

# LAMPLIGHTER

14 Cheshvan  
Parshas Vayeira

1109

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Vayeira, relates the story of the akeida, the Binding of Isaac. G-d said to Abraham, "Please take your son...and offer him there for a burnt offering." Abraham was tested by G-d ten times. The akeida was the tenth and final test.

The Talmud explains that G-d's request - "Please take your son" - was an entreaty to express His wish that Abraham withstand the trial. "I have tried you many times, and each time you passed the test," G-d said. "Would that you pass this test as well, that people not say the first ones were without substance."

Why was it so important for Abraham to pass the final test, and how would his failure to do so have invalidated the success of the previous nine? The akeida was certainly the most difficult trial, but even had Abraham not withstood it, why would the previous ones have been considered to be in vain?

Another question: The first test was when Abraham was thrown into the fiery furnace after destroying his father's idols. Wasn't this test just as critical as the tenth one?

The answer is: Sometimes, when a Jew is willing to give up his life for the sake of G-d, it is hard to distinguish if he is doing so solely because G-d wants him to, or because he himself understands that an act of self-sacrifice is required.

For example, the argument could be made that because Abraham understood the necessity of spreading awareness of the one G-d throughout the world, he was willing to allow himself to be burned. In other words, self-sacrifice was a logical conclusion, arrived at by Abraham's own intellect.

The trial of the akeida, however, was entirely different. Withstanding the trial would not result in the public recognition of G-d's Name, as no one else was present except for Abraham and Isaac. On the contrary, G-d's request seemed to defy logic. Abraham wanted his son to continue spreading the belief in G-d after he was gone, yet here G-d was asking him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering! If Isaac were sacrificed, who would be left to continue his path?

Thus the akeida constituted a test of Abraham's willingness for self-sacrifice in a situation in which his own intellect led him to the opposite conclusion. His ability to withstand the tenth test thereby demonstrated that the first nine were not in vain, as it proved that he had acted out of love of G-d and not merely because his intellect compelled him to obey.

This contains a lesson for each of us, Abraham's descendants, in how to serve G-d. Rabbi Shneur Zalman writes: "It is good to recite the chapter of the akeida each day... in order to subjugate the [evil] inclination and serve G-d." The power to do so comes to us from Abraham, the first to show us how.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 20*

## Hebrews Not Welcome

*By Shimon Posner*

"No Hebrews Allowed." It's the first reference that comes to my mind when I hear us called Hebrews. Okay, I know YMHA means the Jewish YMCA, and HIAS a Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, but still, Hebrew - when talking about people, not our language - smacks of long-hand for Hebes.

In Biblical times the name Hebrew was a put down often enough. *Ivri*: the one who crossed over. The one from on yonder, the foreigner. And no, Ramses University didn't credit diversity appreciation courses. But if *Ivri* was a put down, it also contained a measure, sometimes a substantial measure, of respect.

Avraham is mentioned nine times in the Torah before he is referred to as *Avram Halvri*, "Avram the Hebrew." Why the description all of a sudden? Abraham had crossed over from the Euphrates, had left his home, life, wealth and security to cross over to wherever G-d would tell him to go. Every immigrant has a measure of courage, of pioneership, showing a willingness to leave all that is familiar and safe and go to a far-off goal. Avraham did it before there was a name for it: the pioneer of pioneering.

Now he was faced with fighting the strongest forces in the world. Would he shrink? No, hints the Torah: he is a Hebrew, one who crossed over his comfort zone and never returned to it. He does what is right, not comfortable. He is a Hebrew.

Most people create their own worlds: circles of friends, obligations, pets, pet peeves. And live there. Then there are those who venture outside their worlds, who don't take their comfort zone with utmost seriousness and don't revere their moods. While they pretty much mind their own business, they're ready to bend on just about anything. They look like pushovers.

Don't be fooled. When their values are challenged they are fearless. They have no fear of fear itself. They have no fear of self; they have no self; they have only what they stand for.

