

CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 16 August 2013 - 10 Elul 5773
Sedra Ki Tetze


CHOOSING THE BATTLE OF LIFE

THERE ARE MATERIAL BATTLES IN LIFE OF WHICH WE ARE ALL AWARE. These include the economic struggle of each individual and family, conflicts with neighbours, international politics, and, G-d forbid, facing terrorism and war.

Another kind of battle all the way through our lives is spiritual. It takes place primarily within ourselves, where there are two empires at war: the empire of the spirit, of Jewish ideals, of Torah; and that of ordinary and everyday needs, desires and attitudes. The struggle between these two forces within us are endless, extending throughout our lives.

The Sedra¹ begins by speaking of war, “when you go out in battle against your enemies”, and Chassidic teachings explain this as applying to our inner spiritual battle.

The goals in this conflict are set by the Torah: to make G-dliness a part of our daily lives through keeping the Mitzvot, and to create homes and families where the basic atmosphere is harmonious and wholesome, expressing the values of thousands of years of Torah teachings.



In loving Memory of
 הרה"ח וו"ח עוסק בצ"צ ר' ארון דוב בן ארי' זצ"ל
Rabbi Aron Dov Sufrin זצ"ל - Yahrzeit 6 Elul
 Dedicated by his Family םא

Against this come all kinds of threat. Some of them are very simple issues such as convenience and self-indulgence. Others are more problematic obsessions, which seem to haunt us continuously.

In this life-long situation we are each called on to go to war. Chassidic teachings explain that this is the battle which is described at the beginning of the Sedra. Like a good strategist fighting a battle on a difficult front, the Torah takes account of where to make concessions to the frailties of man, and where not to². Guidance by Rabbis and Rebbetzins today is often precisely on subtle borderline issues.

However, there is an interesting comment by the Sages, which illuminates the paradox of life. Two kinds of battle are described in Jewish law: a battle which is a duty (such as to save the lives of the Jewish people) and a battle which is optional, such as King David's battles extending the territory of the Land of Israel. The Sages describe the battle in our Sedra as "optional"³.

How can the spiritual battle of life, struggling to keep the Torah properly, be described as *optional*? Surely it is imposed on us by the very fact that we are born?

Chassidic teachings give an interesting answer. The Sages say that G-d consulted the Righteous before He created the world. Further, every Jew is considered to be righteous⁴. Hence creation in general, and consequently the fact of each person being born, was approved by each individual soul.

This means that on a profound level, each of our souls has *chosen* to be here. Our soul chose the option to come into the world, to face the spiritual and indeed material battles involved: because it was confident it would come out on top. The battle is optional because this is the option we chose. We chose to be here, and on every front, we are going to win⁵.

1. Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19. 2. See Rashi to Deut. 21:11. 3. See Rashi to Deut. 21:10. 4. Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 8:7, and Isaiah 60:21. 5. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Sefer HaSichot 5751*, p.796ff.

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SEDRA KI TETZE

LOST AND FOUND

Leah wandered along the road. 'What a beautiful day!' she thought. The blue sky was flecked with wisps of clouds, and the sun's rays felt good on her back. The flowers growing by the side of the road seemed to lift their heads to the sun... She stopped suddenly, and looked closer at the flowers. What was that black object? It didn't look at all like a flower.

Bending down, she picked it up. It was a black crocodile leather handbag, not in very good condition. Wow! She opened it excitedly, and sitting down on a nearby wall, spilled the contents out in her lap. A handkerchief, edged with lace and embroidered with the initial E, a pair of glasses, a packet of extra strong mints, half empty - and a fifty pound note. No clue to identity, unless you counted the initial. But - fifty pounds!

Leah rushed home. Her brother David was sitting in the kitchen, eating cheese on toast.

"David! look what I found!" She showed him the handbag with its contents.

David was impressed. "Hey, Leah, what a great chance you have to do the Mitzva of Returning Lost Property. I was just learning about that in the Sedra. Now you have the chance to do this Mitzva."

Leah's face fell. "Do you mean that there is a Mitzva that says I have to give this back? But there's no name or anything on it - how can I? Anyway, I want to keep it!"

Lying in bed that night, Leah thought and thought. She imagined all the wonderful things she could buy with the money - sweets, and felt-tips, and books, and paints... But then she imagined an old lady sitting in a lonely flat, hungry because she had no money to buy food, and she knew what she was going to do.

The next morning she sat at her mother's computer and made some notices with large letters:

FOUND ON WILDWOOD AVE
A BLACK LEATHER HANDBAG CONTAINING
VARIOUS OBJECTS INCLUDING MONEY. CALL
LEAH 0208 - 123 4567

She then went with her twin sister Debbi to the local shops and hung up ten of the notices, hoping in a small corner of her heart that no one would answer.

But that afternoon, the phone rang, and Leah answered it. It was an old lady inquiring if this was the person who found the handbag. Because she had lost a bag with a fifty pound note and her reading spectacles. She hadn't been able to read close up since she lost them, and she was so excited to see the notice in the shop window.

Leah took the bag over to the old lady's house. She was not so poverty stricken as Leah had imagined. Even so, the old lady was so grateful that Leah felt really happy - and she even refused to take a reward.

"It's a Mitzva" she said "I don't want to be paid for doing a Mitzva!"

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