

LAMPLIGHTER

14 Cheshvan
Vayera

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Vayeira, speaks about the greatness of our forefather Abraham, the very first Jew. Through Abraham's service, G-d's Name was made known throughout the world, and many people were brought to believe in Him.

The Torah states: "And Abraham planted an eishel [literally a grove] in Be'er Sheva, and called there in the name of G-d." The Torah specifically mentions Abraham's planting of the eishel, as this was considered a very great deed and a unique accomplishment.

The Midrash explains that an eishel is more than just a stand of trees under which wayfarers may find protection from the burning sun. An eishel is an inn, a place of lodging. Our Patriarch Abraham established his eishel in Be'er Sheva, in the heart of the desert, to cater to travelers in that inhospitable climate.

Did Abraham know these travelers personally? Of course not. He had no idea who might arrive. All he knew was that these strangers would no doubt be hungry, thirsty and tired from their trek across the desert. His motivation was to make their journey more pleasant and less taxing.

Abraham provided his guests with all kinds of amenities, not just bread and water to satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst. His visitors were offered meat, fine wines, fruit and a wide array of delicacies, as well as a place to sleep to rest from their travels.

His visitors' spiritual needs were also taken into consideration. Next to the inn that provided all their physical necessities, Abraham established a Sanhedrin, a court of law, so that wise men could answer the travellers' questions and find solutions to their personal and business problems.

This same attribute of kindness and justice is the birthright of every Jew, an inheritance from our forefather Abraham. And the Torah portion of Vayeira teaches us how we are supposed to fulfil the commandment of charity:

It isn't enough to provide a poor person with the basic requirements necessary to sustain life. We must offer him more than just the bare minimum, bringing him pleasure and enjoyment. And not only must his physical needs be met, but we must also try to help him resolve his spiritual struggles. This applies to every single Jew, even those we do not know personally, and constitutes the true meaning of the commandment of tzedaka (charity).

(Adapted from the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

100% Natural

By Yanki Tauber

"G-d revealed Himself to [Abraham] in the Plains of Mamre, as he sat in the doorway of his tent in the heat of the day" (Genesis 18:1).

Our sages note that, "It was the third day following his circumcision (described in the closing verses of the previous parshah) and G-d came to inquire after his health" (Talmud, Bava Metzia 86). But why did G-d wait three full days to visit the ailing Abraham? G-d's delay is even more puzzling in light of the fact that the natural healing process following circumcision takes three days (see Talmud and commentaries, Shabbat 134b). The Talmud (Nedarim 39b) also tells us that "one who visits a sick person removes 1/60th of his illness." If a human visit has such an effect, a divine visit would certainly have removed Abraham's illness entirely. Apparently, G-d waited until a primary benefit of visiting the sick was no longer operative!

But that exactly was the point. The chassidic masters explain that the purpose of a mitzvah is to transform and sanctify the physical world. Thus, a mitzvah performed by miraculous means is invalid. Let's say that it's Passover and I don't have any matzah, but I'm a holy man with the power to perform miracles. I wave my wand, and a stack of matzahs materializes on the table. Eating them would not fulfil the mitzvah of eating matzah on Passover, since the entire point of a mitzvah is to elevate the natural reality. For Abraham to have been miraculously cured of the natural results of the mitzvah of circumcision would have compromised the significance of his mitzvah.

In Abraham's case, we see this principle applied not only to the mitzvah itself, but to the entire swath. It cuts through time and space. After all, as long as Abraham fulfilled the mitzvah of circumcision by natural means, why should it matter if one minute later all natural effects of his action would be miraculously whisked away? But everything connected with a mitzvah--everything that enables it and everything that results from it--shares in its transformative power, and becomes holier and more G-dly in the process.

Therein lies an important lesson to each of us. Often we look at our lives and are disappointed by how little of it is directed towards a higher purpose. We would love to learn more, but can only spare a few minutes a day. We wish we could give more to charity, but are able to give just a small amount. In truth, however, every action extends backwards and forward in time and has a ripple effect in every area of our lives. We may have studied for just a few minutes, but a single new idea will affect our thinking throughout the day. We give a few dollars to charity, and the time and effort we expended to earn that money are "elevated" along with it. Like a small pebble cast into a pool, a single G-dly deed will reverberate through our life and infuse it with purpose and meaning.

