


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**  
 שבת..... *for Friday nights* ..... קדש  
**Friday 9 August 2013 - 3 Elul 5773**  
**Sedra Shofetim**

**THE ORCHARD**

**H**AVE YOU EVER SPENT SOME TIME WANDERING THROUGH AN ORCHARD? It can be a delightful experience. Especially if the orchard is one in which you can stretch out your hand and pluck a fragrant apple, or other delicious fruit, because the owner has given permission, or because the orchard belongs to you....

The Hebrew for orchard is Pardes, relating to the English word Paradise. For Jews the idea of an Orchard is something special.

The Midrash on our Sedra<sup>1</sup> speaks about an Orchard . The Sedra begins by telling the Jewish people they should appoint Judges. The Midrash<sup>2</sup>, exploring this theme, says there was once a King who had many children, but there was one little child whom he specially loved. This King also had a most beautiful orchard. The King decided to give the Orchard as a present to his little child. Thus, concludes the Midrash, our Sedra tells us to appoint Judges.

In the imagery of the Midrash, the King is G-d, the Jewish people are the little child; and the rules of the Torah are the beautiful Orchard.

Now comes an important question: what about the rest of humanity? They too are described in the Midrash as children of the King. Further, the Seven Noahide Laws, which the Torah itself



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imposes on all humanity, concern laws of justice and morality, including the demand to set up law courts and run a legal system. The Judges in our Sedra seem to express an aspect of Torah teaching which is universal, not just for the Jewish people.

Further, why are the Jewish people symbolized by a little child? In order to administer the legalities of Torah, to act as a Judge in a Law Court, for example, one has to be a mature person, with broad knowledge and experience. So what does the Midrash mean?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the Midrash wants us to broaden our concept of a 'Judge'. In Jewish teaching and life, a Judge is not only the key figure in a Law Court discussing a case of robbery, murder, a financial dispute or something similar.

The Jewish Judge of the Sedra includes the concept of a Sage and a scholar, exploring and expounding all the broad and varied teachings of the Torah. This dimension of Torah, the entire world of the Written and Oral Torah and all its varied explanations, can indeed be compared to an orchard which gives fruit, a tasty luxury, more than the staple diet which everyone needs, which is provided by the wheat or other grain growing in a field.

The 'field' is there for *all* the children of the King: Torah teachings about how to live a wholesome and morally healthy life, for every human being. But the special delight of study of the subtleties of Torah for its own sake is reserved for the Jewish people. Indeed, the special blessing which is recited on the Torah<sup>3</sup> thanks G-d for choosing the Jewish people and giving us His Torah. This means the Orchard, the special, intimate delight of Torah study.

And, finally, why is the Jewish people presented as a child? Because in order to enter the Orchard, we need the humility and simplicity of a child. Only then our questions and discussions themselves become part of the chain of the Torah<sup>4</sup>.

So, as the nights get longer, encouraging us<sup>5</sup> to attend evening study sessions exploring Torah teachings: welcome to the Orchard!

1. Deuteronomy 16:18 - 21 9. 2. Midrash Devarim Rabbah 5:6. 3. It is also at the beginning of the Morning Prayers, said by both men and women. 4. Based freely on *Likkutei Sichot* vo1.29 p.95 ff. 5. See Taanit 31a, Rashi sv *mikan ve'eylach*.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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*SEDRA SHOFETIM*

**BEING TOPS AND BEING HUMBLE**

Sammy waited in the wings. He had the main part in the play his day camp was putting on for the public, and now it was time for the show to start. He peeked through the curtains. Yes there were his parents, with Rachel on his mother's lap And there was Michael's big brother.

"Sammy, time to go on" whispered his camp leader. Sammy strode on majestically. his pointy beard stuck high in the air...

The show was over. Sammy gave a deep bow towards the audience, who were applauding vigorously.

"They are clapping ME!" he thought proudly, as the curtain closed, and he was surrounded by his friends and leaders congratulating him.

"You were amazing, Sam ...You did it! . Hey, can I shake your hand? Fantastic! " Everyone had something good to say about his performance.

On the way home Sammy could not stop talking about his performance His parents were giving his friend Rafi a ride Rafi had had a minor part but unfortunately he had forgotten some of his lines so he wasn't feeling very happy.

“Wasn’t it amazing when I came in and surprised the robbers - I could see everyone laughing away, they really enjoyed it. I think we should put on another performance - everyone will come when they hear how good I was. Dad, what did you think of that scene when I was reunited with my long lost brother? I didn’t think he was so good though; it spoilt my performance a bit.”

And so on. Rafi just looked more and more downcast.

Finally Sammy’s father said “Well Sammy, I think your performance was very good, but I can’t help thinking it’s a pity you’re not taking more to heart the lesson we can learn from this week’s Sedra about the king? Do you know what I’m talking about?”

In Sedra Shofetim, which we read this week, it talks about a king, and certain things the king has to do.

“I know!” exclaimed Rafi. We learnt about that this morning. A king can’t have too many horses, and he has to write a Torah Scroll and always carry it around with him“.

“That’s right! And do either of you know why the king has to have this Torah Scroll?”

At last, Sammy realised what his father was getting at.

“The king always has to remember that G-d is the true King, so that he shouldn’t be too proud of himself.”

“Right on Sammy! Whatever talents we have we shouldn’t be too proud. Everything comes from G-d. You can be tops at what you are doing - but at the same time, you can also be humble!”

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