

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

Our Sages explain the verse in this week's Torah portion, Vayeira, "Avraham was old and well advanced in age," to mean that Avraham utilized every day of his life in the service of G-d. Not one day of his life span on earth was deficient.

We are also told, however, that Avraham did not recognize the Creator until the age of three. (Other statements in the Midrash cite different ages, 40 and 48 respectively, at which Abraham recognized the One true G-d.) How then can our Sages have said that all of Avraham's days were spent in Divine service, when there was obviously some length of time (depending on the interpretation) before he came to worship G-d properly?

In truth, the same question can be asked of each and every individual Jew. The obligation to observe the Torah's commandments begins only at the age of 13, or 12 for girls. Does this mean that before the age of Bar of Bat Mitzva, when a child is first learning about Torah and Mitzvot, that his service of G-d is somehow imperfect?

Not at all. A child's formative years of Jewish education are not only considered not deficient in any way, but are an integral part of the preparation necessary for living a full adult life. When a child is taught how to observe Torah and Mitzvot, his childhood is being utilized to its fullest potential. Whenever the Torah commands us to perform a certain action, whatever preparations we need to make ahead of time are also considered part of the Mitzvah.

One cannot make the argument that the first 12 or 13 years of a Jew's life are spiritually lacking, simply because G-d exempts him from punishment. Rather, it is G-d's will that this period of time be spent learning how to observe Torah and Mitzvot most fully in later life.

The same principle can be applied to our ancestor Abraham. True, he only came to recognize G-d at a certain chronological age, but all of the time leading up to this was spent in the pursuit of truth, as Maimonides writes, "His mind began to range...until he perceived the path of truth." Avraham's early years were therefore not flawed, but an important and necessary stage in his Divine service. He may not have perfected his worship of G-d until a certain point, but in terms of utilizing his time and effort to the maximum, he was as perfect as could have been expected of him.

In fact, the entire period of our exile can be considered as preparation for the spiritual perfection we will attain in the Messianic era. But it is precisely now, by "educating" ourselves properly, that we will achieve the very highest levels of perfection with the Redemption.

Adapted from Vol. 35 of Likutei Sichot

Are You a Selfish Giver?

By Rabbi B. Mann

Have you ever seen that cartoon clip where one character asks for some water, and the other brings a hose and soaks him from head to toe? The subsequent scene is the two characters playing cat and mouse, the first character trying to take revenge against the other for what he had done. The humour always seems to demand a smirk or a chuckle, but I bet you never thought to yourself: wait a minute, what did the second character do wrong, he gave water just like the former had requested?

The answer is quite simple. His request for water was obviously to receive it in a cup that it would be accessible to him for drinking.

When approaching philanthropy, kindness, or a giving nature there can be one of two characteristics being exhibited. Depending on which one, the response or outcome would change dramatically. One may have a very generous disposition, and it may be expressed by boundless giving, but such a form of generosity demonstrates carelessness of the giver towards the recipient. If the one receiving does not require what is being given or does not appreciate the manner in which it is being presented then there is no goal being met and no accomplishment. On the contrary it displays a sort of selfishness.

On the other hand there are others with an objective, every act of generosity is thought through and has a purpose. This is a true philanthropist, one with enough munificence to give as much as another person needs, but enough empathy and foresight to withhold from overwhelming the beneficiary.

The cartoon character got what he asked for, not what he wanted. In order to help someone else in a time of need it is imperative to have a listening ear. An open heart is not enough. You must make yourself fit to his desires and needs. Even if you are accustomed to living in a messy home, when a guest comes you would tidy up so he too will feel at home.

One such personality who displayed these qualities was the biblical character Avraham Avinu. He pitched his tent in the middle of a desert in order that travelers would have a place to rest and eat. This was not a mere performance of his good-hearted nature, but he too had a purpose in mind, to help these passersby in their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.

All who entered Avraham's tent were welcome to a lavish feast of wines and delicacies. When the guest would get up to leave, Avraham would have him make a blessing to thank the Creator who gives sustenance to all of his creations.