Slice of LIFE

Zaidy Pinchas' Torah

By Chana Weisberg

This is the story of a very special Sefer Torah (Torah-Scroll), purchased shortly after the Second World War by my maternal zeide (grandfather), Rabbi Pinchas Sudak, when he and his family were on their dangerous trek escaping Communist Russia.

Unlike most Jews living under the Communist Soviet regime, Zeidy Pinchas did not really lack for anything. He had an underground knitting factory and was a relatively wealthy man. He also managed to sustain a Jewish, Torah-observant life for himself and his family. When he escaped from Russia in the summer of 1946, at the age of thirty-eight, it was not because of any material or even spiritual need. On the contrary, Zeidy Pinchas risked being shot at the border for trying to escape. Nor did he do it for the spiritual future of his children. He did it for his grandchildren.

My mother, Batsheva -- the oldest of Zeidy Pinchas' three children -- grew up in a home where commitment to Yiddishkeit was a way of life. As a young girl she would ride alone on a donkey for several miles through the desert to bring home the necessary wheat to be later grinded and prepared under exacting supervision for the Passover matzah. That was her task, because as a child, she was not as subject to questioning by the authorities.

Nor was it an unusual sight in my mother's home for music books to be swiftly spread over the piano as soon as a stranger entered their home, hiding the religious books nesting beneath. In this way, my mother was able to pursue her Jewish studies with her "piano teacher."

Zeidy Pinchas recognized that his children, raised to fight for the preservation of their faith, would gain inordinate strength and faith to persevere

in following the path of their tradition -- no matter what the circumstances. "I am not leaving Russia for my own children," he said. "They will always know that they are Jews and will remain loyal to their faith. But what will become of my children's children? That I do not know. It is for them that I must leave the clutches of this regime."

Fortunate to have crossed the Russian border alive, the Sudak family found themselves in Cracow with a group of forty-six other Lubavitcher Chassidim escaping the Stalinist dictatorship, with their final destination unknown. Included in this group was the Lubavitcher Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson.

There, in Cracow, Zaidy Pinchas met a Polish Jew who was offering a Torah scroll for sale, and resolved immediately to purchase the Torah. He then had a heavy wooden box fashioned to carry and protect it.

"Wherever this journey may lead us," said Zaidy Pinchas, "how can so large a group of Jews travel without a Sefer Torah in their midst?"

It was time for the group to move onwards, walking through Steczen, to cross the Czechoslovakian border on their way to Prague. They left late at night. Each could carry only their most basic necessities; all other worldly possessions were abandoned. Zeidy Pinchas had diamonds sewn into the soles of his family's shoes.

In the blackness of the night, Zeidy Pinchas and Batya Sudak and their three children, each grasping a coarse rope to keep them together, trekked silently through a dense forest. Zeidy Pinchas clutched his beloved Sefer Torah as he marched behind Bubby Batya, who carried their youngest child, Bracha. As time progressed, Bubby Batya grew weary and motioned to her husband that she could no longer carry Bracha.

With tears in his eyes, Zaidy Pinchas took his Sefer Torah out of its wooden case, and silently mouthed an apology. "My priceless Torah, you know that it is for you that I have left Russia. I would not have left to an unknown future for myself. Nor for my children. I am fleeing to ensure that my children's children will know you and live

with you. Forgive me, dear Torah, for betraying you now. It is either you or my child. I part with you now, so that my children and children's children should live a life where you are a real and meaningful part."

Zaidy embraced the Torah for the last time and gently laid it, in its case, under a tree. He lifted his young child in his arms and journeyed forward.

Eventually, Zaidy Pinchas and his family reached the free shores of Israel. His children, Batsheva, Nachman and Bracha, each grew up to become Rabbis or Rebbetzins serving their respective communities and promulgating faith in Torah.

A few years ago, my mother, Rebbetzin Batsheva Schochet, was visiting in California where she was invited to the home of Mrs. Faigy Estulin, a friend of my sister's. Faigy was describing her own father's exodus from Russia -- several weeks after my grandparents' escape -- and attributed his longevity and robust health to an incident that happened over more than 50 years ago.

He and his wife were escaping Russia on a dark night. Along the way, their five year old daughter wandered away from them and was momentarily lost. Frantically, the parents searched for her, crawling on their hands and knees through the forest.