Me? I'd rather be a comfortable coward. But what Avraham achieved with sacrifice, we attain without asking for it. Together with Grandmother's brown eyes and Grandfather's black hair. And if it is unearned it may well be unwanted on some level. "I know we're the Chosen People, but isn't it time you chose someone else?"

But in all honesty that is only a part of me. The other part wants to be an Avraham, wants to have character instead of being one. And all I need to do is do what Avraham did: walk in the footsteps of his trailblazing. Because I give Avraham the same (sometimes begrudging) respect that the world gave that Hebrew then and gives these Hebrews now.

I need only to just plod along until the energy kicks in and I feel the *Avraham ohavi*, the love G-d feels for this astonishing person, "the one who loved Me" (Yeshaya 41:8). I do what he did and I become what he was. I live towards him and he lives through me. The Father of the Jewish People. The Hebrews.

# Slice of LIFE

## THE SEARCHING SOULS

by Esti (Lynn) Wilson

We were two average Americans living average American lives: working until all hours of the night; talking constantly of work, real estate, and early retirement; finding ways to entertain ourselves through movies, bars, the gym, and TV.

I had met Doug at my new job. It took me a while to let him know I was Jewish, for I was afraid it would take away from my Yuppie status. Little did I know that being Jewish only enhanced my status in his eyes. We fell in love, got married, had two children...typical American story...or was it?

Doug was raised in a Catholic home. By the time I met him, he clearly did not consider himself a Catholic. His upbringing had given him a bad taste for organized religion and he was very wary of anything that smelled of it. As soon as we were "married" he began a study process of the history of the Jews. It was an intellectual pursuit to gain an understanding of a people and their heritage, as well as an attempt to gain an understanding of his meshugana Jewish wife. Doug consistently encouraged me to explore my own roots, to find an appropriate synagogue, to get involved in Judaism, to learn.

We paid our dues, went to services once a month on Friday evenings, and attended various events. Meanwhile, my brother had returned from a year in yeshiva in Jerusalem wearing tzitzit and a kipa. For Doug and me, having my brother in our home was a luxury. We felt we had our own private Rabbi to help us continue our learning.

We began to realize that a general understanding of Jewish tradition wasn't enough. We had a feeling there must be something more out there. Then Chabad moved in around the corner from our

home. We finally went one Shabbat. When I left, my soul knew it had discovered the bigger thing - Hashem's Torah. The wheels that had been set in motion were now starting to turn at freight train speed. I had a fire burning within me, which needed to be fed with more Torah learning.

My husband had his own journey from here on. Prior to this point, we were on similar paths; however, now that we had discovered the Torah, our journeys took different directions. I knew from that point that my mission was to grow in learning Torah and to teach our children to become good Torah Jews. For my husband however, it wasn't the same... he wasn't a Jew.

It had become a very exciting and wonderful time for us, but a very difficult one as well, in that we didn't know where we, as a couple, would go from here. But we continued to learn, began observing Shabbat and started keeping kosher. Doug learned to read Hebrew and started to take an interest in Yiddishkeit. Something had changed in him - the pursuit was no longer intellectual, it was something else. He struggled with the concept of G-d, but continued to push forward... always forward. I remained quiet about wanting my husband to be Jewish, but prayed to G-d every night to help Doug along that path.

Doug observed the Sabbath, he went to shul every Saturday, and read and read. Then one day, the minute Shabbat ended, he said, "I have to go somewhere, I'll be right back." He came home about two hours later and told me he had asked our Chabad Rabbi if he could convert! I had had no idea he was ready for this.

The following year proved to be joyful, stressful, and a little scary. For, although we anticipated his final conversion as a joyful moment, the interim period was very difficult. Doug was given a program to study, and in the following months he was very focused on that program.

It was truly an amazing process to watch him go through. There was a fire burning in him, pushing him towards his goal. It was a very human drive but

definitely had supernatural qualities. The day came when our Rabbi and the Rabbi from the Bet Din (Rabbinical Court) agreed he was ready.