At the end of it all G-d tells Avraham "now I know that you fear me". When one is able to balance his natural tendencies with a purpose and the other individual's requirements in mind, it is an indication that he not only acts kindly by his own inclinations, but his intentions are pure and seek only the best for the recipient.

Slice of LIFE

By Zalman Goldstein

It was a sunny February Friday morning in Monsey, NY, and a friend invited me to attend an estate sale. I'd never been to an estate sale, and I wasn't even sure exactly what it was, but for some reason I decided to go along.

"Here's to new experiences," I thought, and hopped into his car.

We arrived at the advertised address - a small attached home. We parked in front and went inside.

The house was small and cosy. People were milling about picking up knick-knacks and asking for prices. "A dollar-fifty for this, four dollars for that," said a good-natured middle-aged man.

Turns out the owner is an elderly woman, and her children were handling the logistics of the sale, haggling and making small talk with the slow moving crowd filing through the house.

As I walked deeper inside, I spotted the dining room piled high with items for sale. In the middle were a ceramic Matzah dish and two brass candlesticks. I didn't pay much attention to them at the time. Not really interested, I thought.

As I perused, I began to feel some sadness; all these items comprised 50-60 years of memories. Now those memories were laid out for all to see and buy. But the family seemed cheerful enough which helped me feel better about the whole thing.

Eventually we each found something to buy, if just to make the owners happy. On the way out, the older woman, the owner of the house wished us "Good Shabbos." We wished her the same and left.

Driving away, the image of the candlesticks for sale on that dining

room table stayed in my mind. Why am I still thinking about them? I wondered. Soon I felt more clarity: I had completely missed an opportunity!

It was close to noon, time to pick up the kids from school. As I drove, the candlesticks spoke louder. Those candlesticks had a plan. I wasn't going to let them down this time.

I stopped at the bakery and picked up a fresh Challah. I picked up the children and told them about our mission. I stopped off at home to pick up two candles and the accompanying glass holders that sit atop candlesticks, and a Shabbat Table Companion book.

We headed back to the estate sale, hoping the candlesticks hadn't been bought in the meantime.

The plan was now in full motion. I was excited, as were the kids. We parked in the same spot, piled out of the van and filed inside.

Whew! The candlesticks were still there!

I searched for the older woman and asked her if the candlesticks were for sale.

"Yes," she replied, asking her son to give us a price.

"Eight dollars for the pair," he said.

"Deal," I said while pulling out my wallet and giving him the money.

The mother went to the table, took the candlesticks and put them in my hands.

"Here!"

I held them, my kids watching my every move. I then looked her softly in the eye and spoke.

"Do you know why I came all the way back and bought these candlesticks?"

"No."

"I came back together with my children to buy them from you so we can give them back to you. We want these candlesticks to stay in your dining room, continuing to illuminate your home every Friday and Holiday night."

Tears welled up in her eyes.

Mine soon followed.

Our daughter Hindy gave her the bag with the candles and glass holders.

Moishy gave her the Challah.

Chana gave her the Shabbat Table Companion.

The woman's son came over to see what was happening, the daughter following close behind.

Their mother told them what we'd done.

There were hugs and tears between them. Even the strangers rummaging through the estate items stopped to stare as if overcome by the outpouring of G-dly light radiating from the Jewish souls of this beautiful family.

The mother finally spoke and told us her Hebrew name is Tziporah and she went to Hebrew school as a child but not much followed.

She warmly accepted our gift and assured us that she "already knows the brachot (blessings)."

On our way out, her son said to me, "Just as you offered mom a gift, we want to give you a gift -- here, please take the eight dollars back. What you've given us today is worth so much more than a few dollars."

I politely declined and asked instead that they share the merit of the Mitzvah of lighting Shabbat and Holiday candles with my family.

"Agreed!" he said. The mom and daughter also nodded their heads.

We left as we came, but now we travelled on spiritual clouds. We felt part of something bigger; something raw and deep profoundly connecting our Jewish souls. It was this feeling that kept us warm on that winter day as we prepared for Shabbat.