Suddenly Rabbi Gurevitch felt a hard surface. Upon further investigation, he opened a wooden box to discover a Sefer Torah. Next to the wooden box sat his young child. Kissing both passionately, he took the Torah from its box, unravelled it and wrapped it around his body, tying it with his gartel (prayer belt). Eventually, that Torah scroll made its way to its current home, in a shul in New York City.

Mrs. Estulin ended by crediting her grandfather's long and healthy life to the merit of this significant act.

Concluding her story, she looked up at my mother and couldn't fathom why my mother's face had gone completely ashen and tears were streaming from her eyes.

The legacy of Zaidy's precious Sefer Torah had come full circle.

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ISSUE 1008

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The main goal in creating Adam was to bring forth King David and his descendants, the most important one being Moshiach.

This is hinted to in the acrostic for the Hebrew word "Adam": "alef" stands for Adam, "dalet" for David and "mem" for Moshiach. The principal purpose of creation was for the generation of Moshiach. (*Midbar Kodesh, the Belzer Rebbe*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Intermarriage: Not Only a Personal Matter

For a Jewish person to marry a non-Jew is one of the greatest calamities, and not only from the religious viewpoint. Nor is it entirely a personal matter affecting the person involved, for it concerns the whole Jewish people, and there are few transgressions which affect the whole Jewish people as an intermarriage, G-d forbid. It is a transgression also against one's elementary honesty, for it is exceedingly unfair to the other party, from the viewpoint of each, and it is also unfair to the respective good friends, who wish to see their near and dear one lastingly happy, and not otherwise.

It has often been pointed out that marriage in general, even between two persons of similar backgrounds, entails a certain risk as to eventual adjustment and compatibility. Even if the two had been acquainted for some time, it is not a sure criterion as to what the relationship will be when the acquaintance is turned into a marriage, where the two will be thrown together under one roof for 24 hours a day, day after day, and week after week, etc. But when the backgrounds are entirely different, and where this difference dates back for scores of generations, and is consequently of a deep and lasting quality--the chances of adjustment and compatibility are so negligible as to be non-existent. Especially, where the difference is of a definitely antagonistic and hostile nature, as has been evidenced by the pogroms and persecutions of Jews in every land where Jews sojourned in the past 2,000 years. Moreover, modern science has recognized the hereditary nature of character traits, particularly deep-rooted ones over generations.

Thus, if one is honest--in the plain sense of the word--one would not wish to drag another party into an alliance which is doomed from the start. And if one truly loves the other, and not in a selfish way, one would certainly not wish to involve the other in such a misfortune, and would readily forgo the prospect of immediate and short-lived pleasure in order to spare the other the inevitable result. Otherwise, the professed love is nothing but selfish and egoistic.

Should there be children from such a union, there is the added consideration of the tragedy of the children having to witness constant friction, and worse, between their parents, which is bound to follow in the natural course of events.

There is no need to elaborate on this very painful subject.

Needless to say, I am aware of the "argument" that the percentage of intermarriage is a considerable one and many of them seem to last. But it is surely unnecessary to point out that married people try to put on the appearance of a "happy" marriage, being ashamed to confess failure, and to reveal the friction and indignities, etc., suffered at home. In an intermarriage the sense of shame is even greater, knowing that many friends had warned them against it, and they had maintained that their marriage would be different. But as a matter of fact and statistics, the percentage of separations and divorces are incomparably greater in intermarriages than in non-intermarriages.

In the vast majority of cases, those who enter into an intermarriage are emotionally involved. Were they themselves to be asked about others contemplating such a step, they would counsel against taking a step which would commit the two people to possible lifelong misery. Indeed, they would consider it irresponsible to take such a step in an emotional state of mind.

As a postscript I wish to add, that according to Jewish law the child goes after the mother. Therefore, where the mother is Jewish, even if the father is not, the child is Jewish and duty-bound to fulfil all the mitzvot, etc. Further details may be obtained from any Orthodox rabbi.

