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הגה

שבת..... *for Friday night*..... קדש

Friday 19 June 2009 - 27 Sivan 5769
Sedra Shelach

PREPARING TO ENTER THE LAND

WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF ACTION. EVEN SO, OBVIOUSLY, THERE ARE TIMES when we have to stop and think. Action has more meaning and power when it is preceded by preparation - although sometimes in this process itself mistakes can be made.

The story of the Spies in the Sedra¹ presents an example of this concept: the need for preparation, and also the personal, individual and creative aspects of this. Beyond the specific historical event which took place over three thousand years ago, this account offers useful guidance for our lives in any age.

The Jewish people were about to enter the Land of Israel. In other words, they were about to undertake a major project, something central and crucial, which they were clearly commanded by G-d: it was the fulfilment of the entire course of the Exodus from Egypt. Before taking this major step they sent a group of twelve men into the Land, in order to investigate the situation.

The Sages stress that the sending of the Spies was not a command from G-d. It was something the Jewish people decided themselves²



Dedicated by Mrs Tzipora Sufrin ח' , to the memory and merit of her father k"z ihætk rgcus hfsrn ח' ח' v j "vrv

Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Sedra is telling us that there is a real need to pause, to think and to prepare before undertaking significant actions in our lives. These actions include the performance of everyday Commandments. 'Entering the Land of Israel' represents everything important in Judaism and in life. Before the action one needs to investigate and to reflect.

As in the case of sending the Spies, this reflection has a personal and individual quality. It is not 'commanded' to reflect. There are no simple instructions. One needs the power to use one's own mind and to think creatively in order to make the right kind of preparation. The person who can only follow rules will not be able to think clearly about all the issues.

Now, here there is a subtle balance. The rules do have to be followed. In fact this was the mistake of the Spies in the Sedra. In the course of their investigation they decided that there was no point in trying to fulfil G-d's command to go into the Land. It would be impossible. Hence, they said: give up.

This meant that in their case, the preparation took precisely the wrong turn. Instead of creatively investigating *how* to fulfil G-d's command, it became a discussion about *whether* to fulfil G-d's command.

The disastrous effect in their case was a forty year delay in entering the Land. Despite this, the Rebbe comments, the positive teaching remains for us.

Good actions require preparation, which itself needs a personal and creative dimension, combined with the faith that if G-d has commanded us to do it, we *can* do it and it is the right thing to do. The question is *how* to do it in the most effective and meaningful way.

Through this pause for reflection, keeping the balance between structure and creativity, each individual can enter his or her Promised Land, and ultimately help the rest of humanity to do so as well³.

1. Numbers chs.13-15. 2. See Rashi at the beginning of the Sedra, quoting the account of the sending of the Spies in Deuteronomy 1:22-23. 3. Based freely on *Likkutei Sichot* vol.13, pp.39-43.

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SEDRA SHELACH

YOUR SONG

Moshe picked up his recorder and played a few notes. He flipped over some pages on the music stand in front of him. Then he came to the page he wanted. It was one of the melodies the school band was going to be performing in their end-of-year recital. It was one of Moshe's favourite songs.

For the moment, Moshe had the music room to himself. He started fingering the notes on his recorder. During band practice he had to play the song the way the teacher wanted him to, but at home he had been experimenting with different ways to play the song. Now he started with a very soft note. He played very slowly and then faster and faster until he breathlessly ended the melody, holding one long note.

As he put the recorder down, Moshe heard clapping coming from the other side of the room. He turned to see his music teacher leaning against the door with a big smile on his face.

"That was wonderful, Moshe. I like the way you play that melody. It's so creative."

"Thank you, Mr. Fine. I've been practicing at home."

“You know, I was thinking, Moshe,” Mr. Fine continued, “that I’d like each of the band members to have a little more say in the way the band plays at our performance. Maybe each member can choose one song which will be played according to his approach. This could be your song.” Mr. Fine pointed to the music sheet in front of Moshe. “What do you think?”

“Wow. Do you really want us to suggest changes to the music arrangement, Mr. Fine?” Moshe couldn’t help but show how surprised he was.

“I’d like you all to feel like you are partners in this performance Moshe, not just that you are following what I tell you to do. It’s something I’ve been learning about in this week’s Sedra.”

“You’ve been learning about our music performance in this week’s Sedra?” Moshe was puzzled.

Mr. Fine laughed. “You see, Moshe, even G-d asks us to become partners with Him! In this week’s Sedra, G-d asks Moshe to decide if he should send spies into the land or not. It’s completely up to him. On the other hand, the Torah tells us how to live our lives in so many details. It tells us what to do and what not to do. But there are also parts of our lives where G-d *doesn’t* tell us what to do.”

“He wants us to be partners with Him?”

“Yes, Moshe. And I’d like you to tell me how you think we should play this song....”

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