But most of all, I feel fortunate that our children got to experience our unique "transaction." I hope the experience has taught them to look for opportunity even when it isn't apparent at first glance.

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ISSUE 1089

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The donkey that Avraham rode to the "binding of Yitzchak" is the very same donkey which Moses rode to Egypt; and this is the very same donkey upon which Moshiach will arrive. Simply, riding a donkey is a display of humility. On a deeper level, Moshiach's donkey represents the essence of the messianic process. Moshiach, who represents the ultimate fulfilment of Torah, himself rides the donkey of the material, reflecting a world in which the material is not a secondary element, but an utterly refined resource, just as significant as the most spiritual creation.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

21st of Sivan, 5725

Greeting and Blessing:

You have undoubtedly received my regards through Rabbi Moshe Feller, who had also brought me your regards. I trust you had an enjoyable and inspiring festival of Kabbolas HaTorah, and that the inspiration will be with you throughout the year, to animate all your daily activities, inasmuch as the Torah totally encompasses the daily life of the Jew in all its aspects.

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter of May 9th, also your works on your scientific research. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and trouble in sending me the material. Although the subject matter is entirely beyond my province, I trust that I will be able to glean some general ideas from your writings, and perhaps also some specific ones.

At the risk of not sounding very "scientific" to you, I nevertheless wish to express my hope that you will apply also your research work to good advantage in the service of G d, in accord with the principle, "Know Him in all thy ways." Indeed, the discoveries in the natural sciences have thrown new light on the wonders of Creation, and the modern trend has consequently been towards the recognition of the unity pervading nature. In fact, with every advancement in science the underlying unity in the physical world has become more clearly discernable; so much so, that science is now searching for the ideal formula which would comprise all the phenomena of the physical world in one comprehensive equation. With a little further insight it can be seen that the unity in nature is the reflection of true monotheism in its Jewish concept. For, as we Jews conceive of monotheism, it is not merely the belief that there is only One G d, but that G d's unity transcends also the physical world, so that there is only one reality, namely G d. However, inasmuch as creation included all the souls, etc., there has been created a multiplicity and diversity in nature-in so far as the created beings themselves are concerned, without, however, effecting any change in the Creator, as explained at length in Chassidus.

You ask me about my reference to the Rambam [Maimonides] and where it contains in substance, though in different terms, the concepts of the conscious and subconscious of modern psychology. I had in mind a passage in Hilchos Gerushin, end of ch. 2, in the Rambam's Opus Magnum ("Yad Hachazakah"). The gist of that passage is as follows: There are certain matters in Jewish Law, the performance of which requires free volition, no coercion. However, where the Jewish law requires specific performance, it is permitted to use coercive measures until the reluctant party declares "I am willing", and his performance is valid and considered voluntary. There seems here an obvious contradiction: If it is permitted [to] compel performance, why is it necessary that the person should declare himself "willing"? And if compulsory performance is not valid, what good is it if the person declares himself "willing" under compulsion?

And here comes the essential point of the Rambam's explanation:

Every Jew, regardless of his status and station, is essentially willing to do all that he is commanded to do by our Torah. However, sometimes the Yetzer (Hara) prevails over his better judgment and prevents him from doing what he has to do in accordance with the Torah. When, therefore, Beis Din compels a Jew to do something, it is not with a view to creating in him a new desire, but rather to release him from the compulsion which had paralysed his desire, thus enabling him to express his true self. Under these circumstances, when he declares "I am willing," it is an authentic declaration.

To put the above in contemporary terminology: The conscious state of a Jew can be affected by external factors to the extent of including states of mind and even behaviour which are contrary to his subconscious, which is the Jew's essential nature. When the external pressures are removed, it does not constitute a change or transformation of his essential nature, but, on the contrary, merely the reassertion of his innate and true character.

