

The Shul
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Bo

6 Shevat, 5776

A Jungle or a Garden?

The two words 'jungle' and 'garden' create very different images in our minds. A jungle has a feeling of chaos and disarray. It is place where dangerous animals roam; an unsafe environment. A garden on the other hand is an array of beautiful flowers blossoming and delicious fruit trees. The more beautiful the garden the greater the feeling of calmness and serenity.

Sometimes our world reminds us of a jungle. Newspaper headlines are filled with stories of violence, immorality and political unrest. Riots, protests, economic instability seem to be the dominating forces in many parts of the globe. Like the jungle, there is an uneasy feeling of unrest and an uncertain future.

But strangely, in the book Song of Songs, King Solomon tells us that G-d calls this planet "my garden." How can such a chaotic world be G-d's garden?

In one of his public addresses, the Rebbe shared the following idea. The jungle is a potential garden. It just takes work and time. If the gardener invests effort to clear the ground, dig up the earth, soften the soil and plant the appropriate seeds, then over time he will witness a transformation and a beautiful garden of flowers and trees will emerge.

Our world may sometimes look like a jungle. But G-d chose it to be His garden and we are His gardeners. With effort and determination to engage in positive activity, goodness and moral behavior we are able to transform the chaos into serenity and the uncertainty into stability. The unrest and negativity around us is only superficial and transient. Every time we extend ourselves to engage in positive activity and every mitzva (commandment) that we do plants a seed which will eventually sprout into a strong tall tree of permanence and beauty.

Perhaps a good start is to distance ourselves from the media's negative pessimistic view and learn to adopt G-d's positive attitude. When you wake up in the morning, don't see the apparent jungle around you but learn to notice the beautiful garden you are about to create.

(by Rabbi Michael Gourarie from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

Jewish Survival and Exodus

The story of the Jewish people's suffering under Egyptian bondage reaches its climax in this week's Torah reading and in the beginning part of next week's Torah reading as well. The Torah does not really dwell on the history and political significance of this momentous event. It tells us of the plagues visited upon the Egyptians, of the stubbornness of Pharaoh and of the eventual capitulation of the Egyptians to the demands of Moshe.

However, it does not in any way inform us of the geopolitical consequences of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. Rather, the balance of the Torah readings of the year will concern itself almost exclusively with God's relationship and instructions to the Jewish people.

Even when other nations and personages are mentioned and described later in the Torah, this is done only regarding their direct relationship to the Jewish people. So, one can certainly wonder at this seemingly xenophobic exclusive type of narrative. The Jewish people have always been a very small percentage, not only of the world's population, but also of the population of the Middle East itself.

The Land of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people, is a very small country covering only a minute portion of the landmass of the vast Middle East. Why does the Torah, so to speak, ignore the rest of human society and geopolitical reality and concentrate only on the story of a small people who will inherit a very small slice of world territory? This question of Jewish exclusivity lies at the heart of a great deal of the internal and external debates regarding Israel and the Jewish people in today's world as well.

The story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt is the basis for the root concept of Judaism, that the Jewish people are mysteriously special and unique amongst all other peoples that inhabit the globe. As the Torah proclaims: "Has there been any other historic occurrence where one nation has been extracted from the midst of another nation?"

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Many peoples have experienced revolutions against oppressors and the achievement of national freedom. But the story of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt remains a singular and unique one. This is because the purpose for that exodus was not limited to achieving national freedom and personal comfort. Rather, as expressed so often by Moshe and written in the Torah itself, it was that this people should be a light unto the nations, a chosen people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation dedicated to the service of God.

It is because of this higher layer of freedom that the exodus from Egypt represents that the Jewish people have survived and prospered in spite of all odds and through all generations. Throughout the ages, many in the non-Jewish world have dealt with the issue of Jewish survival and its ultimate mystery. Judaism, Jewish values and ideals have penetrated and influenced all sections of humanity. One can say that it is the very exclusivity of the Torah narrative and of Jewish thought and lifestyle that carries with it the universality that the Jewish people have achieved. Among the many great paradoxes of the human story, this paradox of the exclusivity and universality of the Jewish people is primary.

(by Rabbi Berel Wein from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

This Day in Jewish History – Yud Shevat

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson assumes leadership (1951) – At a gathering of Chassidim marking the first anniversary of the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the late Rebbe's son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, delivered a Chassidic discourse (maamar) entitled Basi L'Gani ("I Came into My Garden"), signifying his formal acceptance of the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

(from www.chabad.org)

Community Information of Interest

January 16: The Last Years of the Old Order: Israel and the Jews 1962-1966. Lecture by Rabbi Dovid Katz. *The Diaspora at its Height (Nadir?): A Jewish Tour d'horizon 1962-66.* This lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m. and be held at the Congregation Shomrei Emunah.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Larry Ziffer	9 Tevet - Monday night/Tuesday	for mother	Rochel bas Meir Yehuda Leib HaKohen
Dovid & Atara Ziffer	9 Tevet - Monday night/Tuesday	for grandmother	Rochel bas Meir Yehuda Leib HaKohen
Liz Mayer	9 Tevet - Monday night/Tuesday	for father	Yekusiel Shmuel ben Michoel

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Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday, 1/15 — 5 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Candles — 4:49 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:50 p.m.

Shabbat, 1/16 — 6 Shevat

Shacharit — 8:40 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:50 a.m.
 Berachot Gemara Shiur — 4:05 p.m.
 Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 4:35 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 5:51 p.m.

Sunday, 1/17 — 7 Shevat

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:50 p.m.

Monday, 1/18 — 8 Shevat

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.

Tuesday, 1/19 — 9 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.

Wednesday, 1/20 — 10 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.

Thursday, 1/21 — 11 Shevat

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.
 Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.

Friday, 1/22 — 12 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Candles — 4:57 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.