CUSTOMS CORNER

Reasons for covering the challah on Shabbat:

a. When the Jews were in the desert they subsisted on the manna that fell from heaven every day, except for Shabbat: the challah on Shabbat commemorates that manna. (On Friday a double portion came down. The two challahs on our Shabbat table celebrate this miracle.) The manna was encased between layers of dew that preserved its freshness, so we envelop the challahs between the table cloth (or cutting board) and the challah cover.

b. In Talmudic times, meals were served to each person individually on a three-legged tray, which was brought out by waiters. On Shabbat, these table-trays were brought out after the Kiddush, as the meal was served in honour of Shabbat, which the Kiddush had just sanctified. Today, we set the table with the challah on it, but cover it until the time when it would have been brought in. This delivers the message that the meal only begins after and because of, the Kiddush.

c. Another reason why we cover the bread while we recite the Kiddush is related to the order in which we say blessings on food.

In the Torah the land of Israel is praised with seven foods, listed in the following order: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. We prioritise blessing them and eating them, in the order in which they are mentioned. Grain is before grapes, so bread should be eaten before wine.

We therefore cover the bread so that it not be "shamed" by the fact that we drink the Kiddush wine before we partake of the challah.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Thursday we will be commemorating the birthday of the fourth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Ber, who was known as the Rebbe Rashab. It is said that on a person's birthday, the "spiritual source of the soul shines powerfully." Therefore, it is important to understand what the central point of the Rebbe Rashab's leadership was, and how it differed from the other Chabad Rebbes.

The Rebbe explains how each of the Rebbes was characterized by a particular dimension which reflected his individual nature.

Chabad Chasidut (Chabad Chasidic philosophy) is characterized by the ability to make the esoteric teachings of the Torah, which remained hidden from the majority of the Jewish community, accessible to every single Jew. The Rebbe Rashab was able to bring the teachings of Chabad Chasidut to an even more comprehensible level than his predecessors.

The Rebbe Rashab's teachings put a great emphasis on summarizing subject matter so that it could be more easily implemented into daily life. For this he is referred to by many as the "Rambam [Maimonides] of Chasidut," because he summarized Chasidut in the same way the Rambam summarized the Oral Law, making it comprehensible and giving it clear directions for every aspect of our conduct. The lessons of the Rebbe Rashab are easily understood and are concluded with directions for the practical application of those lessons.

In 1897 the Rebbe Rashab established a yeshiva, Tomchei Tmimim, and he was personally involved in every aspect of it, designing the curriculum, and asking for a detailed progress report on each student. He strove to raise both their standard of learning and their standard of behaviour. It was a great honour to be accepted into the yeshiva, and its students were highly respected by the community.

The Rebbe Rashab published many of his teachings, which deal with improving one's character; how to prepare for prayer and the importance of prayer; and of studying Chasidut. May we all benefit from his teachings.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



The Master of Song

Told by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch

In the early years of his leadership, the founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, would expound his teachings in the form of short homiletic sayings.

One of these early short discourses was based on the Talmudic passage, "All bearers of collars go out with a collar and are drawn by a collar". The Talmud is discussing the laws of Shabbat, on which it is forbidden for a Jew to allow his animal to carry anything out from a private domain to a public domain; however, it is permitted to allow one's animal to go out with its collar around its neck, and even to draw it along by means of its collar. But the Hebrew word the Talmud uses for "collar," shir, also means "song." Thus Rabbi Schneur Zalman interpreted the Talmud's words to say that, "The masters of song -- the souls and the angels -- go out in song and are drawn by song. Their 'going out' in yearning for G-d, and their drawing back into their own existence in order to fulfill the purpose of their creation, are by means of song and melody."

This was in the early years of the Chassidic movement, when the opposition to Chassidism by many mainstream rabbis and scholars was still quite strong. This latest teaching by Rabbi Schneur Zalman, which quickly spread among his followers throughout White Russia and Lithuania, elicited a strong reaction from his opponents, who complained that the Chassidim have, yet again, employed homiletic wordplay and outright distortion of the holy Torah to support innovations to Jewish tradition.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman's words caused a particular uproar in the city of Shklov. Shklov was a town full of Torah scholars and a bastion of opposition to Chassidism. There were Chassidim in Shklov, but they were a small and much persecuted minority, and this latest controversy inflamed the ardour of their detractors. While the Chassidim of Shklov did not doubt the truth of their Rebbe's words, they were hard-pressed to defend them in the face of the outrage and ridicule this latest saying had evoked.