The four weeks from when we received the date until the conversion was certainly a crazy time in our lives. Not only did Doug have to prepare for the conversion but we also had to prepare for Pesach. In addition, we had to plan our wedding, which would follow Doug's conversion. We decided that since this was our first Jewish wedding, we were going to treat it as such. By the time the day came, we were both high on adrenaline.

We arrived at the Bet Din with great anticipation and a whole lot of nervousness on my part. We were later told that prospective converts are not even allowed in front of the Bet Din unless they believe you're going to pass. He came out with a huge smile, and the Rabbis were saying Mazel Tov. I was very curious why it had gone so fast, and Doug's teacher (who was sitting in on the Bet Din) told me they had asked him questions which most people would probably not be able to answer. In addition, it was obvious to the Rabbis that his answers as to why he wanted to be a Jew were true and came from his heart and soul.

After the meeting with the Bet Din, we went directly to the mikva, where my husband completed his conversion and became Chaim Wilson. It was an overwhelming moment for us, but we were not done yet-we still had to be married! Onward to the wedding we went. Probably the most touching moment of the evening was when Chaim spoke. He thanked a number of people and then thanked me in a special way. He began by reading Aishes Chayil ("Woman of Valor") in Hebrew. It was truly a tremendous moment. A newly born Jew reading the language of our people in front of over 100 people. I was so proud.

Our lives have since proceeded at a steady pace of Torah growth. We feel tremendous gratitude to the Rebbe for sending Chabad to us. We look forward to the coming of the Moshiach.

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Editor: Yisroel Leib Lester  
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA  
Phone 0433 026 117  
Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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ISSUE 1109

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Divine revelation will be so intense that it will be experienced in the physical world: that Divine light will bring healing, literally curing the bodies of Israel from all their diseases and maladies. The verse "G-d appeared to [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day" (Vayeira 18:1). Thus alludes also to the revelation that will occur to us with the future redemption.



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d  
7 Av, 5713 [19 July, 1953]  
Brooklyn, NY

Certain areas in the field of commerce are currently not realizing expectations. Undoubtedly we must view this as a test from G-d. Though He knows that the Jewish heart is always open, and at all times ready to heed the call of Torah and mitzvot, still, He tests us in order to satisfy the reluctant-to-believe angels of the Heavenly Court.

G-d therefore says to them:

"See, despite the natural tendency to decrease in *tzedakah* when business is not as it once was; here is a wise Jew, who understands that this is only an attempt to test him. He also understands that when he will withstand the test - and will then understand the real intent behind it all - not only will his business be as prosperous as beforehand, but it will be better than before.

"For a father loves when his son understands the true intention of his father's actions; and the more the child demonstrates his wisdom, so much greater are the gifts that he receives from his father."

Businesspeople say that a veteran in the field has a better grasp of commerce concepts. As you are in business already for a long time, you should be able to understand G-d's intention in this all.

Just as you would stand firm with any good investment, the same applies here. Not only should we not decrease G-d's share, to the contrary, we should give even more on His account. Then G-d will fulfill his assurance stated in the Torah: *Aser bishvil she'tisasher* - "Give a tenth to charity in order that you become wealthy" - and He will give His "partner" an even greater income than before.

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Shvat, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

## Greetings and Blessings!

This reply relates to your letter of 12 Shvat. There you write of the financial state of your family and of your difficulties in earning a living, particularly since you have to support other family members, and hence you ask whether the gates of Heaven have been closed (G-d forbid) and why the way of the worthless prospers.

There is surely no need to explain at length that the question of not only why the way of the worthless prospers, but even the way of the wicked, was already asked by Moshe Rabbeinu [our teacher] (see *Berachos 7a*). Now, since that time a few thousand years have passed. During this time the Jewish people have been following the path of the Torah and its commandments, and specifically for that reason our nation has survived. As it is written, "And you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d" - specifically for this reason and only for this reason - "are all alive today."

