

# LAMPLIGHTER

17 Cheshvan  
Parshas  
Vayeira  
**1270**  
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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.

## A Dialogue Between G-d and Abraham

By Mendel Kalmenson

Way back when, before the Democrats or Republicans were even thought of, a debate of an entirely different nature occupied the biblical stage.

Ishmael and Isaac were having it out. The topic: circumcision. "See here," says Ishmael, "I am more precious in G-d's eyes, since I was thirteen when I had mine done."

"I beg to differ," answered Isaac. "I was eight days old. Now that's gotta be way cooler."

You know, if I wasn't Isaac's grandson, I think I would side with the great uncle. Let's face it. Ishmael has a point.

He had the choice. He felt the pain. Here was a guy who chose to serve G-d. That's real.

Isaac, on the other hand, was barely in diapers. Eight days old. What did he know? He didn't feel a thing (well, almost).

The Hebrew word for the special mitzvah of circumcision is brit, which translates as "covenant."

What is a covenant?

Two friends enjoying a relationship decide to take it a step further. One turns to the other and says, "Now things are great. This is going real well. But there may come a time when we may not feel for each other. You may not appeal to me anymore. The qualities that drew me to you and you to me may fade or dissipate. What then?"

So they make a pact, a covenant. An unconditional commitment that come what may, they will always be there for each other. They have taken a relationship that was limited to reasons and made it unlimited and pure. They have taken something from the conscious and moved it to the realm of the subconscious, from the external to the internal and finally to the eternal.

"On that day, G-d formed a pact with Abraham..." (Genesis 15:18).

G-d: Today I am in love. You are My beloved. You are overflowing with faith, a paradigm of self-sacrifice, a lover of G-d, a man filled with kindness...

There will come a time, though, when your children will look slightly different. They will rebel and complain, ignore and forget. They will be unfaithful to Me time and again. They will run, they will hide, they will try to assimilate.

What then?

Abraham: And what about Egypt and Pharaoh, 40 years in the desert, wars and more wars, eviction from the Holy Land, the destruction of both Holy Temples, exile after exile, the Spanish Inquisition, the persecution and oppression, the Cossacks and the Crusades, the ghettos and pogroms, the yellow Stars of David, Kristallnacht and Auschwitz, the Intifada and the Katyushas, missiles and suicide bombers? My little Shalhevet... What then?

"On that day, G-d formed a pact with Abraham."

An unconditional pact. A commitment for all times. A bond of eternity. "This is the pact that you should observe, between Me and you and your seed forever; every male should be circumcised."

On the other hand, Ishmael's choice was limited. There was a reason behind his choice. He chose because... "Because" is a limitation. It is conditional and, ergo, short term.

A human's finite fingerprints have no place in the world of an infinite pact.

It is precisely this choice that is out of place.

Isaac, on the other hand, slept like a babe.

He didn't get in the way. That's the only way it can work.

Forever and ever.

# Slice of LIFE

## The Power of the Kotel

by Rabbi Uriel Vigler

Ten years ago, when my wife and I hosted our first High holiday services in Manhattan, I didn't know a single person in the Upper East Side. We held the services at the Jewish National Fund on 69th Street. We were nine people in shul, six of whom were close family members - my brother-in-law, Pinny Lew, his son, three friends and myself. I stepped onto the street and prayed that Rosh Hashana not for health nor wealth, but for a minyan.

I remember standing there noticing countless Italians filing past me heading to the Italian embassy right across the street. Amid the chaos, an elderly couple, clad in athletic gear, jogged by me. I stopped them, and upon confirming they were Jewish, invited them to join the services. At first they were reluctant due to their attire, but after coaxing them they agreed and ended up having a great time. It was at the kiddush meal after services that day that I realized just how important it is to make it a good one, for we hit it off right away and remained good friends since. Two years down the road, the husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Three months before his passing I helped him put on tefilin for the first time in his life. Right there and then we celebrated his "Bar Mitzva."

A short while later, I became acquainted with the couple's son with whom I also became very good friends. For years I tried to get him to don tefilin, but he always politely declined. Once he had I nearly had him - we had set up an appointment, but he cancelled at the last minute. Two weeks ago he emailed me to say he was visiting Israel for the first time

in his life. I immediately told him he has to tour Jerusalem and especially the Kotel (Western Wall). I hooked him up with a friend of mine who was happy to show him around.

