

Lesson of Two Rebbes
G-d's Delightful Garden

We have gathered here to commemorate the Yartzeit of my father-in-law, our ultimate objective being to derive lessons from his lifetime and apply their meaning to our daily service of Hashem.

In view of the fact that he was a true Torah-Jew, to the point that he continuously risked his life for the sake of teaching and spreading Torah, it is obvious that in order to discover what the central part of his life was, we must look into his Torah-teachings. Since we stand on the day of his Yartzeit, it is only appropriate that we contemplate upon the Torah-work that he distributed just a few short days prior to his passing, to be studied on the day which he ultimately passed away. Of all the various portions of the discourse, we turn to its opening statement, which includes the content of the entire discourse in an abridged manner.

The discourse begins with the words: "*Bossi L'Gani* –

Lignuni" – "I have come to my garden – to my personal dwelling-place".

In other words: the opening statement of the discourse teaches that the world is referred to as G-d's garden where His holy Presence resides.

The lesson:

One must not be dejected by the downbeat appearance that the world bears. Externally, the world may appear to be a jungle full of untamed wild-beasts. This notion might weaken the person's efforts in working with the world, or at the very least – will have him carrying out his work dreadfully devoid of optimism.

It is precisely this belief that the opening words of the discourse seek to combat. The truth is that the world is G-d's garden! It remains our task only to remove the shell that conceals this element of the

world and reveal the truth. Merely bearing this point in mind allows us to carry out our job with enthusiasm.

Furthermore:

Our world is not compared to an ordinary field which produces grain, but to a garden; an orchard bearing fruit-trees. An orchard is superior to a field. This can be understood by the fact that the labor invested in the planting of an orchard greatly exceeds that of a field and the wait for an orchard to finally bear its fruit (at times – a period of many years) is far longer than the grain's short period from planting to harvest. Hence, the fruit of an orchard are far-more valuable.

The value of fruit will vary according to the stature of the owner of the orchard; in our instance – the Owner is G-d Almighty Himself. He refers to this world as His orchard. When looking from this perspective we can appreciate

the real treasure that lies hidden behind the shell of the world – waiting to be revealed.

This is the lesson that my father-in-law seeks to teach us with his last will and instruction – the final discourse he distributed:

Notwithstanding all the various hardships he endured throughout his lifetime (and they were many), he maintains that we need not feel dejected when tackling our mission in this world, for the world is in essence the ultimate good.

With the correct approach in mind, we are assured that we will eventually unearth the fruit that lie behind the façade of the world. The mere awareness that we stand so close to disclosing this treasure will motivate us to apply ourselves the task, ignoring all hardship, and reach the ultimate goal.



A Beautiful World
Reality Check

[Continuing the on the previous idea.]

The following question arises:

Jewish law dictates, as Maimonides rules in his Mishneh Torah, that when a non-Jew comes forward with a wish to convert to Judaism, we are instructed to warn him beforehand that the Jewish people are a tormented and crushed people. How is this compatible with the idea discussed earlier that the world is a pleasurable place - G-d's garden?

And if we are indeed a tormented people, how then does the Torah expect of us to serve G-d joyfully at every given moment?

This same paradox can also be found Maimonides' own words. In his Mishneh Torah he states that the Jews are a tormented people (as mentioned), yet in his work "Guide to the Perplexed" after a

lengthy discussion as how a Jew's outlook on the world must be (whether positive and optimistic or in a negative sense) - he concludes that one must look optimistically at the world and engage it with confidence. This he writes despite the fact that his own personal life was filled with unimaginable hardships and suffering!

To reconcile this apparent paradox, the discourse begins with the word "*Boss!*" - "I have come"; i.e. G-d has already brought Himself into this world and it remains up to us to reveal His Presence here.

When bearing in mind that with each additional Mitzvah we "invite" G-d Almighty Himself to reveal His Presence in our world - all the torment and hardship are deemed insignificant.

Consider the following example: One who manages to earn hundreds of thousands of gold-coins at once, yet at the

same time loses a single penny, will obviously pay no attention to the insignificant loss.

Then again, one who can only relate to a penny and has no appreciation for the true value of gold-coins will grieve the loss of his penny nonetheless.

In our instance: A non-Jew approaching to convert cannot

yet appreciate the closeness to G-d enjoyed by the Jewish people, it remains beyond the scope of his realm of comprehension, and he is therefore only left to see the torment and suffering. Whereas the Jew, appreciating the immense privilege of carrying out G-d's work here on earth, hardly pays any attention at all to the suffering we encounter.



Sicha 3

Plant It and They Will Come *Greater Investment, Greater return*

The verse quoted in the opening of the discourse uses the term “Gani” – “My garden”. Although the Midrash interprets it to mean “My personal dwelling”, the fact that the verse uses explicitly this term is precise and is certainly intended to teach us a lesson.

Of the basic differences between a garden and a place of dwelling: A dwelling will generally remain in a permanent state and will not change or grow, while a garden

will constantly be cultivated by its owner to continuously grow. In fact the fundamental characteristic of a garden is that it grows fruit! True, this entails years of hard labor, but that's what makes the fruit all the more pleasurable.

The lesson:

We must not suffice by restoring the world to its original state of perfection when G-d called the world His “Dwelling-place”; we must aspire to elevate the world to an even higher standing by

working with our surroundings and uplifting them – to grow as a garden.