The same applies to every one of us, man or woman. If there are things that are achieved with difficulty, especially with regard to making a living, this is not (G-d forbid) because one observes the Torah and its commandments. Quite the contrary: by fortifying one's trust in G-d, Who "provides nourishment and sustenance for all," "with loving-kindness and with mercy," one lessens these difficulties, and ultimately the state of one's livelihood also improves. The spiritual remedy to secure this is likewise an increase in one's Torah study and in one's observance of the *Mitzvos*. As it is written, "If you walk in the ways of My statutes and observe My commandments..." then "I will grant [your rains in their season, and the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will yield their fruit]."

You no doubt know of the practice instituted by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] - a daily reading from the Book of *Tehillim*, as apportioned for the days of the month. From now on, at least, you should observe this practice, and may it be G-d's Will that this, too, will bring about a speedier improvement in your situation.

With blessing,

## CUSTOMS CORNER

The *brit* (circumcision) should be performed on the eighth day of the baby's life (remember, the Jewish date begins and ends at nightfall!) unless the baby is unwell - in which case it is performed at the first possible opportunity. One should consult with one's doctor and with the *mohel* (circumciser) in this regard.

If the eighth day is a Shabbat, the *brit* is performed on Shabbat.

If the baby was born after sunset but before the emergence of three stars, the *brit* is performed on the eighth day following the next morning. Nevertheless, such a *brit* does not override the Shabbat; i.e., if a baby is born between sunset and the emergence of stars on Friday evening, the *brit* is postponed to the following Sunday, nine days later. This is because on the chance that the time of birth is still considered to be part of Friday, the following Shabbat would be the ninth day. And, as explained, a *brit* which is postponed doesn't override the Shabbat.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

This week, is the 153rd birthday of Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneersohn, (known by the acronym "Rashab,") the fifth Chabad Rebbe.

He was born in the town of Lubavitch, in White Russia, on the 20th of the Jewish month of Cheshvan in 1860 (5621 since creation). Famed for his phenomenal mind and analytical treatment of Chabad philosophy, Rabbi Sholom DovBer wrote and delivered some 2,000 Chassidic discourses over the thirty-eight years of his leadership.

Simultaneously, Rabbi Sholom DovBer took great interest in the simple folk, and said many discourses specifically geared towards those with a limited knowledge of Chassidic thought.

In 1897 Rabbi Sholom DovBer established an institution of Jewish learning, a school whose curriculum included the study of Talmudic and legal courses as well as the mystical teachings of Chabad Chassidism. This school also placed special emphasis on prayer: students were encouraged to meditate while praying, to use the opportunity to open their hearts and souls to their Father in heaven.

Once while he was visiting Vienna, when seeing a newly invented wood-carving machine, he commented, "from a hunk, a vessel, from a hunk, a vessel". When asked what the significance of this was, he replied: "this is what the school is to do; to take the students who are raw as this hunk, and turn them into Jews who are true vessels to accept G-dly light".

Rabbi Sholom DovBer passed away in Rostov on the second day of the Jewish month of Nissan, 1920 (5680). Among his final words were: "I am going to heaven; the writings I leave for you. . .," a reference to the thousands of manuscripts that he penned.

May we merit to study his writings and become those who can "accept G-dly light" in its fullest measure.

*J. I. Gutnick*

IT HAPPENED

Once...

The Sages in the Princess' Chamber

At the time when the Roman armies conquered and ruled the land of Israel they set forth three new decrees. Their intentions were specifically to target and destroy the Jewish identity. The decrees were; no one can keep Shabbat (Saturday) sacred, no one was allowed to circumcise their sons or keep the laws of family purity. They realized that if these decrees would be successfully enforced this would destroy the Jewish people as a nation and assure assimilation.

The sage Rabbi Reuven, deeply concerned with the situation decided to take action. He had his hair cut in the same style as the Roman officials (which normally is forbidden), he then took a seat among officials participating in their discussions.

