


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש


Friday 20 March 2015 – eve of 1 Nisan 5775
Sedra Vayikra

SACRED MOMENTS

DO MODERN MAN AND WOMAN HAVE ANY WAY TO RELATE TO THE HOLY? Or is holiness, being close to G-d, something which eludes us because the pace of life is too fast, or because we are too materialistic, or because we are living in a secular society, or because times have changed...?

According to Rabbi Shneur Zalman¹, we can learn something about this from a phrase at the beginning of the Sedra²: “if a person wishes to offer, of you, an offering to G-d”. The wording is a bit strange, don’t you think? You would expect it to say “if a person of you wishes to bring an offering to G-d”. Rabbi Shneur Zalman shows that this is telling us an important idea, relevant to each of us in our own time.

Ostensibly this verse is speaking about a person who wishes to bring an offering to G-d, in the sense of an offering in the Temple. However, it is well known that each word of the Torah has several levels of meaning. The Hebrew word for “offer” can also be translated “draw near”. So Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains that this text is saying “if a person wishes to draw near to G-d, [bring] of you, an offering to G-d”.

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'
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What does this tell us about drawing near to G-d? How does a person achieve this? Rabbi Shneur Zalman says: you draw near by offering *yourself* to G-d.

Offering yourself? What does that mean, something mystical?

As explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe³, in fact we can all understand what that means. Offering yourself means that the person does not think solely about their own benefit, but gives of his or her time, energy, money, comfort - in order to help someone else.

This is something which is comprehensible, even in our high speed materialistic age. A person needs you. You give of yourself, generously. You are helping someone, and also through this generosity, you are coming closer to G-d.

Or take another scenario. There is a problem in a relationship. You and another person at work; or you and someone else in the family. What do you do? You surrender something of yourself. Through this you gain in the goal of peace and unity. In addition, you personally are coming closer to G-d.

Through little steps of offering oneself, we are able to partake of sacred moments, despite our busy modern age. It might even be suggested that our complex world gives us more opportunities for this than people had before, when life was conducted at a slower pace. There is much good to be done. The teaching of the Sedra gives us a path to advance forward.

FESTIVE DAYS

We are now at the beginning of the month of Nisan, described in the Torah as the first month of the Jewish year. This is the month when we were redeemed from Egypt, the beginning of the Jewish theme of Redemption. "In Nisan they were redeemed, and in Nisan they will again be redeemed", say the Sages⁴. The first Seder night of Pesach will be on Friday 3 April, and throughout the month there is a festive atmosphere. Enjoy!

1. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), founder of Chabad, author of Tanya and an updated version of the Code of Law. 2. Leviticus chs.1-5. See 1:2. 3. See the Rebbe's *Sichot Kodesh* 5752 p. 804. 4. Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a.

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SEDRA VAYIKRA

LOVED ONES

It was Friday night and the Levy family was sitting around the table in their dining room, a sparkling white cloth laid out on the table. The candles burned brightly, lighting up the room with their glow, and a feeling of peace and unity was in the air.

They had just brought in the soup course when eleven year old Yakov announced: "Listen everyone! I have a question on this week's Sedra and I want to see if anyone knows the answer."

His younger sister Tami grinned. "I love questions. Go for it. I want to see if I know the answer."

"Go ahead Yaakov," Mr. Levy said, smiling.

"Here goes," he said. "This week's Torah portion is called Vayikra which means 'and He called'. The Sedra starts like this: And He, meaning G-d, called Moses and G-d spoke to him." Yaakov paused and looked around the room again. "What seems strange about this sentence?"

"It repeats itself," the older brother Moshe said. "It says that G-d called Moses and then it says again that G-d spoke to him."

Yaakov's eyes lit up. "Exactly. So this is my question. Why does it repeat itself?"

"My teacher told me that no word in the Torah is extra, every one of them counts," Tami said. "So there must be a good reason."

“Of course there is one. Give me a minute to think.” Moshe cupped his chin in the palm of his hand and stared at the wall, thinking hard. Tami too, frowned, trying to figure out why the sentence repeated itself. Their parents smiled at the scene.

“So?” Yakov said after twenty seconds of silence. “Any suggestions?”

“I can’t think of an answer,” Moshe said regretfully. Tami shook her head as well.

“Rashi gives an answer,” said Mrs Levy.

Yakov nodded. “That’s right! What does he say?”

“You tell us, Yaakov,” said his mother.

“The double expression is an expression of love. G-d called to Moses first, before speaking to him, so as not to startle him, and then He spoke to him. It shows us that G-d loves Moses, and every Jew.”

“I heard that there is a kind of Moses inside each Jewish person,” said Tami. “It’s the real you”.

“Yes, I’m inside each of you”, said Moshe.

“Giving us indigestion” said Yakov, giggling.

Mrs Levy tried to get the discussion back to a serious note. “So what is our response,” she asked, “now we know that G-d loves each one of us?”

“To love Him in return”, said Tami. “And to show that love by doing good things, like Mitzvot.” said Moshe. “Like being together at the Shabbat table”, said Yakov. “And asking questions about the Sedra,” added Mr Levy.

“Yes!” said Mrs Levy. “And now, anyone in the mood for some chicken?”

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