


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 3 April 2009 - 9 Nisan 5769
Sedra Tzav - The Great Shabbat

APPRECIATION

A KEY ELEMENT IN EVERY RELATIONSHIP IS THE ABILITY TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION. This especially applies in our relationship with the Divine, thanking G-d for the infinite bounty that He bestows day by day - despite all the temporary problems and the dark patches.

One of the methods of expressing thanks to G-d is described in the Sedra¹. This is the Thanksgiving Offering, which an individual could bring to the Temple on any weekday. It was brought as expression of thanks by someone who survived any of four specific kinds of danger: a captive who was freed; a person who crossed the sea; one who traversed the desert, and someone who has recovered from an illness². During the offering of this sacrifice on the Altar in the Temple, the joyful Psalm 100 – “Song of Thanksgiving” - would be sung by the Levites. This is now part of the morning service on weekdays.

Together with the offering would be a number of Matzot (unleavened bread) and loaves of leavened bread. The minimum number of Matzot was three. The three Matzot of the Thanksgiving Offering link with the three Matzot at the Pesach Seder³. The Sages point out that on Pesach we went free from captivity in Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and traversed the desert. These are three of the four reasons for bringing a Thanksgiving Offering. So, although the Thanksgiving Offering was not actually offered in the Temple during Pesach because it included leavened bread⁴, it is spiritually represented by the three Matzot at the Seder. This emphasises the idea that the Seder and the entire Festival of Pesach are an exultant and exuberant expression of appreciation of G-d.

**Dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson g"l
 the Lubavitcher Rebbe, born 11 Nisan 5662 (1902)**

ONCE IN TWENTY EIGHT YEARS

Another form of appreciation and thanks to G-d takes place once every twenty eight years. This is the Blessing on the Sun, which will be recited by Jews round the world on the morning of Wednesday 8 April, the eve of Pesach.

The Talmud (Berachot 59b) states that there is a blessing to be recited when one sees the sun “at the beginning of its cycle”. The sun, moon and stars were brought into being on the fourth day of Creation, which is Wednesday. However, the Jewish day begins in the evening, so the actual moment of creation of the sun is seen as Tuesday evening, 6.00pm. This is understood as being at the spring equinox, when the arc of the sun is vertically above the equator, and day and night are equal.

Taking the solar year as $365\frac{1}{4}$ days, a year has 52 weeks plus $1\frac{1}{4}$ days. Every 28 years, when $28 \times 1\frac{1}{4} = 35$, ie: an exact number of weeks, the Jewish⁵ spring equinox is again on Tuesday evening. Hence every 28 years the sun at the spring equinox is in its original position in relation to the days of the week, as at the time of Creation. The blessing is recited the next morning, on Wednesday, ideally in the first quarter of the day, and otherwise till noon. If possible the blessing should be said with a gathering of people.

The text of the blessing is: **Baruch atah Ado-nai Elo-heinu melech ha-olom oseh ma’aseh bereishit.** ‘Blessed are You L-rd, our G-d, King of the Universe, who makes the work of Creation’. By Chabad custom one wears a new garment, or has a new fruit, and then one also says the blessing **Shehechyanu.** If the sun not visible at all, just before noon one says **Baruch atah oseh ma’aseh bereishit.**

1. Leviticus chs.6-8. See 7:12. 2. These four contingencies are mentioned in Psalm 107. 3. See Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Laws of Pesach sec.458 para.5, and *Likkutei Sichot*, vo1.12, pp.27--32. 4. Hence we do not say Psalm 100 in the Chol Hamoed Pesach morning prayers. 5. This is not the astronomical equinox because the length of the solar year is actually about 11 minutes less than $365\frac{1}{4}$ days. This leads to a considerable discrepancy over the millennia. Further, the Sages present the idea that Creation in Nisan was on the level of Thought; Creation as Action took place later in Tishrei (when we celebrate Rosh Hashanah). The moment of the Blessing on the Sun is therefore a *spiritual* moment, focusing on a supernal, spiritual reality, the source of our physical cosmos. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s talk on Acharon shel Pesach, 5713.

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SEDRA TZAV

BURNING FLAME

Granny Shapiro from had never been on an airplane. It was not that she had not wanted to ride one; it was just that when she was a young lady, airplanes were not around, and when she was older – well she was very afraid.

But now, with her granddaughter's wedding taking place in Israel, Mrs. Shapiro was about to embark on her very first flight. And she was very afraid. As she sat down in her aisle seat, she looked around at her surroundings. She noticed a nice young man sitting across the row from her.

"Excuse me", she turned to the man just as the plane took off and was gaining altitude. "I am so scared. This is my first time on a plane and I do not understand. How come the plane does not crash? How do we stay in the air? How does this all work?"

"Whoa – just calm down Mrs., there is no need to be afraid," said the man, smiling. "I have flown dozens of times and nothing has ever happened. You see, each plane is tested time and again before takeoff. They make sure that the engines are going to be working the entire time that the plane is in the air."

Mrs. Shapiro slightly loosened her grip on her chair. "Are you trying to tell me that the entire time that we are in the air, there are engines that are working to make this plane fly?"

"Absolutely, there is no need to be afraid."

“Ach, then it is just like the Jews,” commented Mrs. Shapiro.

“Excuse me?”

“Yes, you know what the Sanctuary is, or the Temple?” began Mrs. Shapiro.

“Of course, it is in Jerusalem. The West Wall is all that is left”.

“Well, let me tell, you, it is also in your heart. G-d says He will dwell in the heart of every Jew. So G-d is in our personal Sanctuary in the heart.”

“Yes madam,” said the young man. “That sounds nice. But what has that got to do with the engines of the plane?”

Mrs. Shapiro looked at the man approvingly. “You are a smart man. So let me tell you the answer right away. You see, the Sanctuary had an altar that was always lit. There was always a fire burning, just like your example of how the airplane always has its engines running. So Hashem tells the Jewish People that every Jew needs to have a fiery love for Hashem, just like the altar always has a fire burning.

“Oh, so when the Jews have a fiery love for G-d in their hearts, then He will dwell in them?” asked the young man.

“Exactly,” exclaimed Mrs. Shapiro. “You caught on right away. When we keep a fire burning in our hearts for Hashem, then Hashem comes and dwells inside us.”

“So then, if G-d is inside us, there no reason to be afraid of airplanes, is there Mrs. Shapiro?”

“Of course not! Who said I was afraid?” said Mrs. Shapiro. She sat back in her seat and relaxed, with a deep sigh. Soon they would be in Jerusalem.

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