When these new decrees came up for discussion, he inquired, "Why should we make the Jews work an extra day (Saturday)? Another day of work creates commerce and brings wealth and strength to them." So accepting the logic of his argument they nullified the decree. Continuing to play on their prejudice and misconception he added rhetorically, "Doesn't circumcision weaken the body? Why should we strengthen our enemy?" This decree was likewise nullified.

He then used a similar argument "why are we seeking to multiply their numbers by forcing cohabitation even during the menstrual period". They nullified the third decree as well.

The news spread quickly and caused much relief and joy to the Jewish people. However, unfortunately this joy was short-lived for the Roman officials realized that this new official that no one really recognized, only engaged in discussions concerning the Jewish people encouraging arguments to nullify their decrees. They came to the conclusion that he must have been an imposter, a Jew that had the gall to disguise himself and fool them. Immediately they re-instated the decrees with no more discussions to be held on this matter.

The sages of Israel had no other choice but to petition the emperor. However, now that the Roman officers were enraged at their audacity this meant that the petitioners would be in danger of being penalized and harmed, even before having the opportunity of reaching the emperor and presenting their petition. They therefore chose to send as their messenger the great sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, for he was sustained by miracles for the 13 years that he fled the officials and was hiding in a cave. Perhaps in his merit another miracle would occur and the Jewish people would be spared. The custom was to send two petitioners so they sent Rabbi Eliezer bar Yosef to accompany him.

As they were coming in to Rome, an evil spirit greeted Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and inquired by him, "Should I join you?" Rabbi

Shimon was pained saying, "why should the salvation of the Jews people come from this spirit and not from an angel", on the other hand, he rejoiced saying, "Wherever the salvation will come from it is welcomed." He then instructed the spirit to go ahead of them. The spirit entered the emperor's daughter's body and she became demented. The only clear words that she said was "bring the sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai that he pray on my behalf."

When he arrived at the palace he was immediately taken to the princess's room. He then instructed the spirit to leave her unharmed. In appreciation of having his daughter saved, the emperor offered to bring Rabbi Shimon into the private treasury room and grant him his any wish. Rabbi Shimon looked around until he saw the document baring these decrees; he took the document and ripped it up thereby nullifying the decrees.

We see to what great extent our sages went in order to preserve the commandment of Brit milah.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

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. Said G-d: "I judge man only as he is at the moment." (Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

And he saddled his donkey (22:3)

This is the very same donkey which Moses rode to Egypt (cf. Exodus 4:20); and this is the very same donkey upon which the Messiah will arrive (Zechariah 9:9)

And he bound Isaac his son (22:9)

Can one bind a man thirty-seven years old without his consent?

But when Abraham came to slaughter his son Isaac, Isaac said to him: "Father, I am a young man and I am afraid that my body may tremble through fear of the knife and I will grieve you, whereby the slaughter may be rendered unfit and this will not count as a real sacrifice; therefore bind me very firmly." (Midrash Rabbah)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 18 OCTOBER 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
7:21 .....MELBOURNE .....	8:21
7:14 .....ADELAIDE .....	8:11
5:39 .....BRISBANE .....	6:33
6:26 .....DARWIN .....	7:16
5:38 .....GOLD COAST .....	6:32
6:12 .....PERTH .....	7:08
6:52 .....SYDNEY .....	7:49
7:02 .....CANBERRA .....	8:00
7:17 .....LAUNCESTON .....	8:19
7:21 .....AUCKLAND .....	8:20
7:26 .....WELLINGTON .....	8:28
7:18 .....HOBART .....	8:21
6:37 .....BYRON BAY .....	7:32
6:34 .....SINGAPORE .....	7:23



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEIRA

14 CHESHVAN • 18 OCTOBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:21 PM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:00 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:48 PM
	MINCHA:	7:10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:21 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	
	SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	MAARIV:	8:20 PM, 9:00 PM