

LAMPLIGHTER

21 Cheshvan
Parshas
Chayei Sara
1110
25 October
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Chayei Sara, we read of Sara's passing, Abraham's purchase of the Cave of the Machpela in Hebron for her burial place, and Abraham's dispatching of his trusted servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac. All of these events took place when Abraham was at a well-advanced age. In fact, the Torah tells us, "And Abraham was old (zakein), well endowed with days."

The Midrash comments: "Some people are old but not endowed with days; others are endowed with days but not old. In this instance we find a person possessing both qualities."

What does this tell us about our forefather Abraham's greatness?

A zakein, an elderly person, is defined as one who has acquired wisdom. By studying Torah he has learned a great deal. The zakein has achieved a high level of perfection of his soul.

"Endowed with days," however, refers to a person whose every day is perfect and whole. Not only does he perform the mitzvot (commandments) properly, but he does so every single day of his life. Through his actions, the days themselves are elevated. He illuminates his environment by the commandments he observes and he raises his surroundings to a higher state of perfection.

The terms "old" and "endowed with days" refer to two types of people, and specifically, to two types of tzadikim (righteous people). Some righteous people are concerned only with themselves and their own pursuit of excellence. By toiling greatly in the study of Torah they attain the level of zakein, but the people around them and the world at large are ignored. Time and effort are devoted solely to their own concerns.

Other tzadikim turn outward to disseminate their light upon their surroundings, devoting themselves to each and every person with whom they come in contact. These righteous people forget about themselves entirely, selflessly ignoring personal considerations for the sake of others.

Abraham, however, simultaneously embodied both of these qualities. "And Abraham was old, well endowed with days." While managing to achieve the highest level of personal perfection, Abraham sought to perfect his surroundings as well, thereby illuminating the entire world with holiness.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 3

Whom to Marry

By Yanki Tauber

A wise man once said that the most difficult question to answer is a question that has a simple answer.

Because a simple answer is the most difficult kind of answer to accept. A simple answer seems an insult to our intelligence, a making light of our dilemma. But often the most profound question or the most pressing problem does have a simple solution.

Whom should you marry? Unless you are the head of state of a superpower at a time of global crisis, no other decision you will make in the course of your lifetime will affect you as deeply and as irrevocably, for the better and for the worse, as this one. And no other decision will be made in as high-pressure circumstances, and in as subjective a state of mind, as this one.

What does the Torah, which the Jew regards as G-d's "blueprint for creation" and his own guidebook for life, say about what to look for in the person whom you are considering to accept as your partner in life? Something terribly simple.

The first marriage of which we read in the Torah is the marriage of Adam and Eve. Theirs, of course, was the ultimate "made to order" marriage: G-d Himself created the bride and presented her to the groom. When Adam said to Eve, "You are the only woman in the world for me," she knew he was telling the truth. There's a message here about how to regard your spouse once you're married, but not much guidance in how to *select* a husband or wife.

The next marriage described in the Torah took place a couple of thousand years later – the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca. By now, there was more of a selection – a bride had to be chosen for Isaac. Abraham decided not to send his son to do the choosing himself, but his trusted servant Eliezer.

Eliezer loaded ten of his master's camels with goodies and gifts (a generous dowry never hurt a match) and travelled to Abraham's old hometown, Charan (good family connections never hurt, either). Then he prayed (that *always* helps). Then he put his plan into action.

He waited at the village well. It was evening, and the young women of the village came to draw water. His plan went like this: he would ask a maiden for some water from her pitcher. If she says, "Draw your own water, buddy," forget it. If she says, "Please, drink your fill," that's better, but still not what we're looking for. If she says, "Drink, my lord, and I will give thy camels drink also" (that's how people spoke in biblical times) – she's the one.

Reams of commentary have been written on the story of Rebecca at the well. Many profound insights have been gleaned from the Torah's 67-verse account of Eliezer's mission. But one gem of an answer shines through them all in its pristine simplicity: marry someone with a good heart.

