

LAMPLIGHTER

14 Cheshvan
Parshas Vayeira

1164

7 November
5775/2014

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In the Torah portion of Vayeira we learn of Yitzchak's brit which took place when he was eight days old. The Midrash relates that Yitzchak and Yishmael argued about who was more cherished. Yishmael said he was more cherished as he was circumcised at age 13. Yitzchak said: "I am more cherished for I was circumcised when I was but eight days old."

One can easily understand why Yishmael felt more cherished: at age 13 he was old enough to protest. That he did not do so was surely reason enough for him to feel superior. But why did Yitzchak reason that he was the more cherished of the two?

The overall theme of circumcision is, as the verse says: "This shall be My covenant in your flesh, an eternal covenant." Circumcision effects an eternal bond between the individual and G-d.

Concerning a covenant formed between two dear friends there is no ironclad guarantee that the covenant will truly be everlasting, for mortals are subject to change. When, however, it is G-d who makes the covenant -- in this case, His covenant with the Jewish people through circumcision -- then it is truly eternal.

The reason that circumcision is performed at the tender age of eight days -- at a time when the infant has absolutely no say in the matter -- may be understood accordingly.

Whatever a person does on his own initiative requires preparation; adequate time must therefore be allowed. However, the covenant that is set in motion through circumcision is effected entirely by G-d. In other words, circumcision is not an act through which a person binds himself to G-d. When a Jew is circumcised G-d binds Himself to the person with an "eternal covenant."

Thus, there is no reason to wait until the infant will come of age and consciously affirm and participate in this act, for in any event he does nothing at all -- the entire covenant comes from G-d. He is therefore circumcised at the earliest age possible.

Thus, the merit of Yitzchak's circumcision at eight days surpassed not only that of Yishmael, but also the circumcision of his father Abraham. For Abraham was commanded to circumcise himself after he had attained the highest degree of perfection possible for a created being to achieve on his own. Thus, Abraham's circumcision lacked the indisputable indication that the covenant, which came as a result of the circumcision, came entirely from G-d.

Only with the circumcision of Yitzchak, at the age of eight days, was it clear for all to see that his was a covenant that had nothing whatsoever to do with his created being, but was entirely dependent on G-d.

Adapted from: The Chasidic Dimension

The Step Beyond Self

By Tali Loewenthal

A crucial turning point in Jewish history was the Akedah, the "Binding [of Isaac]," in which Abraham was called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice of bringing his son as an offering to G-d. Isaac was not a child, but a mature man. Nonetheless he too showed himself completely willing to give his life in order to fulfill G-d's will.

There have been many examples in the past and also in the present of people giving up their lives in order to achieve a certain goal for themselves (albeit in heaven, whether imagined or real) or for their family or their people. In some cases sacrifice of one's life can actually be an extreme form of aggrandizement of self, or a mode of committing a horrific crime.

The case of Abraham and Isaac is different: it was a step of surrender of self. The sacrifice of Isaac would have meant the cancellation of everything that Abraham had spent his life trying to achieve. Let us consider this in context.

Since the time of Noah and the Flood, the world had gradually again sunk into a morass of idol worship and ugly practices. G-d the Creator was totally forgotten. Then Abraham came on the scene. He reached the conclusion that there must be one Master of all existence. Soon he began to teach others. Eventually, guided by G-d, Abraham embarked on his life's mission-to bring awareness of the Creator back into the world. He did this through manifesting the quality of Chesed, Kindness. He and his wife Sarah - who, like her husband, was an inspiring teacher - gathered around them loyal adherents who even followed them when they made the journey to the Land of Canaan.

However, a serious problem was the fact that Abraham needed a successor. Sarah was beautiful and wise, but she had not borne a child through all their years of marriage. Abraham did not feel that even his closest disciples, like his servant Eliezer, were fitting as successors in the task to reveal Monotheism to the world. He yearned for a son. Sarah asked him to take her maidservant Hagar as a concubine, and Ishmael was born. Then G-d told him that Sarah herself would miraculously give birth to a child at the age of ninety, and that this son, Isaac, rather than Ishmael, would be Abraham's successor. Through Isaac a sacred nation, the Jewish people, would come into being. They would dwell in the Land of Israel and reveal knowledge of G-d to all humanity.