Anyone who has been to the Western Wall can testify to the magic aura that surrounds it. I was privileged to pray there just last Shabbat morning, and although I have prayed there countless times, the power of it never fails to captivate me. People from all over the globe are united by a pile of bricks, and yet the energy is electrifying. Indeed when my friend touched the precious stones for the first time, he became very emotional and broke down crying.

My Chabad colleague, Rabbi Weiss, who is stationed at the Kotel went over to this man and gently asked him if he'd like to don tefilin. He agreed immediately. In fact he emailed me right then to inform me of the good news, and the next day he told me he had returned to the Kotel to put on tefilin again. I thought, "Wow! I try for years to get him to put on tefilin and a total stranger gets him to do it within minutes!" Surely the Kotel stirred something in his soul, connected him to G-d in a most profound manner!

Just in case you're wondering what brought Rabbi Vigler to Israel that Shabbat when he prayed at the Kotel, here's his explanation:

The Torah places strict demands on keeping one's word, and not fulfilling a vow is considered a serious misdeed.

About three years ago, there was a young woman by the name of Tali who was very involved in our community. She used to celebrate Shabbat with us each week and she became a beloved member of our congregation. She was the one who set up the kiddush and the person who my wife Shevy and I always knew we could turn to whenever we needed anything. In fact she was so close with our family that when my son Mendel was born on Shabbat

morning and we needed somebody to watch my daughter Rosie, Tali was the person we called.

Like many Israelis in the area, Tali was trying to find her spouse. After two years of searching and dating, New York just didn't seem to be the right place for her. It simply wasn't going anywhere. She kept on dating but felt that while there were many guys "on the market," they too had many options available to them and for that reason were not able to commit to a firm relationship. The truth is that I agreed with her that this is a problem in Manhattan. Since there is such a wide variety of options for men and women some people have a hard time settling on one person. In the back of their minds they are thinking that perhaps there is something better out there.

During one of our many conversations I assured her that every person has a soul-mate in the world and that her spouse is out there somewhere. The Talmud states that 40 days before a child is born it is announced whom it will marry. In fact I even promised her that when she did find her husband I would personally perform her wedding!

Well when I gave her my word I didn't realize that she would get married at the busiest time of the year for me. Her wedding was scheduled for Friday at 1:00 p.m. in Israel, the week before Rosh Hashana. For the entire week before the High Holidays we are extremely busy. In addition, on the Saturday night after her wedding we would be holding a special service to recite the Selichot prayers! Of course, as the rabbi, I have to be in our shul the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana!

However, like we read in the Yom Kippur liturgy, a word is a word and so I boarded a plane to Israel to fulfill my promise to Tali. My flight arrived right before the wedding and I took the first flight out of Israel on Saturday night. I was in Israel for just over 24 hours... but a promise is a promise!

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ISSUE 1270

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

When Abraham was on his way to sacrifice Isaac, he told those who had accompanied him: "Stay here with the donkey...We will worship and then return to you." (Gen. 22:5) The words "Stay here - shvu lachem po" can also be translated as "you will return." Abraham saw that the Holy Temple would be built and then destroyed, after which we would be exiled. He also saw that Moshiach would bring us back and rebuild the Holy Temple. Abraham told them "you will return" to rebuild the Temple. "With the donkey" refers to Moshiach, who is described as "a humble person riding on a donkey."



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Could the Pope Have Saved Jews During the Holocaust?

With reference to your cousin about whom you write in your letter, it is clear that her being in a place where there are few Jews, while on the other hand there are gentiles who are busy exercising their influence, to gain converts, is a most undesirable situation. For, every one of us, and even Tzaddikim, says every morning in prayer, "Bring us not to temptation."

As for her request for literature, you should send her everything that our office in Paris has published in the French language. (The address: Rabbi B. Gorodetzky, 80 Rum St. Antoine, Paris). If she also understands English, you ought to send her also some English publications which you can select from our catalogue, which you think may be of interest to her, since you know her personally.

