


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש


Friday 28 June 2013 - 20 Tammuz 5773
Sedra Pinchas

SACRED INTIMACY

IN JEWISH TEACHING, MARITAL INTIMACY IS CONSIDERED SACRED, reaching beyond the bounds of physicality towards a spiritual dimension. It is potentially the point where the spiritual and the physical meet, the union of soul and body, of G-dliness and human physicality.

In the Talmud¹, Rabbi Akiva explains this in terms of the Hebrew words for man and woman. IYSH איש is Man, composed of the word for 'fire', *esh* אש plus the letter Yud. The Hebrew for Woman is ISHAH, אשה the same word *esh*, 'fire' plus the letter Heh. If their union is spiritually wholesome, based on the teachings of the Torah, it becomes a source of holiness: the letter Yud of the man joins with the letter Heh of the woman, forming the Divine Name. The Shechinah, the Presence of G-d, is revealed in every detail of their marriage and in the home they create together.

However, continues Rabbi Akiva, if a union between man and woman does not have this spiritual quality, if their union is not based on the teachings of the Torah, the fire in both man and woman becomes dominant. There might be the flame of intimacy, but it conceals the Divine.

	<p>In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ה"ע - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb 'שי</p>
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This week's Sedra², named Pinchas, begins at the conclusion of the events described in the Torah last week: Jewish men openly consorted with beautiful Moabite and Midianite women. They abandoned Torah teachings on the holiness of intimacy and, therefore, they threatened the destruction of the whole ethos of Judaism, to the extent that Moses began weeping³. So Pinchas, a grandson of Aaron, fought against this, and was successful.

At the beginning of our Sedra, G-d declares that Pinchas is granted a Covenant of Peace. The Lubavitcher Rebbe comments⁴ that this Covenant expresses peace between body and soul. Instead of the physical body concealing the soul, it reveals it.

This bond of body and soul is seen in the tradition of our Sages that Pinchas and the prophet Elijah are the same person. Elijah is remarkable in that he did not die; instead his body was swept up to Heaven in a storm wind⁵. This means, that his body attained total purity and holiness, like that of the soul. Another tradition is that Elijah will herald the Redemption. In the times of the Messiah, body and soul will indeed be one. The physicality of life will not hide G-dliness. "The glory of G-d will be revealed to all flesh"⁶, meaning that physical flesh itself will perceive and experience the Divine.

At a circumcision a chair is prepared for Elijah. Our Sages say that Elijah is present to affirm that the Jewish people indeed keep this Covenant. Circumcision itself expresses the way the physicality of the male is joined with the holiness of the Divine, leading eventually to sanctity in marriage. Indeed, false types of physical intimacy are described as profaning the Covenant of circumcision. They separate body from soul, thus denying the Covenant of Peace.

These central themes merge together: the holiness of Jewish marriage, and the ultimate goal to unify body and soul. In general, the task of life is to reveal the sacred in the physical. This is the purpose of all the Mitzvot, through which G-dliness is expressed in the physical world. In particular this is seen in the physical, psychological and spiritual bond in Jewish marriage, the sacred intimacy and love at the heart of Jewish life.

1. Sotah 17a. 2. Numbers 25:10-30:1. 3. See Numbers 25:6. 4. See *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 2, p.610. 5. II Kings 2:11. 6. Isaiah 40:5.

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SEDRA PINCHAS

LOTTERIES

There was great excitement in the Gordon household. They had just got a brand new Nintendo Wii! The children all crowded around as Mr Gordon opened the boxes and concentrated on connecting the wires between the Nintendo Wii console and the screen. Jacob, the oldest, helped his father by reading the instructions off the manual as his sister, Rachel, passed him all the parts. The two younger ones, Talia and Joseph, watched wide-eyed with beaming smiles.

“Can I have the first turn once it’s all set up?” Talia asked.

“No, I want to!” Joseph pouted.

“Well, I helped Daddy set up, so I think I deserve the first turn!” Rachel boasted.

“Alright, alright,” Mrs Gordon calmed them down, “Let’s think this through fairly.”

“Mommy’s right, children,” Mr Gordon said, “we only have one remote so far so you can only play one at a time until I buy a second one. And you all equally deserve a turn so I think we are going to figure this out by doing the old-fashioned Gordon-family tradition!”

“What’s that?” Joseph looked up, interested.

“I know! A lottery!” Jacob exclaimed. “What a great idea, Dad.”

“I’ll write everyone’s names on pieces of paper,” Rachel volunteered. “And here’s a box to put them in...”

Five minutes later, Mr Gordon stood up and clasped his hands together. "All done!" he said, "Who's going first?"

"Well," Rachel said, "I have the lottery ready. We need someone to pick the first name." "I think Mommy should do it," Talia suggested.

Mrs Gordon reached into the box holding all the papers, picked one out and unfolded it. "Alright, this is the person who gets the first turn on the Wii. It's...Joseph!"

Joseph clapped his hands excitedly. Mrs Gordon picked out the next three, which resulted in Rachel having the second turn, Talia the third and finally Jacob.

Jacob felt a bit upset that he was last, but he thought to himself, *I am going to have so many chances to play on it...I guess it's not so bad...A lottery is pretty fair. Hey, I just learnt about a lottery this week in Sedra class!!*

"Hey, isn't it pretty ironic, I learnt about lotteries this week in Sedra class," Jacob said aloud.

"Why, did they Jews get a Nintendo Wii in the desert?" Talia giggled.

"No, silly!" Jacob smiled, "The Jews were receiving their parts of the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel was divided into twelve, for each tribe to get his own share of the land. And they were all given out by a lottery."

"Wow! Imagine that!" Rachel marvelled. "I wonder what my ancestors got..."

"Alright, Joseph, your game is up! It's Rachel's turn!" Mrs Gordon told Joseph.

"Okay," Joseph handed the Wii remote to Rachel. "I like lotteries! Just like the Jews in the desert, getting their portion of the Land of Israel..."

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