Suddenly, when Isaac was grown up, and Ishmael had long before been sent away, Abraham received the Divine call to transcend his self, his quality of Kindness, and his future. To go to a distant mountain alone with his son and offer him up to G-d. No one would see this: it would be a private event, abrogating the life-long work of a great religious leader. G-d's own promises to Abraham were here being reduced to naught!

Abraham made the step which goes beyond self. Infinite G-d rules all, and is unlimited. As finite human beings, we cannot understand G-d. Abraham was ready to obey-and in fact, that was sufficient. Isaac was not offered up. Instead a ram was offered-and consequently on the Jewish New Year a ram's horn is blown, reminding us of this event.

The effect of Abraham's step beyond Self was to transmit to us, his descendants, a similar ability to go beyond fashion, convention, and ordinary understanding in our path through history, and through life, dedicated to G-d. Abraham's actions helped ensure the existence and continued flowering of our people for all generations.

Slice of LIFE

The editor of Kfar Chabad Magazine, Rabbi Ahron Dov Haperin writes that once when traveling in the U.S.A. he ate a Shabbat meal in a Chabad House in California.

There were many guests at the table and the conversation was lively, when suddenly a strangely silent young man with very long hair and a wild look in his eyes entered the room, took a seat at the table and just stared blankly at his plate refusing to respond or react to anything around him.

He sat that way for a good half-hour, and just when everyone forgot about him, he suddenly looked up at the large picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe that was hanging on the wall (as in every Chabad House), lunged from his seat, pulled it down, threw it to the ground and began screaming "Leave me alone!"

The other guests subdued him and finally, when he had calmed down and drank some water, he began to talk.

He was the oldest child in a rich Jewish family from San Francisco. After graduating High School he enrolled in Berkley University and quickly became totally involved in the 'hippy' scene'.

Eventually, when the drugs and partying lost their charm, he made his way to India and 'lost himself' in one of the many spiritual cults there.

He cut off all contact with this mundane, illusionary world i.e. 'his old self', and it goes without saying

from his parents, and had decided to devote his life to meditation and spiritual achievement.

Then, suddenly one late afternoon, after almost two years of complete silence he was overpowered with a sudden tremendous longing to see his parents. His heart ached for home. He tried to meditate, to think of something else but to no avail. The longing plagued him constantly for days until, weeping like a madman, he left his guru traveled to the nearest town, called home and asked his amazed parents to send him a plane ticket as fast as possible.

When he arrived home totally bewildered as to why, his parents were overjoyed to see him (despite his weird zombie-like appearance) which made him open up and tell them what had transpired in the last few years.

Then, when he got to the part about his sudden nostalgia a week or so ago, his father suddenly interrupted and said "Tell me, exactly when did this happen, what day and at what time? The reason I'm asking," the father continued, "is because a strange thing happened to me last week. I went with a group of businessmen on a trip organized by Chabad to see the Lubavitch Rebbe.

Some people asked the Rebbe for advice or for more blessings but I just took the dollar, said thank you, and continued walking.

But then the Rebbe called me back. His secretary pulled me back, and the Rebbe gave me another dollar and then said; 'This is for your oldest son'. I thought to myself 'That was a bizarre thing for him to say, especially because I hadn't seen you

in so long, and how did he know that I even had a son?'

And now, just a few days later... here you are!! It's really a miracle!!"

When they calculated the time of boy's longing they realized that it began just minutes after his father received that dollar.

And that is what brought about his outburst in the Chabad House a few days later. He wanted to return to his guru in India where he felt so 'at peace' but try as could he couldn't manage to break away from home, his heart just wouldn't allow him.

"So here is the dollar back!!" He screamed as he pulled the dollar his father received from the Rebbe out of his pocket, "Take it back and tell him to leave me alone!!!"

The story is not over.