We must also adopt this approach when dealing with our fellow man: Man is likened to a tree whom we are to assist in nurturing. When taking on this initiative, we need not focus only on an individual from whom we expect to see the fruit of our labor within a short period of time and with a small amount of effort (much a field produces its grain hastily and without the farmer investing much exertion). We are to invest our efforts even in

one who we cannot expect to see such immediate results (like when planting an orchard where the effort invested is tireless and the fruit are not seen until many years afterwards).

Even one who appears to be a “barren-tree” with seemingly no potential to ever bear fruit is worthy of your effort to eventually transform him into a fruit-bearing tree, generating pleasure to his surroundings.



Sicha 4

Protector of Her People *The Jewish Women's Unique Song*

This week is referred to as “*Shabbos Shira*” – the Shabbos of Song, as its Torah portion recounts the song of the Jewish people at the Red Sea, both the Song of Moses and the Jewish men, and as well as the Song of Miriam and all the women. Naturally, the Haftarah for this week is the “Song of Deborah.”

In the Prophets, however, there is another Song sung by a man: the Song of David, but it was not chosen as the Haftarah of this week. This is rather ironic, since the main event in this week's Torah Portion is the Song of Moses and the Jewish People – the Song of Miriam, on the other hand, is mentioned only in passing.

Would it not have been more appropriate to institute the recital of David's Song, the song of a man, for this week's Haftarah instead?

The explanation, along with the practical lesson we derive from it:

When circumstances resemble those of the time of Moses, then the main role is played by the Jewish man, but when circumstances resemble those of Deborah's time, then the main task rests upon the Jewish woman, while the man plays a secondary role.

Moses Song was composed while the Jews were still in the desert, and had yet to reach their ultimate "home" – the land of Israel. In Deborah's time, by contrast, the Jews were already settled in the Land of Israel.

These two scenarios are reflected in the overall mission of the Jewish People to transform this world into a dwelling place for G-d. When going out into the world, the Talmud tells us "It is man's nature to conquer, not a woman's." Torah declares: "The

beauty of the princess is inward" – when it comes to doing battle, her role is to support her husband, not to go to the outside. At the stage of "battle" (while the Jews were still in the outside world, before reaching "home"), the Song of Moses is primary, while Miriam's song only followed.

But once the home is established and an intruder comes along, seeking to infiltrate the home with non-Jewish influences, placing the integrity of the Jewish home at risk, the main effort rests upon Deborah – the Jewish woman.

Now we can understand the choice of this week's Haftarah:

During the six workdays, the primary focus is on working with the mundane world and "conquering it", so to speak. It is for this reason that parts of the Torah portion are studied throughout the week. The Song of Moses empowers the Jew to conquer the mundane world throughout the six workdays.

Then Shabbos arrives, and the focus turns inward on

building a strong Jewish home for the family. At that point, the woman's role takes the spotlight and therefore in the Haftarah - read on *Shabbos* - we read the Song of Deborah the Prophetess.

This is also the clear response to those who argue that the Jewish woman does not fill as prominent a role as

the man. The truth is that it depends in which area: Regarding "conquest" of the outside world, G-d created man for conquest, not woman. But when it comes to safeguarding the home, then the opposite is true: the woman is the mainstay and protector of the home and the man is only secondary to her.



Sicha 5

Siyum on Talmud *Tractate Midos*



Sicha 6

Protecting the Integrity of Our People *Part 1: A Matter of Jewish Law*



Sicha 7

Protecting the Integrity of Our People *Part 2: Courage to Come Clean*



Sicha 8

Fund for Torah Scholars *Supporting Full-Time Torah Study*



Sicha 9

Adopt a Brother *Welcoming the Jews of Georgia and Bukhara*

The Song of Moses at the Red Sea begins: “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.” The commentaries explain that the first to recognize G-d’s hand and declare “This is my G-d” were the children who were born in Egypt, whom G-d saved through miracles. (Out of fear of the Egyptians, the children were hidden in the field, where they were fed by Heaven with cakes made of honey and oil. Since G-d had sustained them in the field, they were first to recognize His hand at the Splitting of the Sea).

We’ve been speaking lately about the Jews who have recently emigrated from Georgia and Bukhara. These places lacked Yeshivos for hundreds of years; but G-d sent them emissaries to set them on

the path of Torah and Mitzvos, instructing them how to live as G-d commands and to educate their children and grandchildren – and to do so with great self-sacrifice, if and when necessary.

In order that they remain steadfast and strong in this lifestyle, with Torah as their life-source, it is imperative that their observant neighbors assist and guide them in the proper path.

It is a great privilege for all that will do so; it brings benefit to the benefactors themselves for as the Talmud says “The receiver does more for the giver, than the giver does for the receiver.”

Since there are many who will potentially get involved

with this, they must take care to ensure that “two cooks don’t spoil the broth” – so that they won’t each rely upon one-another, or each devote themselves to the same activity, which would result in a failing outcome.

Therefore, in order to ensure the utmost success, the activists should communicate amongst themselves so that each of their efforts will complement those of the rest, with each one assuming his individually-assigned role.

It would be best to implement a system of families “adopting” families: The Chasidic families in Kfar Chabad, or in other Chabad communities and other Torah-observant families in the Holy Land – should each adopt a new immigrant family to assist them and ease their transition, and facilitate their growth in Torah study and observance of Mitzvos.



Sicha 10

The Tenth Song *Dancing to Moshiach’s Tune*

