


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 2 July 2010 - 20 Tammuz 5770
Sedra Pinchas

CONNECTIONS

IN ONE WORD, CAN YOU STATE THE MAIN THEME OF LIFE? ONE ANSWER MIGHT BE: CONNECTIONS.

Connections between people: in friendship, in marriage, in families, in the community, in wider society, in humanity as a whole. Connections with departed souls, through the reciting of Kaddish and other good endeavours. Connections with G-d, through the Mitzvot of the Torah.

In fact, Chassidic teachings point out that the word Mitzva, usually translated ‘Command’, also means ‘Connection’¹. Further, through the Mitzvot, we also connect the world at large and all its various streams of energy, with the Divine Creator.

A large part of the Sedra² is devoted to a specific mode of connecting ourselves and the world with the Divine: the sacred service in the Temple.

Chassidic teachings explain that the soul of each person enters the world with a particular purpose: to make this finite and limited realm into a dwelling for the Infinite Divine. The first area of endeavour which the soul encounters is that of the physical life of the individual. To a great extent this is influenced by our animal appetites. The quest for food, territory and other appetites is a feature of our physical lives,



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117 GEORGE STREET, LONDON W1H 7HF
www.chabadresearch.org - cru@LubavitchUK.com

just as it characterises the behaviour of an animal. The Divine soul within the person therefore confronts a domain where there are animal forces which need to be controlled, tamed and, ultimately, transformed into holiness. When they are transformed in this way, the person truly makes his or her life into a 'dwelling' for the Divine.

Chassidic teachings inform us that the animal aspect of the individual has a sublime spiritual source. The service in the Temple, in which animals are offered on the Altar, connects the animal dimension of the person with this spiritual source. Further, as well as the animal offering there was also flour, olive oil and wine from the vegetable world, and salt from the mineral world. The offering, brought by a human being, connects all aspects of existence with the Divine. The melodies played and sung by the Levites during the service, linking with the song of the Angels, emphasise the sublime spirituality of the event³.

An offering in the Temple might be on behalf of one individual. But the offerings described in our Sedra are the 'Public' offerings which relate to the entire Jewish people. The Temple service described in the Sedra achieves a spiritual transformation within everyone, connecting the whole Jewish people, and the entire world, with G-d.

Before the Temple is rebuilt, we cannot actually bring these offerings. But our daily prayer is an equivalent. The Amidah Prayer, recited standing, facing towards the Temple in Jerusalem, corresponds to the daily public offering brought on the Altar.

Extracts from our Sedra are a prominent feature of the Prayer Book, especially in the Musaf (Additional Service) prayers for Shabbat and Festivals. Further, on Rosh Chodesh and every day of a Festival, the relevant section from this Sedra is read from the Torah Scroll. The recitation of the sacred text itself has the power to connect the person and the world with G-d.

Our connections with the Divine are the basis for all other connections: with our loved ones, in this world or beyond, with humanity. Connection is the central theme of life.

1. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Likkutei Torah*, Bechukotai, 45c. 2. Numbers 25:10-30:1. See chs. 28-24. 3. See *Likkutei Torah* on this Sedra, 77d.

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SEDRA PINCHAS

THE HOLY LAND

"Fasten your seat belts please" announced the captain of the plane "we are preparing for takeoff".

Michael and his family were going on a trip to Israel. It was his first time on a plane and he was really excited. "How long is the flight, Dad?" Michael asked. "I think about five and a half hours" answered his father.

After the stewardess gave Michael, his parents and his sister their kosher meals Michael finally put down the control piece for the games on the small video screen in front of him. As he began eating he suddenly thought of the question which had been bothering him for some time.

"Dad" said Michael, "what's so special about Israel?" "What a crazy question!" said his sister Rachel. "Why do you think we're going to Israel?"

"That's why I want to know," said Michael. "It's not a crazy question," said their father. "In fact, we can see a bit of an answer to it in this week's Sedra".

"Do you mean about how G-d tells Moses to apportion the Land of Israel to the different tribes?" asked Rachel.

"Yes, quite right!"

"So you mean to say that different tribes have different parts of Israel?" asked Michael.

“Tea? Coffee? Tea? Coffee?” said the stewardess. Each of the four members of the family chose something to drink. Michael asked for Sprite. Comfortably eating and drinking, the conversation continued.

“Yes, Michael” said his father “they divided the land among the Twelve Tribes, and the way they divided it was by a raffle”.

“Really, by a raffle like we have in school?” asked Michael, rather surprised.

“Daddy, I thought they divided the land so that a larger Tribe got a larger portion,” said Rachel. “You’re right, Rachel” answered their father. “The Land was divided up into different portions, and they drew lots to see which Tribe got which portion. That’s why I called it a raffle, because they drew lots. But at the same time, it turned out that the Tribe which had a greater population got a larger portion.”

“I see,” said Rachel. “Drawing lots meant that the decision was coming directly from Hashem. But at the same time, it made sense that a large portion of land should be given to a large tribe.”

“Yes,” said their father, “and that helps us understand something about Israel. It is a Land, a country, where people go to school, work, have fun and do ordinary things. But it is also the Holy Land, given by G-d to the Jewish people, all the way back from the time of Abraham. And somehow, it seems that everyone in the world is focused on the Holy Land of Israel. It is always in the news...”

Then the seat belt sign went on. “Oh no, I think there is a turbulence” said their mother from the seat in front. “Do your seat belts up, quickly!”

“Don’t worry,” said Michael, doing up his seat belt. “I can’t wait for Moshiach to come so that I could know which Tribe we are in, and then we will know which part of Israel is really ours...”

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