


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 24 February 2012 - 1 Adar 5772
Sedra Terumah

WAKING UP

MODERN SCIENCE TENDS TO SUGGEST THAT THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE is in some way unified. Especially with the opening of intriguing fields of discovery such as quantum mechanics, everything in existence seems to be connected together in a truly remarkable way. This raises an interesting question, which is not usually treated by scientists but is discussed in Chassidic teachings. Is existence conscious?

What does this mean? Let us try to understand.

The difference between consciousness and unconsciousness can clearly be seen in a human being. The unconscious person is alive, breathing, with his or her heart pumping as it should and most of the organs functioning healthily. However, although everything in his body is interconnected, it does not actually express anything. The face of the unconscious person does not properly convey his or her character; the limbs are uncontrolled. The person achieves nothing, creates nothing, communicates nothing - except, possibly, pain or even anguish.

When this person regains consciousness there is suddenly a remarkable change. Now everything he or she does becomes an expression of their inner personality. There is no longer a blank

enigma when you look at his face. The person smiles at you at once and relates to you directly, from the heart and from the essence.

At this moment in time, is existence conscious? In terms of this image, one would say that it is not. The world seems in a state of chaos, of unease, disharmony. It is unified, in the way that modern physics describes, indeed, wondrously so. But it is not clearly expressing anything. It is like an unconscious body, acting without direction or purpose.

Through most of the history of the world, this has been the situation. However, the Sedra¹ tells us about a major step towards consciousness: the building of the Sanctuary, the prototype of the Temple. One can consider the Temple as functioning as a kind of 'mind' of the universe. In the deepest interior of the Temple or Sanctuary, in the Holy of Holies, there was the Golden Ark containing the sapphire Tablets of the Law, given by G-d on Sinai. On its lid were two golden cherubs with outstretched wings, and between these cherubs rested the Shechinah, the Divine Presence.

Here in the Holy of Holies is the focus of consciousness of all existence, which ultimately has the power to bring a sense of unity of purpose and direction to every detail of life.

The full realisation of this will be in the time of Moshiach, when the Temple will be rebuilt and the whole world will suddenly 'wake up' and express the harmony and joy of its inner essence and reality: the infinite Divine.

Instead of being unconscious and largely uncommunicative, as it is now, with the Temple in ruins, then everyone will be able to see clearly what life means. Whether they look at a leaf rustling in the wind or at pebbles scattered in the road, they will see the expression of goodness and holiness. Every human being will respond from the heart, by doing their utmost to keep G-d's laws, the 613 Commandments for the Jew, and the Seven Noachide Laws for the non-Jew.

It will be a time of joy, of peace, and of awareness of the Divine in every aspect of life².

1. Exodus 25:1-27:19. 2. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Tanya* I chs.51-53 and Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn's *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5700, pp.5-10.

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SEDRA TERUMAH

THE SANCTUARY

Donny glanced nervously at the teacher as he whispered urgently to Eli, sitting in the row behind him, 'Eli!'

Eli took his eyes off the maths text book they were studying. 'What?' he whispered back. 'I heard we are having a special treat in the Sedra lesson today! Gil told me...' 'Shhh..'

The maths lesson seemed to take forever for Donny. He couldn't wait to see the surprise!

Finally, the Sedra lesson arrived. Everyone waited impatiently as Mrs Coleman began the lesson. 'Why does everything interesting seem to take forever?' wondered Donny to himself.

'Today,' Mrs. Coleman began, 'as some of you may know, I have arranged something special for you'. Everyone waited quietly to hear what she was going to say. 'It isn't in here; we have to go to the lunchroom where it is waiting for us! Everyone, please stand up quietly and go single file to the lunch room...'

Everyone got up, went to the door, and walked quickly to the lunchroom. 'Just a clue as to what the surprise is,' Mrs. Coleman said as the group of children piled out of the door, 'it has something to do with the Sedra!'

As they entered the lunchroom Donny nudged Eli. 'Look!' Filling the entire top of a table was a scale model of the Sanctuary, the *Mishkan* built by the Jewish people in the desert and described in the Sedra.

This was the early form of the Temple. ‘Look at that!’ said Eli, ‘It’s just like the pictures Mrs. Coleman showed us!’

‘Yes!’ said Donny, ‘There is the Golden Menorah. Look, its seven lights are burning!’ As they peered closer they could see it was fitted with tiny light bulbs which gave a flickering flame-like effect. As well as the Menorah there was a small Golden Altar, which also had miniature flames flickering on it as if incense was being burned.

‘Can you smell incense?’”, asked Eli. They really could! A thin stream of real fragrant smoke somehow emerged from the electric simulated fire on the Golden Altar. Then in the dark ‘Holy of Holies’, partly covered by a roof, they could just glimpse the Golden Ark of the Covenant.

‘Beautiful’ exclaimed Donny. He had recently worked hard at home making a fleet of model planes and he could see that an enormous amount of work had gone into this Sanctuary.

‘Shhh!’ Mrs Coleman quietened down the class, ‘this is only part of it. This model was made in Israel by a computer firm. They have provided a DVD which gives you the chance to visit the Sanctuary in person, and also the Temple in Jerusalem. You can go into all the different places and see what is there. There is a DVD for each of you to use in break-time in the Computer Room or after school at home. As you make your journey, you collect points, which enable you to take part in an international competition. Look carefully at the model now, because that will help you gain points. The twenty top scorers worldwide will each get a free holiday in Jerusalem...’

Eli and Donny lined up to receive their DVDs, with the other pupils. Eli was thinking how great it would be to visit Jerusalem. Donny, who often visited Jerusalem with his family, was planning how to build a model Sanctuary himself at home, with simulated fire and real smoke of incense. And maybe also an MP3 file of the Levites singing and playing music...

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