I must say that I was greatly surprised that she writes to you about the benevolence of the gentiles in her environment. Does she not know of the terrible tragedy of the millions of Jews who were savagely put to death by the Germans and their cohorts, while the rest of the world the gentiles looked on with complete indifference? Even the last Pope who could have saved many Jews by mere oral intervention, refused to do so. It is a well-known fact that when the Germans occupied Rome, and the Jews were interned in concentration camps, the German commander hesitated to harm them, having been told that it would arouse the displeasure of the Vatican. However, checking personally with the Vatican whether this was so, the Pope refused to confirm it, knowing full well what the denial would mean for those thousands of unfortunate Jews, and although he had been pleaded with to say just one good word in their behalf. As a direct result, thousands of Italian Jews were deported to the extermination camps. This is all the more noteworthy since the Pope knew well that his attitude would not remain a secret, and yet he could not find it in his heart to say a good word about the Jews. Despite efforts to misrepresent the facts, the evidence is irrefutable, as it was given by the very persons who attempted to obtain the Pope's intervention in behalf of the Jews.

That a Jewish girl should be oblivious of this and fall under the influence of her gentile environment, is beyond comprehension.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Why is Challah Braided?

**Question:** Why do we braid the challah bread baked for the Shabbat meals?

**Answer:** Good question. Most challahs are braided with either three or six strands of dough. I recently heard an interesting explanation for the six-braided loaves.

Shabbat represents the idea of unity. The six days of the week are the paradigm of diversity. They are like the six directions in our three-dimensional world—north, south, west, east, up and down. During these days we are in a search outward, full of action and initiative, trying to master our environment. Shabbat, on the other hand, represents the inner point. Shabbat points inward, and is full of the unity and the peace that comes with unity. That is why we greet one another with "Shabbat Shalom," Shabbat of peace and unity. Shabbat also represents the innerness of absorbing the blessing from the six workdays and directing them to our homes and our lives.

Perhaps the braiding of the challah, which is eaten at the Shabbat table, also represents this idea of unity: how we tie everything together, bringing all the diversity in our lives together for a peaceful harmony and unity that only the Shabbat can achieve.

The two challahs together are thus also symbolic of the twelve showbreads which were placed every Shabbat on the table in the Holy Temple sanctuary. This is just one possibly reason, and it is certainly not mandatory to use six-strand challahs.

Mrs. Chana Weisberg

## A WORD

from the Director

*This Monday, the 20th of Marcheshvan, is the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab, fifth in the Chabad dynasty. The following incident took place shortly after he became Rebbe in 1883:*

*A Jew once came to the Rebbe and begged him for a blessing. Faced with a difficult problem, he was troubled and distraught. But the Rebbe refused to help. "There is nothing I can do," the Rebbe said. "I cannot help you."*

*The man left the Rebbe's chamber and burst into tears. At that moment the Rebbe's brother, Reb Zalman Aaron, passed by, and asked him what was the matter. The Jew poured out his heart and told him what the Rebbe had said.*

*Reb Zalman Aaron immediately went and confronted his brother. "Is that how you treat someone who comes to you for help?" he asked him. "A Jew asks for a blessing, and you tell him you can do nothing? Why, even now that man is sitting outside your door, weeping in agony and distress."*

*At that the Rebbe Rashab put on his gartel and asked for the man to be led into his room a second time. The Rebbe gave him his blessing, and he was delivered from his terrible predicament.*

*It sometimes happens that a person may not yet be worthy of receiving G-d's blessings. When the Rebbe Rashab told the man that he couldn't help him, his words were so painful that his spirit was shattered. With a broken heart he called out to G-d, and was thus transformed into a suitable vessel. The Rebbe could then bless him, and his blessing was fulfilled.*

*Every Jew is good in his innermost core, wishing sincerely to fulfill G-d's command. However, if he stumbles and transgresses, he is no longer worthy. Pride and ego can then cover up his true self, causing him to overlook his shortcomings.*

*When a Jew is in pain his pride disappears, and his inner, essential goodness is allowed to resurface. In this way he becomes an appropriate vessel to contain all of G-d's abundant blessings.*

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Rabbi Sholom Dovber, the fifth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, known as the Rebbe Rashab, once was travelling to Petersburg by train. When he reached his destination he claimed all of his baggage except one valise which was nowhere to be found. His attendants searched the entire train station, but that suitcase which contained several important books was lost.