To a person of your background it is unnecessary to point out that nothing in the above can be construed as confirmation of other aspects of the Freudian theory to the effect that man's psyche is primarily governed by libido, the drive for marital relations, etc. For these ideas are contrary to those of the Torah, whose view is that the human being is essentially good (as in the Rambam, above). The only similarity is in the general idea that human nature is a composite of a substratum and various layers, especially insofar as the Jew is concerned, as above.

I will conclude with the traditional blessing which I have already conveyed to you through Rabbi Moshe Feller-to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness, as a daily experience throughout the year.

With blessing/signature

A WORD

from the Director

This week we will be celebrating 20th of Cheshvan, the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab, the fifth Chabad Rebbe. Since the Torah is a guide to our actual conduct in our lives at present, it follows that a connection can be found between this week's Torah reading, Parshas Vayeira, and this auspicious day.

There is a well-known story concerning the Rebbe Rashab and the Tzemach Tzedek. When the Rebbe Rashab was four or five years old, he was taken to his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, for a birthday blessing. When he entered his grandfather's room, he began to cry.

After calming him, his grandfather inquired about the reason for his tears. The child responded, "In school we learned that G-d revealed Himself to Avraham, our forefather. Why does He not reveal Himself to me?"

The Tzemach Tzedek answered him, "When a Jew (according to an alternate version, 'a Tzaddik') who is ninety-nine years old recognizes that he must undergo [the spiritual service of] circumcision, he is worthy for G-d to reveal Himself to him."

The Tzemach Tzedek answered that for a person to receive a direct revelation of G-dliness, he must merit it through his actual deeds. When a person serves G-d for ninety-nine years, and then realizes that he requires to undergo circumcision, he is worthy of a manifest revelation.

This produces a lesson for every individual, when he reads that G-d revealed Himself "to him," he must realize that "to him" does not mean only to Avraham, but "to him," to his own self. Since he is a descendant of Avraham and has entered into "the covenant of Avraham" through circumcision, G-d reveals Himself to him. As can be derived from the story concerning the Rebbe Rashab, even a young child can desire such a revelation, and similarly this should arouse in every one of us a desire to actually see that revelation.

J. I. Guterlich

CUSTOMS CORNER

Giving charity is a Mitzvah equal to all others put together

The highest form of *tzedakah* (charity) is to provide self-sufficiency. Extend a loan to a friend, allowing him to embark on a business project; help an acquaintance find a job or bring her into your family business.

No one should have to pay with his dignity for another's assistance. That's why it's better to give anonymously. Similarly, give *before* you are asked. Spare the fellow the embarrassment of having to beg.

And the main ingredient: Give with a smile and genuine warmth. *How* you give, our sages taught, is more important than *how much* you give!

Since giving is a Mitzvah, it is customary to keep a *pushka* (charity box) on prominent display in one's home and office. Just drop a few coins in the *pushka* every so often, at least once a day.

IT HAPPENED

Once...

ONLY TO SEE

In the city of Kremenchug, in Ukraine, there lived many pious and learned Jews, including a number of wealthy ones who would generously fund the communal needs. One rich man, the owner of a flour mill, was exceptionally wealthy and had many dealings with high Russian officials. Over time, he left the path of Torah Judaism completely. Very proud of his riches and high official connections, he spent his time socializing with the Russian ministers.

Once, while the wealthy mill owner was in Petersburg for business, he heard that the Rebbe Rashab [Rabbi Sholom-DovBer Shneersohn] was then in town, staying in a hotel. Although he was steeped in worldly desires, he had a strong wish to see the Rebbe, who was known throughout the world for his wisdom and holiness. The mill owner arrived at the hotel when Chassidim were being admitted to private audience with the Rebbe, but the Rebbe's attendant refused him immediate entry, because others were already waiting. In response, he attempted to enter by force, and this caused a major commotion.

Hearing the noise, the Rebbe Rashab opened the door. He motioned for the mill owner to be allowed in. When the wealthy man entered the room and beheld the Rebbe, he felt himself overwhelmed with awe and fear and was unable to say anything.