Slice of LIFE

The Soviet Official's Intoxicated Inspiration

Life in the Soviet Union for Yane Krichevsky, the son of Chassidic parents, was not easy. His father, not wanting to work on the Shabbat, was without a steady job, which forced his family to live without knowing where their next meal will come from. Yane would often eat at the Belenitzskys, who were close family friends. The father, Yisroel Noah Belenitzsky, had an accounting job in a factory. He managed to avoid working on Shabbat by remaining late on Thursday and coming early on Sunday morning.

Due to the danger of maintaining a religious lifestyle in Communist Russia, Yane never went to synagogue as a child, but on early mornings, a teacher would come to his home to teach him Judaism. The teacher's salary was some food that Yane's mother, Tziporah, scratched together. His upbringing left him with only a very basic Jewish education, while he graduated the Soviet school system.

After his marriage to a girl from Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Yane learned that life on her side of the Soviet Union was much better. Though they were not able to publicly practice Judaism or teach Torah, the authorities there were much more lax in enforcing the laws aimed against those who were doing so underground.

Thus, many religious Jews found their way to that side of the country and Yane easily found his place there. He joined prayer services in the home of Lubavitch Chassidim where there was standing room only due to the large crowds that regularly gathered. The services were always followed by a Chassidic gathering, where the participants would share words of Torah, sing soul-stirring melodies and speak to one another with open hearts.

For the first time, Yane met Jews whose entire lives centred on serving G d with love and awe. They would cover their heads and faces with their prayer shawls and say the words of prayer with deep concentration. To these individuals, the words were not

merely words, but each one had deep meaning and was murmured with precious fervour.

Yane learned to love his Judaism. It was not just about doing, but it was about connecting to a higher Creator.

Meanwhile, Yane slowly climbed the ranks in business, and ran numerous fabric factories. His position now gave him the opportunity to employ many of those who did not want to work on the holy Shabbat.

He also followed the Belenitzskys' example, opening his house to assist others in need. At times, his living room floor was covered with mattresses from wall to wall, leaving no room to walk through.

In their home, they prepared kosher food for those who were imprisoned for disseminating Judaism. He also assisted other prisoners by convincing top officials to relocate them to safer prisons or labour camps.

As an official manager of numerous profitable factories, Yane was well connected. But it also brought additional surveillance and inquiry on anything that he did. He knew that his Jewish activities were done under the watchful eyes of the Soviet government. With a lot of bribing and expensive vodka, Yane was able to continue his illegal activities.

When his second son was born, Yane was immediately contacted by local Soviet officials who warned him, "If you ritually circumcise your son, you will be sent to Siberia for at least ten years."

Yane responded in a rigid tone. He told them that while he would respect their wishes, there is no way he'd surrender his right to make a huge celebration for his family and friends in honour of his son's birth.

The officials agreed and bade him well on the birth of his new baby boy.

Yane and his wife Rochel immediately began preparations for the celebration. They invited their family and friends, all from the Chassidic community. Not to arouse any suspicion, they also invited Mr Spiegel, a high ranking official in the Uzbekistani government in Tashkent, who happened to be Jewish.

The crowd gathered for the celebration. Yane sat with Spiegel and offered him a huge serving of vodka. After that, it was another attendee's job to drink with Spiegel, and then another. A short while later,

Spiegel was drunk, and they were ready to do the ritual circumcision...

The Krichevskys honoured Rabbi Shmaya Marinovsky, a highly respected and pious Chassid, with holding the baby boy, to be the traditional sandek. Rabbi Marinovsky's flowing white beard was wet with tears of joy at the privilege of holding the newborn entering the Covenant of Abraham, at great sacrifice to his parents. He knew that if Spiegel would come to his senses, Yane would be sent in exile for many years.

As ten men gathered around the baby, the child was circumcised and named Matisyahu. He was named after the famed Jewish hero from the Chanukah story, who stood up to the Greeks in the face of oppression, and was ultimately triumphant.

As the crowd dispersed from around the child and sandek, Spiegel suddenly awoke, pointed, and asked, "Who is that holy man?"

Worried that Spiegel had figured out what was going on, they told him that it is the custom for a righteous, elderly man to hold the baby and give him a blessing.

The communist responded, "I want to bend down and give him a kiss on his hands." Rabbi Marinovsky's face became white with fright and feared the worst for Yane, his family, and the entire community.

No one knew what would happen.

