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שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 3 August 2012 - 15 Menachem Av 5772
Sedra Va'etchanan

DOUBLE CONSOLATION

LIFE PRESENTS AN INTRIGUING INTERPLAY OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE, POWER and frailty, advance forward and retreat backwards. A mysterious truth is that both qualities are needed. It is not enough just to win outright. Hence, there is an important role for *consolation* - after having lost. And then there is a Jewish theme of 'double consolation', which is ultimately better than having won in the first place.

We see this process at work in the Sedra¹ which begins with Moses describing the way he pleaded with G-d to be allowed to enter the Holy Land. This request was refused. Instead it was Joshua who led the Jewish people into the Land of Canaan. His conquest was initially successful, but eventually the Jews were themselves conquered and sent into exile. The Sages tell us if Moses himself would have led us into Israel, as he pleaded, we would never have been overcome.

Hence it seems that we lost, and Moses lost. If G-d would have accepted his plea, everything would have been perfect. And now - look at what is happening, in Israel and everywhere else!

Well, this is where Jewish teaching gets more subtle. Let us see how.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that Moses leading the Jewish people into Israel would have been an expression of spiritual power

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‘from above’. Moses’ leadership represents direct revelation of G-d. By contrast Joshua’s leadership was an expression of human power ‘from below’, guided - of course - by G-d, but without the direct and open revelation which Moses experienced. Joshua was intrinsically weaker. Yet G-d wanted this weaker force, even though it would eventually be conquered. Because the goal is a combination of both.

If Moses’ request would have been granted, there would never have been the opportunity for the approach of Joshua, the attempt from below. On the other hand, now that Joshua’s attempt *has* taken place, the stage is set for a combination of efforts from ‘above’ and from ‘below’ which will give us full possession of the Land of Israel, from everyone’s point of view. This will be with the coming of the Messiah, with a true double consolation. We will inhabit the land of Israel with the power both of Moses and of Joshua, with a spiritual service both from ‘above’ and from ‘below’. No one will challenge our right to the Land, and our being there will have a profoundly positive effect on all humanity.

This relates to another feature of the Sedra, which always follows the Fast of the Ninth of Av. The Haftara portion for this Sedra begins a series of seven Haftara portions for the weeks before Rosh Hashana. They are called “The Seven Consolation Portions”, for after the Ninth of Av, signifying destruction and loss, each of these passages expresses consolation and rebirth.

The Haftara this week begins with the words “Be comforted, be comforted, My people”². The double expression implies the double consolation which will be with the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple: the Third Temple will be a double consolation for the two that were destroyed.

When the Messiah comes we will perceive deeper dimensions of history and life. Why was there exile and persecution? Why the Holocaust? Why are there tragic victims today? Why is the world filled with sorrow? Now we cannot answer. But ultimately there will be double consolation for all our woes of the past, and as deep and bitter as was our sorrow, so intense and true will be our joy³.

1. Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11. 2. Isaiah 40:1. 3. Based freely on points from the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Sefer HaSichot 5751* vol.2 pp.736-43.

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SEDRA VA'ETCHANAN

ANSWERS TO YOUR PRAYER

"Hey, Debbi. what's the matter?" Mr Korn looked at his eight year old daughter in some concern. She was sitting her head buried in her arms, sobbing

Tearstained eyes looked up at him

"Last week, (sob) you told me that if I want something I should pray for it (sob)" Debbi said miserably.

"So today, I broke the next door window and I prayed really hard that Miss Smythe wouldn't find out it was me, but she *did*. G-d didn't listen to me!"

If she would have looked at her father, she would have seen a distinct twinkle in his eyes. Nonetheless, he said seriously:

"But Debbi, have you considered that G-d did listen to you, and perhaps He thought that maybe it was better that Miss Smythe *should* find out it was you?". He could see his small daughter turning this thought over in her head.

"But I don't like it when someone tells me off", she said in a small voice.

"Aha, but if no-one ever told you off you might not realise when you did something wrong. For example you might think there is nothing wrong with playing ball near other people's windows and breaking them - as long as you don't

get found out! Then you might possibly grow up to be a selfish person. No doubt G-d doesn't like that idea."

"So. you mean that sometimes we pray for things but G-d doesn't give them to us because if He did it wouldn't be good for us?" Debbi asked thoughtfully.

"Exactly" her father said "In fact we have an example of that in this week's Sedra, Va'etchanan. G-d has told Moses that he can't enter the Holy Land, but still Moses prayed very hard asking to be allowed to, after all.

"Do you know what? G-d still did not let him go into the Land. It was not in G-d's plan to let Moses enter the Land of Israel at that time, so even though Moses, a really great person, prayed very hard, his prayer was answered 'No'."

Debbi's eyes opened wide. "So do you mean prayers are always answered - just sometimes 'yes' and sometimes 'no'?"

"Yes," said her father "You are quite right. The main thing is that through the praying we connect with G-d." Debbi thought about that. "*Fancy that!*" she thought: "*Through praying we connect with G-d!*"

She realised her father was saying something else, and she had not been listening.

He began again.

"By the way, Miss Smythe told me this evening she did not want to charge us for the window, because she was so grateful to you for rescuing her kitten when it got stuck up a tree last week. So maybe G-d answered 'yes' after all! Now say the Shema, and remember to thank G-d for looking after you... Goodnight!"

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