A while later, Rabbi Schneur Zalman passed through Shklov on one of his journeys. Among those who visited the Rebbe at his lodgings were many of the town's greatest scholars, who presented to him the questions and difficulties they had accumulated in the course of their studies. For even the Rebbe's most vehement opponents acknowledged his genius and greatness in Torah. The Rebbe listened attentively to all the questions put to him but did not reply to any of them. However, when the scholars of Shklov invited him to lecture in the central study hall, the Rebbe accepted the invitation.

When Rabbi Schneur Zalman ascended the podium at the central study hall of Shklov, the large room was filled to overflowing. Virtually all the town's scholars were there. Some had come to hear the Rebbe speak, but most were there for what was to follow the lecture, when the town's scholars would have the opportunity to present their questions to the visiting lecturer. All had heard of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's strange behaviour earlier that day, when all the questions put to him were met with silence. Many hoped to humiliate the Chassidic leader by publicly demonstrating his inability to answer their

questions. In the background, of course, loomed the recent controversy over the Rebbe's unconventional interpretation of the Talmudic passage about animals' collars on Shabbat.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman began to speak. "All those of shir," he quoted, "go out with shir and are drawn by shir." "The masters of song," explained the Rebbe, "the souls and the angels, all go out in song and are drawn by song. Their yearning for G-d, and their drawing back to fulfill the purpose of their creation, are by means of song and melody." And then the Rebbe began to sing.

The room fell utterly silent. All were caught in the thrall of the melody, a melody of yearning and resolve, of ascent and retreat. As the Rebbe sang, every man in the room felt himself transported from the crowded hall to the innermost recesses of his own mind, where a man is alone with the confusion of his thoughts, alone with his questions and doubts. Only the confusion was gradually being dispelled, the doubts resolved. By the time the Rebbe finished singing, all the questions in the room had been answered.

Among those present in the Shklov study hall that day was one of the town's foremost prodigies, Rabbi Yosef Kolbo. Many years later, Rabbi Yosef related his experience to the Chassid, Reb Avraham Sheines. "I came to the study hall that day with four extremely difficult questions -- questions I had put forth to the leading scholars of Vilna and Slutzk, to no avail. When the Rebbe began to sing, the knots in my mind began to unravel, the concepts began to crystallize and fall into place. One by one, my questions fell away. When the Rebbe finished singing, everything was clear. I felt like a newly-born child beholding the world for the very first time.

"That was also the day I became a Chassid," concluded Rabbi Yosef.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And he sat at the opening of the tent in the heat of the day (Gen. 18:1)

This is the mark of the truly righteous individual, who always sees himself "at the opening," i.e., the very beginning, along the path of righteousness. Considering himself still "outside" and far from spiritual perfection, he worries that his deeds haven't accomplished much... (Toldot Yaakov Yosef)

And they said, So do as you have said (Gen. 18:5)

The way of the righteous is to say little, yet do much. The angels knew that Abraham was a tzadik (righteous), and that he would go out of his way - above and beyond what he had already offered - to make them feel at ease. They therefore asked him to "do as he had said" with regard to their comfort, and no more. (Torat Moshe)

For I know him...that he will do justice and judgment (Gen. 18:19)

What is the connection between justice and judgment? Whenever G-d gives a person an abundance of blessings, he must ask himself: Do I really deserve so much goodness? Why me and not someone else? This "self-judgment" will then prompt him to give tzedaka (charity) in a generous and unstinting manner. (Sefer HaMaamarim)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 11 NOVEMBER 2011



BEGINS		ENDS
7:46	MELBOURNE	8:49
7:36	ADELAIDE	8:36
5:55	BRISBANE	6:51
6:32	DARWIN	7:24
5:54	GOLD COAST	6:51
6:31	PERTH	7:30
7:13	SYDNEY	8:13
7:25	CANBERRA	8:25
7:46	LAUNCESTON	8:52
7:45	AUCKLAND	8:47
7:55	WELLINGTON	9:00
7:49	HOBART	8:56
6:54	BYRON BAY	7:51

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

**PARSHAS VAYERA
15 CHESHVAN • 12 NOVEMBER**

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING: MINCHA: KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	7:46 PM 7:55 PM 8:30 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS: LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: MINCHA: SHABBOS ENDS:	10:00 AM 9:33 AM 7:45 PM 8:49 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI: MINCHA: MAARIV:	9:15 AM 7:55 PM 8:45 PM