Shortly thereafter, Yane went to Mr. Spiegel's office in Tashkent. He wanted to find out whether Mr Spiegel had reported him to the authorities, and as a result, if anything was brewing against the Jewish community. Yane brought some extra goodies he could use as a bribe.

To his shock, there was no sign on Spiegel's door and he was nowhere to be found in the building. In the Soviet Union, the removal of an office sign usually meant that its occupant was arrested.

He immediately began to investigate, worried that if the Soviet authorities found out that this high ranking official attended a ritual circumcision, Yane and his family would surely be arrested soon thereafter.

But, surprisingly, he was told that Spiegel had retired due to health reasons. Yane decided to visit him at his home.

When Yane arrived, he was surprised to learn that Spiegel was greatly moved by the self-sacrifice that others had for their Judaism, and had decided to give up his high ranking and well-paying career and return to his Jewish roots.

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ISSUE 1110

MOSHIACH MATTERS

With the Messianic redemption, we too shall merit a manifestation of the Divine Presence, just like Abraham. Thus it is written, "Your Master will no longer conceal Himself, and your eyes shall see your Master" (Isaiah 30:20). The people of Israel will be able to see this with their physical eyes - an empirical perception.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

26th of Teves, 5742 (1982)

Greeting and Blessing:

This is my first opportunity to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Dec. 15, 1981. In it, after kindly paying tribute to the work of the Lubavitch movement, you express your reservations about the "Tzivos HaShem" [lit. "G-d's Army] Campaign, on the ground that it is based "on the glorification of the military and an aggrandizement of arms, war, and battlefields."

A letter is hardly the proper medium to explain fully the reasons that impelled us to introduce the establishment of the Tzivos HaShem organization, the purpose of which is to bring young Jewish children closer to Torah and Mitzvot [commandments], as I am glad to note you fully recognize. Needless to say, it was done only after due deliberation, which I can only briefly outline in this letter.

To begin with, "Tzivos HaShem" - as you surely know - is not a "foreign" idea. It is first mentioned in the Torah in reference to "G-d's Hosts" who were liberated from Egyptian bondage. The term is clearly not used in the strict military sense. Rather it indicates that the Hosts who had been enslaved to Pharaoh to serve him, were now G-d's Hosts, free to serve G-d, and G-d alone.

Of course, the Torah does not glorify militarism, war, and the like. On the contrary, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." And, as our Sages declare, "the Torah was given to bring peace into the world," and "there is no greater Divine blessing than peace," and much more in this vein.

Parenthetically, with all the emphasis on pacifism, the Torah (from the root Hora'ah [guidance]) also provides guidance in situations where military action is necessary, and prescribes the laws of warfare, as you are, of course, aware. To be sure, Rabbi Akiva's fame rests on his spiritual contribution, but there was a time when he found it necessary to be Bar Kochba's "arms-bearer," as the Rambam notes in his Code (Hil[chos] Mlochim 11:2).

When the "Tzivos HaShem" was instituted recently, careful consideration was given to using a minimum of military trappings, and only such as would be consistent with the spirit of the Torah. For example, "spying missions," which you mention in your letter as one of your objections, was categorically excluded. Furthermore, the whole Campaign is limited to children of pre-Bar Mitzvah and pre-Bat Mitzvah age. The idea is that reaching that age they become full-fledged Jews, and by then they will have had the benefit of the experience, and will realize that it had served its purpose for them.

The question is: Since the term "Tzivos HaShem" would seem to some people to smack of "militarism," what were the overriding reasons that outweighed such reservations as you expressed in your letter? Could not the same results be achieved through other means or other methods?

This brings us to the core of the problem.

As an educator, you know that children need activation, but that is only one aspect of the problem. The most important aspect, in my opinion, in this day and age, is the lack of *Koblas Ol* [accepting the yoke], not only of *Malchus Shomayim* [the kingdom of Heaven] but also general insubmission to authority, including the authority of parents at home and of teachers in school, and the authority of law and order in the street. There remains only the fear of punishment as a deterrent, but that fear has been reduced to a minimum because there has in recent years been what amounts to a breakdown of law enforcement, for reasons which need not be discussed here.

