


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 13 June 2014 - 15 Sivan 5774
Sedra Shelach

A VISIT TO HEBRON

SHABBAT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL - **S**IN OUR IMAGINATION, both through time and also anywhere in the world. The focus is often on the expanse of desert between Egypt and Israel, but this week it is on the beautiful Land of Israel itself. The Sedra¹ tells us of the Twelve Spies who embarked on a long exploration of the Land. They spent nearly six weeks there, forty days in all. Most of the time they all travelled together. However, suddenly one of them divided off from the others, and set off on his own private excursion.

The Sages explain that this was Caleb, the brother-in-law of Moses, husband of Miriam. He went alone to the ancient city of Hebron². Why did he go there?

In Hebron are the graves of four pairs of great Tzaddikim (righteous people). Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah³. The grave of a Tzaddik is an auspicious place to pray, to ask G-d for help. Caleb felt that the other Spies with whom he was exploring Israel had a negative approach to the whole project of trying to enter the Holy Land. He went to the graves in Hebron in order to ask G-d for spiritual strength to be able to



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 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb ז"ל

stand up against his companions. The fact that he prayed at that holy place made his own prayers to G-d have greater power⁴. In addition, the Talmud tells us that he asked the souls of the Patriarchs to pray to G-d on his behalf⁵.

As we see further in the Sedra, in the end Caleb *was* able to speak out his own opinion, fearlessly. The other Spies, with the only exception of Joshua, the special disciple of Moses, were against entering the Land. Caleb insisted that there is nothing to fear: with Moses' leadership all will be achieved successfully⁶. Unfortunately, the Jewish people did not listen to him, and as a result had to spend forty years wandering in the desert.

Now, today each one of us is engaged in our own individual task to travel spiritually and metaphorically from Egypt to the Holy Land. This is the central goal in our daily lives. We too have a relationship with the Tzaddikim in Hebron. We mention several of them when we say the Amidah, the main section of our daily prayers. The Sages tell us that our own personal prayers pass through Hebron on the path towards the heavenly realms. In fact, all graves of Tzaddikim have a spiritual quality and are in a sense connected together, even though they may be outside the Holy Land.

For example, many people visit the grave of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York, whose 20th Yahrzeit will be on 3 Tammuz this year, 1st July. Our connection with our inspiring Sages and Tzaddikim through the ages aids us in our personal bond with G-d the Creator of the Universe.

We pray to be able to keep our focus on our unique Jewish direction in life. This includes keeping focused on our special connection with the Land of Israel, the country of Hebron, of Jerusalem and of the Jewish people, despite all those who might oppose us. Above all we pray for the genuine world peace which will dawn with the coming of the Messiah.

1. Numbers chs.13-15. 2. Numbers 13:22 states 'he came to Hebron'. See Rashi. 3. The tomb of Rachel, the other wife of Jacob, is on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. 4. See Rashi on 13:22, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 8 pp. 90-93. 5. Sotah 34b. 6. See Num.13:30.

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SEDRA SHELACH

TWO WAYS OF LOOKING

Debby leaned back against a moss covered rock, and pulled her peak cap lower over her eyes. "Anyway, I hate mountains" she muttered. The Cohen family were on a brief holiday in Wales during half-term. They had only been there a few hours when Debby started to complain. It wasn't that she was having a miserable time, it was just that...

Her mother had asked her to bring in the washing that was hanging outside the little cottage in the morning and she had forgotten and it had rained. Then, when the family had taken a little walk, she had slipped and gotten herself absolutely covered with mud. She was the only one who found it upsetting; everybody else thought that it was quite funny. Now she was stuck on top of this mountain, with nosy little sheep staring from afar, the sun was in her eyes and she was fed up.

Rina rolled her eyes. "Mummy, let's just leave her here. We can pick her up on the way down." Her brother Rafi walked over and sat down next to her on the big rock. "Debby" he started to say. Debby looked the other way.

"You remind me of something in this week's Sedra...." Rafi's voice trailed off. The rest of the family were sitting a little way off, eating cheese and cucumber sandwiches.

Debby looked at her brother. He continued "Basically the Jews were worried about what was going to happen when they entered the Land of Israel and they wanted to send spies ahead to check out the situation. So a representative from each tribe was chosen.

“When the spies came back from the Land of Israel, most of them had terrible things to say. They told the people ‘the bunches of grapes are so big, it takes a few people to carry one! The people are giants, we looked like ants in comparison, we will never be able to win a war with them. And it’s a dangerous land, people were dying wherever we went!’

These three things sounded absolutely shocking to the people and they lost faith in the promises of G-d about Israel. They wept; they did not want to hear from Caleb and Joshua, the only two spies who had positive things to say.

“Actually, you could see it all differently. Yes, the fruit was very big, but that was a blessing. The land was so fertile it produced enormous, delicious fruit. The people were giants, but G-d was on the Jew’s side. G-d is much more powerful than any human army, however powerful or strong. And thirdly, the people dying wherever the spies went was a miracle that G-d had performed for the spies’ benefit. The Canaanites were so busy burying their dead, that they did not notice the Jewish spies, and did not harm them. So you see, you can see it all differently...”

Debby looked at her muddy shoes, trying to work out what her brother meant.

“So basically you mean I could look at the mountain as being beautiful instead of tiring, and the sun as pleasantly warm instead of grumbling how much it is getting in my eyes”.

Her brother grinned and nodded. “Come, let’s go get some sandwiches before they are finished”.

The two siblings ran towards the others, Debby slipping in the mud and trying to find something good to think about it.

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