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words
come *to*
life!

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Home for the
Wondering Jew™

THE CHICAGO TORAH NETWORK SHABBAT FAX[©]

A WEEKLY PRESENTATION OF JEWISH THOUGHT PUBLISHED IN MEMORY OF RAE DANIEL

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 16 FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2010 / 14 SH'VAT 5770 CANDLE LIGHTING: 4:41 P.M. SHABBAT ENDS: 5:53 (CHICAGO)

Hang in there - Shabbos is coming!

TORAH PORTION: B'SHALACH (EXODUS 13:17 - 17:16)

*"This week's CTN Shabbat Fax is sponsored anonymously
in honor of the sponsors' wedding anniversary."*

1. See, G-d has given you Shabbat. (16:29)

Shabbat. It's called a day of rest. But it's much more.

Jewish tradition has a powerful insight into the wording of this verse:

"See. G-d has given you Shabbat."

... Because what Shabbat is really about, is seeing.

About getting a perspective.

Because we know how it is. How life is hectic. There's so much going on.

Work. Play. And social obligations.

Phone calls. Texting. Facebook. And so much more.

And it's so easy to lose sight of what life is really about. Of what's really important.

And of who we really are.

Shabbat is a day we step back. Out of the rat race.

So we can think. And connect.

To our families. And friends.

To G-d.

And to ourselves.

- *Nathan Sharansky (former refusenik, now Chairman of the Jewish Agency) was once asked his opinion about a major issue in Israeli life*

His response? "I'll tell you the truth. I haven't given it enough thought yet. Life is so hectic that there's hardly any time to think."

And then he said something absolutely amazing.

"Sometimes I find myself missing my prison cell in the Soviet Union.

Because as bad as it was, there I had time to think."

... What an amazing insight into life from someone who went through so much.

It's interesting. Shabbat couldn't be more different than sitting alone in a prison cell.

A day of festive meals. Family. Friends. Singing. Studying. And schmoozing.

... Yet it has the power to give us the same thing.

The ability to think about life.

"KEEP THE TORAH UPON YOUR HEART"

"And these words, which I command, you today, shall be upon your heart ..."

It's part of the *Sh'ma*. The daily declaration of some of Judaism's most important teachings and commandments.

But there's something strange about the wording.

Shouldn't it say that 'these words shall be in your heart?' Meaning that we should take them to heart. Live by them.

Why, 'upon your heart'?

... It's a very important lesson.

Sure it would be great if we could just study Torah, take all the lessons to heart, and live by them.

To love G-d. Fear G-d. And observe all His commandments.

But it's not always that easy. And sometimes it's just not where we're at.

We're not ready to take them to heart.

And when that happens we figure, 'why bother studying right now?

I'm not ready to do it now anyway.'

... The Torah tells us study Torah anyway.

Keep the connection. Learn and explore all that Judaism has to offer.

If you're not ready to put the words in your heart, put them upon your heart.

And let them stay there.

Because things change. Life has its ups and downs.

And maybe right now I'm not open for it, but there will come a time when I will be.

It may be something great that happens in life. Like having children. Starting a family. And feeling that I need a source of values and tradition to give them.

Or maybe, G-d forbid, a loss that leaves me groping for answers and meaning.

One day I'll be ready for it. I'll be looking for guidance, values and lessons for life.

... One day my heart will be open.

And if we study Torah now, then the words of Torah will be there.

Ready to go right in.



Shabbat Shalom and have a great week!



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