

CHABAD

 RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 20 April 2012 - 28 Nisan 5772
 Sedra Shemini

THE NEXT STEP

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SEEM TO BE LEADING HUMANITY TO EVER HIGHER LEVELS. In recent years we have experienced a series of leaps and bounds, bringing totally new possibilities. The Torah teaches us about similar steps forward not in technology, but in spirituality, reaching towards higher levels of connection with the Divine. The goal of Creation is for our daily world to express the boundless infinity and holiness of G-d. This takes place in stages, in a pattern laid down in the past yet leading to the future.

Our Sedra¹ is called *Shemini*. This means the eighth, the eighth day of the inauguration of the Sanctuary. Let us try to understand what this means.

The Sanctuary was built by Moses and the Jewish people, about 3,300 years ago, at the foot of Mount Sinai. Why at Sinai? Because, at a unique moment in history, G-d had been revealed to the Jewish people at the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. This was a foretaste of the direction that they and ultimately the world should be taking: to achieve that revelation not only near a lonely mountain in the desert, but in the warmth and joy of everyday life. The laws given at Sinai provide the path of behaviour and ethos which leads towards that goal.

The Sanctuary expresses the intensity of the core of this ideal, the spiritual energy at the centre, in a kind of continuous re-enactment of the revelation at Sinai. Sinai was a unique moment of Time, and the Sanctuary is a unique Place. In the Sanctuary the Divine Presence was revealed, in a remarkable way, in the Holy of Holies and in the Divine fire on the sacred Altar.

The steps towards this were described in Sedra Tzav, read before Pesach, depicting the seven days² of the inauguration of the Sanctuary, transforming it from a beautiful human artefact of gold, silver, cedar wood and tapestry into a dwelling for the Holy.

Then comes our Sedra, and the eighth day, the day on which “G-d will be revealed to you”³. The eighth day signifies a step beyond, reaching an altogether higher level. The number Seven signifies the cycle of existence, like the seven days of the week. Eight is a step into a higher level of holiness.

Among the days of the week there is indeed a time of holiness: Shabbat, the seventh day. Yet Shabbat is also a taste of a *future* dimension, the time of the Messiah and the World to Come, which are signified by the number Eight. The Sages tell us that in the Temple there was a harp with seven strings; but in the time of the Messiah the harp will have *eight* strings.

The Sanctuary and the events in the Sedra might seem far away, thousands of years ago. Yet to an amazing extent the battles of the present have at their centre the spiritual focus of Jerusalem and the site of the Temple. This is the heart of our people and of our Land.

Our long epoch of exile, with all its wars and struggles, represents further varieties of the cycle of Seven, the cycle of ordinary existence, with its pains and joys. Yet our Prophets and Sages promise that at any moment, in response to our dedication, we will all be carried into the next stage, that of Eight, with the coming of the Messiah, when G-d will be revealed from the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. Then there will be true peace, for all humanity⁴.

1. Leviticus chapters 9-11. 2. Lev. Chapter 8. See verse 33. 3. See Lev. 9:4 .

4. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.3, pp.973-6.



SEDRA SHEMINI

KASHRUT

Rafi pushed the supermarket trolley down the aisle while his mother followed behind with her shopping list, taking things off the shelf. Yoni sat inside the trolley, enjoying the ride. Usually this was forbidden, but today the manager of the shop had said he could ride inside the trolley.

“Oh Mummy, can we get those - please?” Yoni suddenly called out, pointing to a colourful packet of biscuits. “No darling,” his mother answered, “We can't eat those, they're not kosher.”

“I don't understand, Mummy - what makes some things kosher and some things not? I thought biscuits were kosher - we always eat them,” Yoni wondered.

“I'm sure Rafi knows the answer to that question,” his mother said.

“Oh yes,” Rafi said eagerly. “That's just what we've been doing in school - about kosher animals. It's in this week's Sedra. You see, Jewish people are only allowed to eat

animals that chew the cud and have split hooves. That means we're not allowed to eat pigs, because although they have split hooves, they don't chew the cud."

"What does chew the cud mean?" asked Yoni. "Is it a kind of chocolate?"

"No, it's not chocolate!" laughed Rafi. "What is it, Mummy?"

"It means chewing their food again and again, as if they were thinking... Also, even the kosher animals have to be slaughtered in a special way. That's why we have to go to a special kosher butcher. And we have to be very careful that any food we eat, like biscuits or sweets or anything else, has only kosher ingredients. Those biscuits could have had pig fat inside, or other non-kosher things."

"I see. What about fish?" At that moment they were passing the fish counter. "Are all fish kosher?"

"No, we can only eat fish that have both fins and scales. See that fish - there are the fins and there you can see the scales, so that's kosher. But that one doesn't have scales, so it's not kosher. And all shellfish aren't kosher."

"So that means we have to make sure that all the food we buy doesn't have any non-kosher meat or fish in it," Yoni said.

"That's right. But look, Yoni, here's the kosher food section. All the food here is kosher - see, it says 'Kosher' on the packet, with a kosher emblem from the Beth Din. So here there are lots of things we can get."

"Oh good - so can we buy *those* biscuits?!"

***Torah teachings are holy –
please treat this page with care***