


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 7 October 2016 - 5 Tishrei 5777
 Sedra Vayelech -Yom Kippur

FROM THE HOLY OF HOLIES TO THE WORLD

THE SEDRA¹ TELLS US ABOUT THE COMPLETION OF THE FIRST full Scroll of the Torah. G-d transmitted to Moses the concluding passage of the Torah Scroll and he wrote it down. As always, it was a kind of Divine dictation. According to our Sages, Moses did not write things which he had thought up in his own head. However great and wise Moses was, the Torah is not his creation. His true greatness is that he was able to *receive* the Torah from G-d, and faithfully transmit it to the Jewish people.

The Sedra tells us that, having completed the Torah Scroll, Moses gave it to the Levites. They would look after it. The Scroll was placed in the Holy of Holies, together with the Golden Ark containing the Tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Now, there is a great difference between the Torah Scroll and the Tablets with the Ten Commandments. The Sages tell us that the Tablets were actually made of sapphire stone. The letters of the Ten Commandments were engraved on them in a wondrous way: the engraved letters went all the way through the stone². While this itself was mysterious, there was something even more remarkable about the Tablets and the Golden Ark in which they were kept.



In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin
 (Yenta bas Devora) ה"ע - 15 Tevet 5772
 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb 'שי

The Sages tell us that “the space of the Ark was beyond measure”³. The Ark was a kind of chest made of wood completely overlaid with gold. The Torah describes precisely how it should be made and what its measurements should be⁴. It was housed in the Holy of Holies. Yet somehow, it did not take up any room. If you took a measuring tape into the Holy of Holies and started measuring from the walls to the sides of the Ark, you would find that the Ark seemed to take up no space at all.

The Golden Ark and the Tablets of the Ten Commandments inside it were in a sense beyond this world. They were something miraculous, beyond reason and ordinary understanding.

By contrast, the Torah Scroll was a real, normal object, albeit a very sacred object. The Scroll written by Moses was just like the Torah Scroll in the synagogue today. This is certainly very holy, but it is also part of our everyday world.

The juxtaposition of the Tablets and the Torah Scroll in the Holy of Holies is telling us something about the nature of holiness. The goal is that the holy should illuminate and inspire the ordinary, daily world. In the Holy of Holies itself, the first step towards the ordinary world was the parchment Torah Scroll⁵.

Indeed, it is the Torah Scroll which has succeeded in carrying the holiness of Jewish teaching to us throughout the centuries, all over the globe.

This also relates to the time when we read this Sedra: the Shabbat before Yom Kippur (commencing Tuesday evening). Yom Kippur is like the Holy of Holies in our lives. Temporarily like angels, we do not eat. We read in the Yom Kippur Machzor (prayerbook) about the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies. In a sense, each one of us is like the High Priest going into the Holy of Holies in our own heart.

Yet, as in the case of the Holy of Holies in the Temple, the goal is that the sense of holiness of that special day should permeate and inspire us throughout the year.

1. Deuteronomy chapter 31. 2. The Sages point out that this was beyond nature, because some letters are circular such as Samech or final Mem. See Talmud Shabbat 104a. 3. Talmud Yoma 21a. 4. Exodus 25:10-16. 5. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.1.2, pp.407-8.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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YOM KIPPUR

ALL WILL BE FORGIVEN...

Yom Kippur, the holiest, most serious day of the year. Harry and his family were dressed at their very best, and the seriousness hung low in the air and they walked to the synagogue. Harry was still pretty full from the festive meal they had before the fast, and he didn't get why Mum wouldn't let him fast.

"You can fast until breakfast," she'd said. Like he did every day, Harry thought, annoyed.

"Look, Harry," Mum said. "I know you're upset about fasting, but to be honest, I wish I didn't have to fast. I'm a *terrible* faster. I feel sick at the very thought. Anyway," she added. "you're going to be able to fast in four years, when you're Bar Mitzvah. That's not *too* far away."

But four years is actually a very long time.

Dad took Harry's hand. "Let's talk about something other than fasting." They walked in silence for bit, as Dad thought of something to say.

"Have you apologised to your friends for anything you might've done to them this year? Then G-d will for sure give you a good year."

“If I didn’t apologise to my friends G-d wouldn’t give me a good year?”

“I’m sure He would, but He’s forgiving us for every bad thing that we’ve done. So we have to do our part. In our prayers on Yom Kippur we ask forgiveness from G-d. But if we did something which upset another person, we have to apologise to them directly...”

Harry thought for a moment. “Well, I didn’t really apologize to that Dutch boy Joost for making fun of his name. I mean, his name looks like juice but sounds like toast.”

“Well, you should certainly apologise if you made fun of his name. Did you actually say that to him about juice and toast?”

Harry was silent, which meant yes.

“I suggest maybe you should invite him over for a night or a Shabbat meal.”

Harry looked embarrassed. “I hardly know him.”

“Well, he’s probably coming to synagogue, right? Then you can go over to him and apologise for teasing him, and maybe you can start being friends.”

“I dunno,” Harry said doubtfully.

“Come on, you’ll find it’s worth it. Oh, here’s the synagogue.” An old, grand building stood before them, with the words “Kahal Adath Israel Benjamin Steiner Synagogue” engraved above the double doors.

Dad put his hand on Harry’s shoulder and gently steered him inside.

The Day of Atonement beckons. All will be forgiven...

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