Years later Rabbi Halperin met with a Knesset (Israeli Congress) member called Professor Avner Shaki (ob'm), who told him a similar story that had occurred to him a week or so earlier.

He was in Chabad House somewhere in California for Shabbat, and in the middle of the meal three hippies entered, sat down uninvited, began eating with their hands, refused to make blessings and were generally obnoxious.

He turned to the Shliach (Chabad House manager) to ask him to do something to get rid of them but the Shliach comforted him and said that he shouldn't worry. "In fact" the Shliach added, "a few years ago I was much worse, and if you don't believe me, ask the editor of the Kfar Chabad Magazine."

This Shliach was the young man that the Rebbe saved from India years ago.

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the **Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

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ISSUE 1164

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The future Redemption will follow in the wake of our service of G-d through the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos. This service refines the world and transforms it into a vessel for Divinity. For, as is explained in Chasidic philosophy, the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai heralded a new world order, whereby the loftiest of spiritual revelations, even those of the future Redemption, are intimately integrated into this world. (*Likkutei Sichos, Vol. I, p. 235*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Av, 5740 [August 7, 1980]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of July 30th, in which you write about your youngest son. Considering the seriousness of the situation, I am confident that you will not rest content with what has been done in this matter until now, and will intensify your efforts, both by your husband and yourself, as well as through enlisting the aid of friends, to do everything possible to prevent the tragedy. For, when it comes to a Jewish heart, one never knows what and how will come the moment of truth and proper response.

I you will let me know the Jewish names of all the members of your family for whom you request a blessing, together with their mother's Jewish name, as is customary, I will remember each and all of you in prayer.

It is my duty to call your attention to the following, which I trust you will accept in the spirit it is offered:

All the members of a Jewish family constitute one organism, and when one part of it needs special treatment, it can be done in one of two ways: either directly, if possible, or indirectly, through strengthening the other parts of the body, particularly those that govern the functions of the entire organism. Applying this illustration to the present case, it is well to bear in mind that the head of the family is called Baal Habayis [head of the household], and the wife is called Akeres Habayis [the foundation of the household], corresponding to the heart of the family. Thus, strengthening the commitment to the Torah and Mitzvoth on the part of the parents has a beneficial effect upon all the members of the family in the same direction. Of course, it may sometimes entail certain difficulties by having to make some changes, perhaps even radical changes, in regard to habits and lifestyle, etc., but on the other hand, considering the far-reaching benefits, and especially the fact that parents surely would not consider anything too difficult if it can be beneficial to their children, of what significance can any difficulty be, especially as in most cases these are often exaggerated. In any case, a Jew is always required and expected to live up to G-d's Will; how much more so when a special Divine blessing is needed.

At the same time, there is the assurance that however the everyday life and conduct was in the past, a Jew can always start a new life through Teshuvo (which literally means "return" to one's essence).

As we are about to enter the month of Elul, you surely know of the Jewish custom that from the beginning of the month of Elul, Jews wish one another a happy new year. I will, therefore, conclude with prayerful wishes to you and all your family for a truly Happy New Year, and may G-d grant that even before Rosh Hashono you should have good news to report to this effect.

With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Modeh Ani

The Talmud refers to sleep as 1/60th of death -- and for good reason. Our eyes are closed. Conscious powers become weakened, and we lose control of many of our faculties. Thus upon waking while still in bed, even before he washes his hands, one should put their hand together and say "Modeh Ani" to thank Hashem for returning one's soul. The text is "Modeh anee lefanecha melech chai vekayam, she-he-chezarta bee nishmatee b'chemla, raba emunatecha" with a pause between B'chemla and Raba.

The recital of "Modeh Ani" is applicable to all; men, women and children.

