

CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday night* קדש

Friday 11 July 2014 - 13 Tammuz 5774
Sedra Pinchas


DIVIDING THE INNER LAND

EVERYTHING IN THE TORAH HAS SEVERAL LEVELS OF MEANING. THERE ARE DESCRIPTIONS of events which took place thousands of years ago. Yet those events, on another level, relate also to our own lives today, as individuals and as the Jewish people as a whole. The Torah is the blue-print of creation, and is the psychological and spiritual map of our own inner being.

In the Sedra¹ there are instructions on how to organise a new phase of life of the Jewish people. They will soon enter the Land of Israel. G-d tells Moses how to divide up the territory of the Holy Land among the Twelve Tribes. Then, within each Tribe, he should divide the land among the different families.

An intriguing feature of this is that two quite different methods are used. One is a logical method based on the size and characteristics of each tribe, the number of members of each family, and taking into account the variable quality of the agricultural land. This seems quite rational and straightforward.

The second method, however, is by means of drawing lots. This is



In Memory of Rabbi Nachman ben Pinchas Sudak OBE זצ"ל
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Principal Lubavitch Emissary to the UK

quite a different dimension: above reason or logic, a decision which is beyond human control.

Commentators discuss these two methods, and the question of how they are both applied to the question of dividing up the land between the different Tribes².

However, this idea also has a wider meaning, relating to our lives today. Each one of us has the personal task to “conquer” and “divide up” the land. We are each faced with the secular and possibly hostile personal ‘Land of Canaan’, which has to be transformed into the sacred Land of Israel.

In order to achieve this, we have to utilize the two contrasting dimensions of Reason and the “lot” which is above Reason.

In many aspects of our lives, we generally feel that Reason, sound common sense, is enough. Yes, we say, keep Jewish tradition - but surely in no more than a “reasonable” way.

This approach uses our mind. But does it touch our essence? Our task as Jews is to “divide up the land” using not only our head, but also our heart and our soul.

This implies dimensions beyond Reason. Qualities of dedication, self-sacrifice, love, yearning - which join together with sound common-sense and healthy reason. Thus we combine the two aspects of dividing up the land described in the Sedra: Reason, and the drawing of lots, beyond Reason³.

We see both of these qualities in our relationship with G-d as Jews. There are aspects of Judaism which we feel we understand; there are others which transcend Reason. Regarding all areas of Jewish teaching, we are commanded to study and explore further with our logical minds. Further, in the ups and downs of life we often have to combine precisely these two dimensions.

Through both these qualities together we discover the full sense of what it means to be a Jew. And we come a step closer to fulfilling our task to bring true humanity and spiritual civilization to the world.

1. Numbers 25:10-30:17. 2. See Rashi to Num.26:54. 3. Adapted from the Lubavitcher Rebbe's discourse *Ach BeGoral* 5735.

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SEDRA PINCHAS

LITTLE HERO

'Hey guys, wait for me!' Sara called out after her friends.

Every day after school all five of them would walk home together, for they all lived in the same area. As a result they were all very good friends and they often spent time with each other.

'We were waiting for five minutes for you, but you didn't come', Aviva, the oldest of the group, explained. 'I know, Mrs. Bloom held me up, she wanted me to carry a box for her'. She looked round at the group of four other girls; they were a friendly bunch, and together they often got up to mischief.

'We were just talking about Mrs. Bloom actually', Debbi spoke up. 'She is so mean to us and we decided that we were going to get her back for making us do that punishment'. She was referring to the time that Mrs. Bloom had caught them taking down some posters of the school rules the week before; they each had to write a 500-word essay as a punishment.

'Oh really?' Sara enquired with interest.

'Well, she *thinks* she can get back at her', Danielle commented rather cynically. 'Wait till you hear the idea!' They turned their eyes to Debbie, expectantly.

'You know that black carry-bag in which she keeps all her work?' They nodded their heads in affirmation. 'Well, this week, after she gives us the test, and collects up the exam scripts, we're going to take them from that bag and destroy them...'

'Yes, we think that's a great idea!' Aviva and the others said together. All except Sara. 'What do you people think you are doing?' she asked looking totally appalled, 'you can't do that kind of thing; it is just wrong!'

The others looked at her in open surprise. 'I thought we were always in things together-', Debbi began saying, but Sara interrupted, 'Not this! I don't care what you do, I'm not having anything to do with this, that's final'. 'Fine!' said Debbi scornfully, 'be that way!' and she and the others walked off leaving Sara behind in tears.

When Sara got home she told her older sister, Michelle, about what happened. 'Don't worry, Sara, you did the right thing to not take part', Michelle said supportively. 'Really?'

'Yes! You did exactly what Pinchas did in this week's Sedra. He saw that many people were doing wrong in a terrible way. So instead of just watching, which is what everyone else was doing, he went and did something about it. He was a real hero!'

'So are you saying I'm some kind of hero?' Sara asked. 'They say I'm just a spoil-sport.' 'You're a hero,' answered Michelle. 'They wanted to do something bad, and you were the only one that had the guts to stand up to them...' She patted Sara on the shoulder, '... my little sister hero'.

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