


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 8 November 2013 - 5 Kislev 5774
Sedra Vayetze

JOINING WORLDS


THE DREAM OF THE LADDER IN OUR SEDRA¹ IS SOMETHING THAT HAS captivated people's imaginations for thousands of years. Jacob, the ancestor of the Jewish people, was on a journey going far away from home. The sun set, and he lay down and slept, dreaming of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven.

The basic perspective of Judaism is that 'earth' - meaning practical, physical life, in all its detail, and 'heaven', meaning spirituality and holiness, are closely connected.

In every area of activity we have the opportunity to express this connection. The practical details of Jewish law provide the guidance how to achieve this.

For example, the Zohar tells us that the ladder in Jacob's dream represents prayer. Like the ladder, prayer reaches from earth to heaven. It is the means for every individual person to connect with G-d.

The prayer service has different sections. In the morning service

	<p>In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ה'ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb ז"ל</p>
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there is the preliminary part of the prayers, then the Shema, then the Amida. These are different stages, similar to the rungs of a ladder. During the service the person is, so to speak, climbing higher and higher, reaching ever closer to G-d. The highest stage is the Amida prayer, in which one stands in the immediate presence of G-d, as in the throne room, and one speaks directly to Him.

Following this interpretation, the angels going up the ladder in Jacob's dream represent the words of the prayer. The words coming from our mouths and our hearts rise up to G-d. They carry with them a little bit of the radiance of our soul: our feelings of love, awe and dedication to the Divine.

The angels coming down the ladder are the “messengers” from G-d carrying Divine blessing to the person who is praying, to his or her family, to the community, to the Jewish people and the entire world.

After having the dream of the ladder Jacob made a declaration establishing the bond between another version of these two worlds. One world is that of his own personal material success. The other is *holiness*. How can these two be joined?

Jacob said to G-d, “of whatever You give me, I will give a tenth to You” (Gen. 28:22). By giving a proportion of his income to charity, Jacob was ensuring that all his wealth was tinged with holiness. Because every hundred pieces of silver he earned meant an extra ten pieces of silver would be used for a sacred purpose. Thus two worlds are joined: the material and the holy, like earth and heaven.

Through the ages Jews have tried to follow Jacob's example, giving a tenth of their income to charity. This practice has been a vital factor in the preservation of the Jewish ideal, learnt from Jacob's dream: to seek in every aspect of life, whether deep in prayer or engrossed at work in the office, to join earth and heaven.

.1.Genesis 28:10-32:3.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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SEDRA VAYETZE

GIVING A TENTH

Adam and Judy Levine walked their grandparents to their car. The elderly couple had driven down from Manchester to visit the children and their parents.

“And happy birthday to you, my darling Adam”. Adam blushed as his grandmother kissed him. She slipped a little envelope into his hand and the car drove away.

“Well,” Adam turned to his sister, “I guess it’s back to our homework.” His sister shrugged. “For you maybe, but I have choir practice. Bye.”

It was only later, when Adam was trying to gather together his files and text books, that he remembered the envelope that his grandmother had given him. “Gosh,” he exclaimed as he opened the card, “thirty pounds! That’s nice of them. Wow! I think I’ll be able to buy that new computer game that Rafi has. Or maybe I’ll get that new book, or maybe...”

The next day, as Adam prepared to leave school, his mind was still busy racing with ideas of what to buy with his birthday money. “Hey Rafi,” he called out to his friend; Rafi would give him good advice. As the two boys walked into the local game shop Rafi turned to his friend and asked, “by the way, Adam, did you give a tenth of your birthday money to charity?”

Adam looked at Rafi quizzically. “What are you talking about? I don't know what you mean.”

Rafi explained. “Remember, in school today, Mr Greenberg was talking about Jacob?” Adam had a vague memory of the class, but truthfully speaking, his mind had been focusing more on the game of football that had just ended in the previous gym lesson.

“What did he say about Jacob?” Adam asked.

“Well, Mr Greenberg was telling us how Jacob was travelling towards the home of his uncle Laban. On the way he lay down to sleep, and had a dream of a ladder, with angels going up and down”.

“Oh, yes, I remember that”, said Adam.

“Well, anyway, in the morning Jacob turned to G-d and promised that he would give Him a tenth of everything he would earn. Since then, Jews have given a tenth of their earnings to charity. That means for every pound you get, you give ten pence. Mr Greenberg said it helps us remember that really the money we get is from G-d.”

Adam thought of his grandmother. Was the envelope with thirty pounds from her or from G-d? Maybe G-d gave her the idea to give it to him...

Then he said aloud: “So a tenth of thirty would be three pounds. Maybe I can give it to the collection they are making in school to help fund a Jewish school in the Ukraine. And you can share in the Mitzva because it was your idea!”

The boys nodded at each other and turned to look at the game shelves. Adam had twenty seven pounds to spend.

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