On the other hand, American children have been brought up on the spirit of independence and freedom, and on the glorification of personal prowess and smartness. It has cultivated a sense of cockiness and self-assurance to the extent that one who is bent on mischief or anti-social activity, feels that one can outsmart a cop on the beat, and even a judge on the bench; and, in any event, there is little to fear in the way of punishment.

Continued in next issue

CUSTOMS CORNER

The wedding ring

The wedding band serves a dual purpose: the ring -- a smooth gold band, free of engraving or gems, a simple unbroken circle -- alluding to a marriage unmarred by conflict or distraction. But it also plays a very important role in the wedding ceremony, serving as the object through which the betrothal is effected. Thus following the technical requirements pertaining to the wedding band is crucial. The wedding band must belong exclusively to the groom - it is *his* gift to his bride. Often, the parents of the groom or bride purchase the band. In such an instance it must be ascertained that the band was given to the groom as an unconditional gift before the chupah.

According to kabbalah and Jewish tradition, the wedding band should be pure gold and totally unadorned.

The bride must not give the groom a ring beneath the chupah. If they so wish, this may be done at a later time.

A WORD

from the Director

In this week's Torah Portion the verse says:

"And Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and weep for her." (23:2)
Rashi comments: "The narratives of Sarah's death and the Binding of Yitzchak follow one another, for through the announcement of the Binding, that her son had been prepared for slaughter and had almost been slaughtered, her soul fled from her and she died."

Why would a righteous woman like Sarah expire upon hearing that her son was prepared for slaughter for the sake of Hashem? On the contrary, she should have been proud!

When Sarah heard of Abraham's mission to Mount Moriah, she marvelled at his spiritual heroism. Had she been told that Yitzchak was sacrificed, she would have been filled with joy at the fact that her son was accepted by Hashem. She, however, was told that he had almost been slaughtered.

Upon hearing this, she was terribly saddened, because she presumed that at the last moment her son was found unsuitable. Sarah feared that perhaps her influence was in some way inadequate and her education of Yitzchak imperfect. This was so profoundly saddening that her soul departed.

This teaches us a lesson. When Sara thought that there was a blemish in her son's education, she didn't hide behind the possible faults of her child, or some of the deficiencies that Isaac's surroundings may have impressed upon him, but she scrutinized herself, examining her part in his education - and in this her whole life was consumed. We too must seek to find the parts within ourselves with which to educate our children, constantly re-evaluating, in order to give to our children a wholesome education which will guide them throughout their lives.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

PROTECTED BY ESAU'S ANGEL

And then there was the time that a group of Jewish community leaders of Medzhibuz came to the Baal Shem Tov, also a resident of Medzhibuz, to discuss a serious problem.

"It is not a happy occasion that brings us," they explained with a worried tone of voice. "There is an army officer, who despises Jews and does everything he can to torment us. We have just learned that he is about to become our mayor. What a disaster! He will make our lives unbearable. Only you can help us, Rebbe."

"I am already aware of this problem but I don't know what can be done. Esau's guardian angel is at this man's right side. I am powerless against him."

"And so what if Esau's angel supports this man!" the townspeople responded. "Are we not more influential? Are we not G-d's own children?"

It was such utterances of implicit faith that made these townspeople so beloved to the Baal Shem Tov.

"We will see. There are good ministering angels on our side too. Let us wait and see how this turns out," he answered.

The townspeople heard this and were satisfied. "Thank G-d. We can rely on the Rebbe," they said to each other.

Medzhibuz had an annual fair which was attended by farmers and merchants from near and far. This fair was the main attraction of the town. Everyone found something of interest, be it buying, selling or just having fun.

On the morning the fair was about to open, the Baal Shem Tov arose early to pray with the Jewish merchants that were hurrying to open their booths. Following the morning prayers, the Baal Shem Tov announced "I am also going to the fair."

This statement alarmed the merchants. They warned the Rebbe, "You can't go today. The army officer we told you about will ride through the market place on his horse and strike whoever is in his way with a leather whip. He makes a special point of lashing Jews, whom he particularly despises. Please, Rebbe, don't go."

"And why should I be any different than the other Jews who feel his whip?" the Baal Shem Tov replied. Wearing his *capoteh* (a long black suit-coat) and his *shtrimmel* (round, flat fur hat), the Baal Shem Tov walked to the market place, followed by a group of his followers.