Kippah-Skullcap

Since the days of old it was the Jewish custom to keep the head covered at all times to remind us of the existence of G-d above, instilling within us Yira'at Shoma'im [fear of heaven]. Thus, the skull cap became a familiar part of the Jew's attire. Here are a few laws about the Kippah

- (1) One should not walk bare-headed (the distance of) four cubits.
- (2) Nowadays there is an additional prohibition, not only to walk a short distance, but even to sit in the house bare-headed.
- (3) It should be even worn during sleep at night.
- (4) Small children should also be raised to cover their heads.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Thursday, the 20th of Marcheshvan, is the birthday of the fifth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Schneersohn, born in 5621 (1860). Often referred to as "the Maimonides of Chasidut" for his terse and practical summarizations of complex subject matter, he also founded Yeshiva Tomchei Teminim in 1897, which continues to flourish around the world.

It was during the years of the Rebbe Rashab's leadership that the famous Mendel Beilis blood libel case occurred in Russia. Accused in 1911 of the age-old charge of ritual murder when the body of a Christian boy was found near a brick oven owned by a Jew, Mendel Beilis, an innocent employee, was arrested and ordered to stand trial, despite the absence of any incriminating evidence. A two-year anti-Jewish campaign ensued, culminating in the trial itself. The judges had been carefully selected for their narrow-mindedness, and the jury consisted of ignorant peasants who believed in the myth of Jewish ritual murder.

The Rebbe Rashab was instrumental in helping the Jewish defense attorney, Oscar Gruzenberg, prepare his case, providing him with some 33 books to consult. In a letter of encouragement and support, the Rebbe also instructed him to conclude his defense with the verse "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad" ("Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One"). The Rebbe also gave Gruzenberg a blessing to succeed in his objective.

Oscar Gruzenberg listened to the Rebbe's advice. At the end of his very lengthy presentation in court, he turned to the prisoner sitting on the defendant's bench and said, "Mendel Beilis! Even if these judges close their ears and their hearts to the truth and find you guilty, do not be discouraged. Be as willing for self-sacrifice as every other Jew who ever gave up his soul for the sanctity of G-d's name with the declaration, 'Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One!'"

Mendel Beilis was acquitted.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED

Once...

THE RIGHT CHALLAH

Reb Meir'ke of Mir, one of the chassidim of Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch, once interrupted a journey in order to enter an inn to say his prayers. While he was there, a whole caravan of wagons arrived, full of itinerant paupers with their wives and little waifs. Reb Meir'ke saw one man in their midst, of old and venerable appearance, whose face bespoke a rare purity of mind. As he watched him closely, the innkeeper's wife placed bread and other food on the table. While the other poor folk all grabbed their slices to allay their hunger, that old pauper walked deliberately over to the water basins, and examined a dipper carefully to see of it was suitable for netilat yadayim. Before washing his hands, however, he took up the slice of bread over which he was due in a moment to say the blessing -- but he immediately laid it down, took instead some other bread that was there, recited the blessing over it instead, and sat down to eat.

The paupers all left the inn soon after, and the old man left with them. But throughout his prayers and his evening meal, Reb Meir could not stop thinking about that aged beggar. Why did he not eat that slice of bread?

He had to find out. He approached the landlady and asked: "Excuse me, but when did you bake that bread?"

"Why, yesterday or the day before," she replied.

"And do you recall," He continued, "whether you remembered at the time to separate the tithe of challah from the dough?"

"Woe is me!" exclaimed the woman. "I forgot to take off the tithe!"

It was now clear to Reb Meir'ke that the old man was divinely inspired. He immediately harnessed his horses and made haste to catch up to that ragged crew. He found them soon enough, but his man was nowhere to be seen.

"Where is that old man who was with you?" he asked.

"Why should you ask after that crazy old fellow?" they answered. "He tagged on to us a few weeks ago, and he travels wherever we travel, and he sleeps wherever we sleep. But he behaves as if he was out of his mind. Nearly every day he leaves us for a while and stands alone for some time among the bushes in the forest. And once, in midwinter, when he saw a lake frozen over, he broke the ice and went for a dip in that freezing cold water."

When Reb Meir'ke followed the direction in which they pointed, he came upon this strange man standing under a tree, entranced in his thoughts, his face burning like a brand.

"Rebbe, bless me!" he exclaimed.

The pauper asked him for a copper coin, and then gave his blessing.

