANGEROUS OBSTACLES

'Vrrrooom!!' Donny sounded as he zoomed around the garden in his brand new bike leaving an imaginary trail of dust in his wake. He had just received this bike for his 10th birthday, and now he was going to put it to good use.

'Hey! Watch the plants on the side', warned his big sister, Leah, from the kitchen. 'Boys!' she thought in disgust as her brother, taking no notice of her warning, skidded into a bunch of beautiful flowers that she herself had planted only weeks ago. She turned her attention back to her one-year-old brother Eli, whom she was feeding with a spoon.

'Weeeeeeee!' screeched Donny as he came to a halt by the door to the kitchen.

'Boy! Am I thirsty!' he exclaimed as he jumped off his bike and ran into the kitchen. 'Donny', said Leah in her grown-up-sister voice as he paused to make a blessing on his drink, 'you left your bike in a terribly dangerous place'.

'What do you mean?' said Donny defensively, 'that's perfectly OK, and anyway, who do you think you are? Miss Traffic warden?'

Leah sighed. 'The Torah says we have to be careful about what we do, we have to have regard for others', she told him, 'I mean, didn't you learn this week's Torah portion?' she asked sarcastically. 'In fact', retorted Donny, 'I did learn it, and it

doesn't say anything about not leaving bikes by the kitchen door....'

Their argument was interrupted by the sound of Eli's cry, Leah and Donny ran over to see what happened. Eli was sprawled on the floor having tripped over the bike.

'See, I told you!' said Leah to Donny as she picked up Eli and tried to soothe him.

A few hours later Leah was sitting in her room listening to some music. Donny peeped through the door. 'Can I come in?' he asked a little shyly. 'Sure.' Said Leah. 'Um... where *does* it say about bikes in this week's Torah portion anyway?' he asked as he sat down on her bed, trying not to sound as if he had lost their earlier argument.

'Well,' said Leah, 'This week's Sedra tells us that when we build a house we have to build a fence around the roof so that no one should fall off'.

'Yes, I remember that', said Donny, 'but that doesn't have anything to do with my bike.'

'I know the Torah doesn't mention bikes, but it is telling us that we have to be careful that the things we do, won't end up hurting another person', replied Leah 'This is how my teacher explained it to us, and he showed us that the Code of Law explains that any kind of dangerous obstacle is included'.

'You know something,' said Donny, 'the truth is that now I remember my teacher explained exactly the same thing, he even used a bike as an example of things to be careful about! I suppose I forgot all about it because I was so excited about getting a nice new bike for my birthday...'

Leah laughed. 'Well, you forgot, and so did I. I should have been looking after little Eli, instead of telling you off about the bike. So, just when we are supposed to remember, we forget... Never mind - in the end we will remember!'

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