"Good morning," he said to whomever he passed. However, the townsfolk could not bear to look at his glowing face and answered his greetings with averted eyes.

Suddenly everyone froze. The anti-Semitic officer galloped into the market place on his huge, powerful, black horse. His uniform was pressed, his high boots polished to a sheen, and with a gleeful smile, he flicked his whip right and left in sadistic pleasure. He accompanied his lashes with shouts of fury, "Dirty Jews, out of my way!"

Everyone tried to flee from his path but few could escape the long reach of his vicious whip. Right and left it swung, tearing at coats, upsetting piles of merchandise, relentlessly striking whomever it could.

Only the Baal Shem Tov stood his ground. Following his example, his disciples behind him were equally steadfast.

The officer soon reached the group of Chassidim. When he saw they weren't fleeing, he grew furious. "Out of my way!" he shouted and brought his whip down.

It was fortunate that the Baal Shem Tov was wearing his *shtrimmel*. The whip fell on it, merely grazing the Rebbe's forehead. But its tip did leave an imprint and a drop of blood shone brightly upon his forehead. To add insult to injury, the officer spat at the group and galloped on.

Everyone crowded around the Baal Shem Tov to make sure he was alright. They were concerned about both his wound and the shame he had suffered at the hands of this cruel officer, a truly despicable person.

But, the Baal Shem Tov didn't appear to be upset and maintained his usual calm demeanour. "When the fair is over this evening, I want everyone to come to my *shul*," he announced.

At the end of the day, everyone came to the shul and found many tables set with platters of cake and shnaps. "Drink *a'lechayim*!" he happily urged each newcomer. "Eat something! Rejoice!" exclaimed the Baal Shem Tov.

Everyone could not help but wonder why they were celebrating.

Finally, after much anticipation, the Baal Shem Tov arose and spoke. "I have good news for you. Today, when the officer so arrogantly rode through the market place, I whispered a prayer.

'G-d All Mighty, this evil man, in his great pride and haughtiness, sees himself as the ruler of Your children. Does he really deserve such greatness?'

"Thank G-d, my prayer was accepted and the heavenly court ruled against him. Therefore, I am happy to inform you, my brothers and sisters, that this wicked man lost his future post as mayor. Now eat, drink and be grateful to G-d."

And so it was

Biographical note:

Rabbi Yisrael, the Baal Shem Tov ["master of the good Name"], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He passed away on the festival of Shavuot in 1760. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And he gave straw and provender for the camels... And there was set food before him to eat (24:32-33)

First he fed the animals, and afterward he was served food. For it is forbidden for a person to taste anything until he feeds his animals. (*Midrash HaGadol*)

We will call the girl, and inquire at her mouth (24:57)

From this we learn that a woman should not be given in marriage without her consent. (*Rashi*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 25 OCTOBER 2013

| BEGINS | ENDS |
|----------------------------|------|
| 7:28MELBOURNE | 8:28 |
| 7:20ADELAIDE | 8:18 |
| 5:43BRISBANE | 6:38 |
| 6:27DARWIN | 7:18 |
| 5:42GOLD COAST | 6:37 |
| 6:17PERTH | 7:14 |
| 6:58SYDNEY | 7:56 |
| 7:08CANBERRA | 8:07 |
| 7:25LAUNCESTON | 8:28 |
| 7:28AUCKLAND | 8:27 |
| 7:34WELLINGTON | 8:37 |
| 7:27HOBART | 8:31 |
| 6:42BYRON BAY | 7:37 |
| 6:33SINGAPORE | 7:22 |



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS CHAYEI SARA
21 CHESHVAN • 25 OCTOBER

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT: | CANDLE LIGHTING: | 7:28 PM |
| | MINCHA: | 7:35 PM |
| | KABBOLAS SHABBOS: | 8:05 PM |
| SHABBOS: | SHACHARIS: | 10:00 AM |
| | LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA | 9:42 PM |
| | MINCHA: | 7:15 PM |
| | SHABBOS ENDS: | 8:28 PM |
| WEEKDAYS: | SHACHARIS: | |
| | SUN-FRI: | 9:15 AM |
| | MON-FRI: | 8:00 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 7:35 PM |
| | MAARIV: | 8:25 PM, 9:00 PM |