When in due course, Reb Meir'ke again visited Lechovitch to see his rebbe and told him the whole story, the tzadik said: "How fortunate you are! For the man who gave you his blessing was none other than the saintly Rabbi Leib Sarahs!"

This same Reb Meir'ke once lost his way while traveling alone through a forest. As evening fell he spotted a house with a stable next to it, and on entering the house found no one at home but a woman who was busy cooking.

"Is there room here to lodge for the night?" he asked.

"Most certainly," she said.

But when the owners of the house returned later that night, he saw at once that they were a gang of murderers. Nor was he at all reassured to overhear the women telling them: "We have a very worthwhile guest..."

There was no chance to escape; every door and every window was locked.

He therefore found himself in a quiet corner, and as he recited Vidui, wept over his confession with the honest tears of a man who is nearing his end.

When they had finished their crude meal, they pounced on him from all sides and bound him hand and foot, ready for the slaughter.

"Open up, there!" a raucous voice snarled at the window.

The murderers were so alarmed by the insistent battering on the shutters that they were afraid to oblige. But the cold was bitter outside. The impatient callers broke down the door, and a noisy crowd of sturdy Russian merchants, who had also lost their way, burst their way in.

In a flash they gathered what was going on before their eyes. A couple of them unbound the poor victim, while the others seized the murderers and trussed them up. At daybreak they lifted them on to their wagons and drove off to the nearest town, where they handed them over to the local police.

"You won't believe this," they said to Reb Meir'ke, "but we often take this road, and know it well. In fact we have never lost our way around these parts. But today for some funny reason we somehow got mixed up and strayed from the highway, until we landed here. It is clearly the finger of G-d, so that we should be able to save you from death."

When Reb Meir'ke next visited Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch, no sooner had he appeared in the doorway than his rebbe said: "It is all because of you that I couldn't sleep that night. But thanks to the fact that you once gave a coin to Rabbi Leib Sarahs and received his blessing, those merchants lost their way and arrived out there just in time to save you."

Biographic Notes:

Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch (? - 15 Tishrei 1810), disciple of R. Shlomo of Karlin; known for the fervour of his prayers. Exceedingly charitable, particularly toward the poor of Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbi Leib Sarahs (1730-4 Adar 1796) was held in high esteem by the Baal Shem Tov. One of the "hidden tzadikim," he spent his life wandering from place to place to raise money for the ransoming of imprisoned Jews and the support of other hidden tzadikim. The Lubavitcher Rebbe stated the possibility that Rabbi Leib Sarahs and the Shpoler Zeide are the same person.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Because the cry of [the victims of] Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous (18:20)

In Sodom it was decreed: "Whoever hands a piece of bread to a pauper or stranger shall be burned at the stake."

Plotit, the daughter of Lot, was married to one of the leading citizens of Sodom. One day, she saw a pauper starving in the street, and her soul was saddened over him. What did she do? Every day, when she went to draw water from the well, she would take some of the food from her home in her pitcher and feed the pauper. But the people of Sodom wondered, "This pauper, how is he surviving?" Eventually the matter became known and she was taken out to be burned, and her cries rose to the Divine Throne. (*Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 25*)

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].

CANDLE LIGHTING: 7 NOVEMBER 2014

BEGINS		ENDS
7:42	MELBOURNE	8:45
7:32	ADELAIDE	8:32
5:52	BRISBANE	6:48
6:31	DARWIN	7:22
5:51	GOLD COAST	6:47
6:28	PERTH	7:26
7:10	SYDNEY	8:09
7:21	CANBERRA	8:21
7:41	LAUNCESTON	8:46
7:41	AUCKLAND	8:42
7:50	WELLINGTON	8:55
7:43	HOBART	8:50
6:51	BYRON BAY	7:48
6:32	SINGAPORE	7:22



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEIRA

14 CHESHVAN • 7 NOVEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:42 PM
	MINCHA:	7:50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:20 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:34 AM
	MINCHA:	7:40 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:45 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	MON-FRI: 8:00 AM
	MAARIV:	7:50 PM
		8:45 PM