The Rebbe calmed him and asked why he had come, but only after some time was he able to compose himself enough to reply. "I did not come for anything, I just came to see," he muttered. Then the Rebbe blessed him and he left.

Years later, this wealthy man related, "From the moment I saw the Rebbe, I changed completely, for seeing his holy face made a deep impression on me. I have seen great ministers and leaders of the kingdom, but never felt any fear; but when I saw the Rebbe, an intense fear overcame me, and I decided to change my ways. When I arrived home, I got rid of all my (non-kosher) dishes, and began closing my mill on Shabbat." He became a proper Jew in every way and formed a strong connection to the Rebbe.

THE COMPROMISE CURE

There was once a Chassid of the Tzemach Tzedek whose wife suffered from terrible recurring headaches. After describing his wife's symptoms, the Tzemach Tzedek instructed her to wash her head in hot water every time she felt a headache coming on.

The advice worked. All the woman had to do was stick her head in the hot water and the pain would disappear.

After the Tzemach Tzedek passed away, however, whenever the headaches began, the hot water had no effect. The Chassid went to the Rebbe Maharash and asked him what his wife should do.

The Rebbe Maharash listened and then smiled. "Nu, if hot water doesn't help, let her wash with cold water!" he said. The woman tried this and the pain went away immediately.

In this manner the woman found relief from her headaches for the entire reign of the Rebbe Maharash, but after his passing, the cold water also lost its healing effect.

Neither could hot water do anything to ease her pain. When the headaches began to recur the woman sent her husband to the Rebbe Rashab to ask him what she should do now.

After the Chassid had related the peculiar story of his wife's headaches, the Rebbe Rashab smiled and said, "Nu, let her mix both hot and cold water together!"

The woman did, and the headaches disappeared.

Biographical notes:

Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (2 Iyar 1834-13 Tishrei 1882), the fourth Lubavitch Rebbe, known as the Rebbe Maharash, was the sixth and youngest son of his predecessor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the Tsemach Tzedek.

Rabbi Sholom-Dovber Schneersohn (Cheshvan 20, 1860 - Nissan 2, 1920), known as the Rebbe Rashab, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chassidic thought.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And he said: "My Lord! if now I have found favour in your eyes, pass not away, I beg you, from your servant. (18:4)

This verse has two meanings. One meaning is that Avraham is addressing the most prominent of the three guests, asking him and the others not to pass by his tent without availing themselves of his hospitality. Another meaning is that Avraham is addressing G-d, asking Him to stand by while he attends to his guests.

Rabbi Judah in the name of Rav said: This is to teach us that the act of taking in guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence. (*Rashi on verse: Talmud, Shevuot 35b*)

And G-d heard the voice of the lad (21:17)

This teaches us that a person's prayer for himself is preferable to others praying for him, and is sooner to be accepted [for though the verse speaks of Hagar's weeping, it tells us that it was Ishmael's cry which G-d heard]. (*Midrash Rabbah; Rashi*)

For G-d has heard the voice of the lad where he is (21:17)

The ministering angels hastened to indict him, exclaiming: "Sovereign of the Universe! Would You bring up a well for one who will one day slay Your children with thirst?" "What is he now?" asked G-d. "Righteous," said the angels. G-d said: "I judge man only as he is at the moment." (*Midrash Rabbah; Rashi*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 2 NOVEMBER 2012

BEGINS		ENDS
7:38	MELBOURNE	8:39
7:28	ADELAIDE	8:28
5:49	BRISBANE	6:44
6:29	DARWIN	7:22
5:48	GOLD COAST	6:44
6:24	PERTH	7:22
7:06	SYDNEY	8:05
7:17	CANBERRA	8:16
7:36	LAUNCESTON	8:40
7:37	AUCKLAND	8:37
7:45	WELLINGTON	8:49
7:38	HOBART	8:44
6:48	BYRON BAY	7:44



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEIRA
17 CHESHVAN • 2 NOVEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:38 PM
	MINCHA:	7:50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:20 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:36 AM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS::	8:39 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:50 PM
	MAARIV:	8:40 PM