


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT
 שבת.....for *Friday nights*.....שבת
 Friday 20 July 2011 - 12 Tammuz 5771
 Sedra Mas'ei

AARON AND THE THIRD TEMPLE

WE ARE IN THE PERIOD CALLED THE ‘THREE WEEKS’, LEADING UP TO the fast of the Ninth of Av when both Temples were destroyed. This year the month of Av begins on the coming Monday (1 August). At this point begin “the nine days”. There are mourning customs throughout the Three Weeks - such as no weddings - and the mourning atmosphere intensifies during the nine days, culminating in the Fast. Is there a positive way to look at all this?

Of course there is, and the Sedra¹ this week helps us do so. It is interesting that the date of the First of Av is recorded in the Sedra. The Torah states that on this day, “on the fifth month² on the first day of the month” the great Jewish teacher and High Priest Aaron, the brother of Moses, passed away³. The passing of a great personage like Aaron is of course a sad event, like the destruction of the Temple. However, the Torah tells us ways in which we can compensate for the passing of a great person, and similarly there are ways in which spiritually, at least, we can rebuild the Temple right now.

Every great person is the transmitter of a teaching. The Sages tell us that by the fact that there are students and disciples who follow his teaching, the person himself is in a sense still alive. “If his offspring are alive, he himself is alive”⁴. The offspring mean not only his



In Loving Memory of v"g l'bhv l'ubj , c tekv t'bgv
 Mrs Henny Sufrin ל"ה - Yahrzeit 4 Menachem Av
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biological children and grandchildren, but also his disciples and those who are positively influenced by his ideas.

Now, in the case of Aaron, his central teaching was that of love for one's fellow. Ethics of the Fathers states: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and drawing them close to the Torah" (I: I2). This is precisely the teaching which is needed in order to rectify the destruction of the (second) Temple, which, the Sages tell us, was on account of causeless hatred⁵.

Hence the initial sadness at Aaron's passing away on the First of Av, with also the atmosphere of mourning for the Temple, is transformed into something positive by renewed commitment to his teaching of love of one's fellow. The effect of this is the feeling that Aaron lives on, through us, and in addition, his teaching of love helps dissolve hatred between Jews, which was the cause of Destruction.

Now in the same way that our study of a great person's teachings means that in some sense that person lives on, so too our study of the details of the Temple means that in some sense we are rebuilding it⁶. Hence at this time of the Three Weeks, by thinking about and studying some aspect of the Temple in Jerusalem we are in a spiritual way building the Third Temple which will bring real peace and love to the world⁷.

In the Holy of Holies of the Temple, the Divine Presence was revealed. The very purpose of creation is the revelation of the Divine in this world, and this was and will again be achieved through the physical Temple with its courtyards and its inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies. However, when the Divine Presence is revealed in the Temple of stone in Jerusalem, it is also revealed in our own heart of flesh within us. And this brings us back to Aaron's teaching: love. Aaron's teaching lives, and we are at the threshold of the Third Temple...

1. Numbers chs.33-36. 2. The first month is Nisan, then come Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av. 3. Numbers 33:38. This is the only Yahrzeit mentioned in the Torah. Aaron's passing is described earlier in Sedra Chukat, Num.20:22 ff. 4. Talmud Taanit 5b. 5. Talmud Yoma 9b. 6. Midrash Tanchuma 96:14. 7. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 18 pp.411-420.

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SEDRA MAS'EI

CITY OF REFUGE

"Mum, look what happened!" Sammy's normally placid face was red with anger and despair. "Rachel managed to spill water all over my science project, that I've been working on for days!"

Rachel was his two and a half year old sister. It was usually hard for Sammy to feel cross with her - she was a very cute little person after all – but this time he was really upset about his ruined work.

He would probably have to start all over again, and with the project being due in the next day, he for sure would not be the winner of that high-power microscope Mr Forbes was offering as a prize.

"Mum, can't you smack her or something! She has to learn that she can't do that!"

"But Sammy, it was a mistake. Rachel didn't plan to ruin it - she just tripped when she was holding a drink. What good would punishing her do?"

"So what if it was a mistake - what if I would murder by mistake, it doesn't matter if I planned to or not, the person is still dead, and my project is still ruined!" Sammy argued vehemently.

That was Thursday evening. Two days later Sammy remembered his words. It was Shabbat and he was in the Synagogue listening to the Torah being read, reading ahead in his Torah translation as he always did, when he read:

“You must designate towns which shall serve you as refuge cities to which a murderer who kills a person accidentally can flee. These cities shall serve you as a refuge from the avenger...”

Wow! Just what he had been talking about. He could just imagine the scene... Mr X, driving his new BMW, ran over Mr Y and killed him. Of course, Mr Y’s loving family were furious, and his hot-headed brother decided to kill Mr X. What should Mr X do?

The Torah had thought of this, and commanded that there be built special towns, where poor Mr X could go and live. He would have to stay there until the High Priest would die. But there in the City of Refuge he would be safe from the anger of the family of Mr Y.

On the way home Sammy told his parents what he had read. Then, suddenly remembering his spoiled project, he added: “...So maybe Rachel could go and live in one of these cities!”

Rachel looked up at her brother in alarm. “Don’t worry, Rachel,” said her mother quickly, you are staying right here! No-one is trying to take vengeance on you - are they Sammy...”

She gave Sammy a meaningful look. “..Er... of course not,” he replied. And anyway, Mr Forbes had said there would soon be another chance...

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