


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 5 April 2013 - 25 Nisan 5773
Sedra Shemini

RECOGNITIONS

IN OUR JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE WE HAVE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF EXPERIENCE. Some are happy and boisterous; some are more sombre; some are just dogged day-to-day getting through what has to be done; some are serene and moving; some are inspiring.

According to Jewish teaching, through all this, at every step of our lives, we have an important relationship with the Infinite, with G-d the Creator and inner Life of the Universe. Much of the time we may be completely unaware of this relationship. The joys or the worldly desperations of the moment hide it from us. At other times, there may be some kind of hint of recognition.

The Sedra¹ provides an intense and ecstatic example of recognition of G-d. The Jewish people, guided by Moses, had constructed the beautiful Sanctuary. It was a wonderful edifice manifesting many kinds of craftsmanship and artistry, expressed in gold, silver, copper, cedar wood and skilfully woven tapestries.

But the Sanctuary was intended to be more than that. The purpose of the Sanctuary was to be an abode for the Divine, a place where you could recognise G-d. Directed by Moses, there had been a seven day



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 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb ז"ל

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long ceremony of dedication of the Sanctuary, making it not just a work of art, but a Divine dwelling. Our Sedra starts on the eighth day (the name of the Sedra, 'Shemini' means 'eighth'). Moses told the people that now, at last, after all their preparation, "the Glory of G-d will be revealed to you"².

Offerings were brought at the altar. Then Aaron blessed the people with the Priestly Blessing. Moses and Aaron entered the Tent of the Sanctuary, came out and both blessed the people. At that point, suddenly, G-d's glory was revealed: a stream of fire emerged from the Tent of the Sanctuary and ignited the offering on the altar³.

At that moment, over three millennia ago, the Jewish people recognised G-d. They shouted and prostrated themselves before the Sanctuary. They did not think of trickery, or pyrotechnics, as some people might today, in our later, technological, secular and cynical age. For the Jewish people with Moses it was a moment of recognition of the Divine.

However, asks the Lubavitcher Rebbe, what about *us*? What about an epoch when we do not see this kind of revelation? When the world seems to conduct itself according to very sober and rational rules, without apparitions of Divine fire?

One possibility is that although we do not see the revelation, we can act as if we did see that reality. Our physical eyes and mind, well trained for assessing bank-statements and mobile-phone agreements, do not perceive G-d. But our souls do. Hence we should act accordingly, as if our conscious minds were also directly aware of the Divine, by dedicating ourselves to Jewish teaching and practice.

This can lead, suggests the Rebbe, to another possibility: when we do the right thing, guided by Jewish teaching, then sometimes, in some way, almost without our realising it, we may actually experience moments of awareness and recognition. The Shabbat or festival table, the birth of a baby, a visit to the West Wall of the Temple, a Jewish wedding – these can be moments of recognition of the Divine. Gentle, almost imperceptible. But real⁵.

1. Leviticus chs.9-11. 2. Lev. 9:6. 3. Lev.9:24. 4. II Chronicles 7:1. 5. Based freely on the Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 27 pp.63-65. See also *Tanya* I ch.16.

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SEDRA SHEMINI

PRETENDING TO BE HOLY

“Did you hear what the new girl in class five did?” Debbi’s friend Sara told her and Leah one day in the school playground.

“She’s in big trouble now - I heard she’s suspended!”

“Wow! What did she do?” Debbi asked.

Leah saw their teacher looking at them. She said loudly “I don’t think we should be talking badly about other people. It’s Lashon Hara - the evil tongue.”

“Okay,” the other two agreed, somewhat shamefaced. Out of the corner of her eye, Leah saw the teacher smile and nod approvingly.

That night Leah asked Debbi curiously “Did Sara tell you what that girl did? I heard she...”

Debbi looked at Leah in surprise. “I thought you didn’t want to talk bad about other people,” she said sharply.

Leah blushed. “Well, today in the playground Miss Cohen was listening, and I was hoping that she’ll consider me for her good behaviour award she gives every month. I didn’t want to spoil it by talking Lashon Hara. But I’d still like to know what the girl did!”

Debbi looked shocked. How could Leah behave like this? It was really horrid!

She said quietly “Leah, you know you’re acting a little bit like the pig. Remember what we learnt about pigs yesterday?”

Leah was taken aback. She didn’t want to be compared to a pig!

“Oh,” she said, “You mean when we were learning about the signs of a kosher animal - that they have to chew the cud and have split hooves.”

“Yes. But there was more to it than that. Do you remember what Mr Goldstein said about the pig - how it’s a big faker? It’s not kosher because it doesn’t chew the cud. However, it does have split hooves.

“The Sages tell us that when the pig lies down it sticks out its split hooves to try to deceive everyone into thinking it’s kosher. So the Torah especially warns us that it’s not a kosher animal.”

Leah blushed. “You’re right. I was acting a bit like that - pretending to behave really well in school and being my normal self at home. What do you think I should do?”

“Well,” said Debbi, “don’t start being bad in school just for the sake of being honest! I think we should both try to be just as good both at school and at home, when others are looking and when we are alone...”

“That nearly rhymes, Debbie” said Leah, smiling. “But it makes good sense.” Then after a pause, she added anxiously, “Still, you won’t tell Miss Cohen, will you....”

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