


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 13 July 2012 - 23 Tammuz 5772
Sedra Pinchas

LOVE BREAKS BARRIERS

THERE ARE MANY BOUNDARIES AND BARRIERS IN LIFE. SOME ARE VERY important for a healthy existence, and are established and promoted by the Torah. Other boundaries are more ambiguous, and the Torah itself will say they should be crossed, for the sake of higher ideals. One such ideal is that of *Ahavat Yisrael*, to love one's neighbour as oneself. For the sake of love of one's neighbour, ordinary social boundaries, for example, disappear.

The Sedra¹ too tells us about the crossing of boundaries. Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron, provides the paradigm of a *zealot*. The English word zealot comes from 'zeal', enthusiasm. At the end of last week's Sedra, Moses and Aaron were confronted with a situation in which they felt powerless. In a very public way a Jewish leader, the head of one of the Twelve Tribes, was flaunting the entire concept of Jewish identity, by openly consorting with a Midianite woman. Moses was weeping. Was this the end of the Jewish people?

Pinchas stepped forward with a spear, and seemingly took the law into his own hands. We see him apparently breaking the Jewish rules of careful trial, evidence and judgement. Yet at the beginning of our



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

Sedra he is commended by G-d for his action.

The Sages discuss this event, and present a slightly different picture. It is true that Pinchas crossed boundaries. However, he remained within Torah law². In Jewish thought there are certain courses of action which are described as within the bounds of the law, but which nonetheless cannot be suggested by the Jewish law court³.

Pinchas' action was in this category. It was a desperate situation which required a desperate remedy, and Pinchas did the right thing. Hence in our Sedra he is commended by G-d in a remarkable way.

What does this teach us about our own lives? The Lubavitcher Rebbe suggests transferring this theme of breaking through boundaries into the realm of the positive, in expression of the ideal of Ahavat Yisrael, to love your neighbour as yourself.

There is the normal, ideal structure of Jewish life: a warm, close community; an intimate family circle; a life immersed in typically Jewish activities. This is the goal for the committed, observant and knowledgeable husband and wife in the Jewish community.

However, the Rebbe suggests following the example of Pinchas: keep within Torah law, but break out of some aspects of this structure, because a Jew somewhere is in need. Invite a person to your Shabbat table, perhaps someone who has never experienced that before. Spend time with that person, helping him or her feel a sense of acceptance, rather than busily carrying out your more conventional Jewish duties. Perhaps even leave your comfortable community, and go and live in a place where there are Jews, but no kosher shop, no Jewish school, none of the ordinary advantages of Jewish communal life. You will help other Jews discover the meaning in being Jewish. Gradually, the kosher shop, the Jewish school and Jewish life will develop.

You will change people's lives, in a wholesome, positive way. Because you broke through barriers, because of your love...⁴

1 Numbers 25:10-30:1 . 2. See Rashi to Num. 25:6-7 3. See Talmud Eruvin 7a, Betza 28b: "it is indeed the Law but one does not give this as an instruction".

4. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 2 pp.344-6.

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53

SEDRA PINCHAS

DETERMINATION

Rina chewed her pencil thoughtfully and stared down at the blank scrap of paper in front of her. "Psst! Rina!"

Rina turned around. Sarah leaned over her shoulder. "What are you writing about?" Sarah whispered. Rina shrugged. Their school was having a writing competition. The students with the best essays would enter into a raffle and could win various prizes. But the top prize...

The top prize was going to be a trip to Israel. Rina had never been to Israel. 'If only I could win the trip' Rina thought, "or even just be in the raffle, it would make my parents so proud. They were really upset when my grades dropped so much this year - but this would show them that I really can do it'.

Rina was still thinking about the essay on her way home from school. She walked into the front gate and bumped straight into her brother David. "Hey! Look where you're going! ... What's up Rina? I haven't seen you so serious in a long time."

Rina sat down on the grass next to her brother and started telling him about the competition. He was sympathetic, but then he said: "Well... only one person in the entire school gets to win and the chances of it being you..." David's voice trailed off.

"Right," said Rina. "But winning isn't necessarily the main thing. The top twenty essays will go into a raffle. And just to get that far is special. And it will make Mummy and Daddy really pleased."

"Hmm. It's going to need a lot of effort on your part - and a lot of your free time. But you seem to be pretty determined. Actually saying 'determined' reminds me of what we learned in school today about the five daughters of Tzelafchad."

"Oh yes," said Rina. "Their father had died, and they didn't have any brothers, so it seemed that their family wouldn't get a portion of land in the Land of Israel. But they loved the Land of Israel so much that they were not going to settle for that. So they went with real determination to Moses and told him their story. Then G-d told him that they should get a portion of land after all."

"You're right!" said David. "We learn from them that if you really want something, then Hashem will help you get it. Especially if you make an effort! So, look at you! You are so determined, I am sure your essay will be included in the raffle. And who knows - the daughters of Tzelafchad got to go to Israel and have a portion of land there - maybe you will too!"

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