Several days later the Rebbe was visited by a young man named Reb Avrohom Eliyahu Guarary. The young man was newly married and had invested his considerable dowry in a business which had unfortunately failed. Now, he was left with only one thousand rubles and had come to seek the Rebbe's advice.

No sooner had he entered the room when the Rebbe said, "Ah, Reb Avrohom Eliyahu will bring me back my suitcase from the train station!" He handed the young man the claim and sent him off, unaware that the case was missing.

The train station was deserted and Reb Avrohom stopped to have a smoke. He noticed a man watching him and staring at his pack of cigarettes. "Do You smoke?" Reb Avrohom asked the man. "Yes," he replied.

The young chasid offered the gentile a cigarette and they were sharing a smoke together when the man asked, "What are you doing here at such an hour?"

Reb Avrohom replied affably, "There is a rabbi by the name of Schneersohn visiting, and I am here to pick up his suitcase." "That's a handy coincidence. You see, I'm the warehouse manager. Why don't you give me your baggage ticket and let me see if I can find your case."

The manager went into the large warehouse and instructed his workers to bring him the suitcase, but to his consternation, they couldn't find it. He ordered them to check each piece of baggage carefully. Sure enough, they found the valise lying behind a large crate. Reb Avrohom thanked the man profusely and returned to the Rebbe, valise in hand.

The Rebbe was very happy to receive his lost suitcase and said to the young man, "I am now in your debt. How can I help you?"

Reb Avrohom poured out his whole story of the ten thousand ruble dowry which he had lost in an unsuccessful business. Now he had only one thousand rubles and wanted to know how to make the most of it. The Rebbe advised him, "Go to the city of Koritz and there G-d will provide you with a livelihood. Just make sure that you bring along food for the trip."

Reb Avrohom returned to his wife and told her what the Rebbe had said. His wife baked and cooked all kinds of delicious foods for his journey, and they chatted excitedly about the success they faithfully anticipated.

Reb Avrohom arrived in Koritz on a hot, humid day. He decided to cool off by taking a swim in the Korchyck River. After the refreshing swim, he sat down to eat some of the delicious food his wife had packed. He noticed another Jew nearby and Reb Avrohom, being a friendly type, offered him some of his wife's food. They struck up a conversation and Avrohom told the stranger the story of his failed business and the blessing he had received from the Rebbe.

"I would like to help you," said the man. "Come back here tomorrow. I'm going to bring a friend with me. Perhaps between the two of us, we can figure out a way to help you out. But don't forget to bring along some of your wife's great cooking," the man added, smiling.

The next day the three men met and concluded a deal. "I have decided to sell you my entire shipment of cigarette papers for a thousand rubles," said the friend. "I hope you are successful and make a big profit from it." They shook hands, and went their separate ways. Reb Avrohom headed for the town of Kremenchug to claim his goods. That town was a center of cigarette manufacturing and there he would be able to sell the papers. He headed for the factory of a certain Reb Tzvi and made him a proposal: "I will sell you my entire stock for 10,000 rubles," he said.

"What! The paper is worth 2,000 at the very most."

"No," replied Reb Avrohom, "I want to recover my whole loss. I will take ten thousand or nothing." And it was impossible to move him.

Reb Tzvi listened to the young man's whole story and decided he would go to Koritz himself and try to make a similar purchase. But when he arrived he was disappointed to find that there was no cigarette paper to be had. In fact, there was a severe shortage in the whole city. The seller had given Reb Avrohom his last lot for the thousand rubles out of pity for the young man.

Reb Tzvi lost no time. He telegraphed Reb Avrohom, requesting him not to sell his supply of cigarette papers to anyone else. He then rushed back to Kremenchug and paid the asking price of 10,000 rubles.

Having recovered his loss, Reb Avrohom returned to the Rebbe for further instructions.

"But, Reb Avrohom Eliyahu," said the Rebbe this time, "my debt to you is already repaid!"

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Let a little water be fetched, I pray you, and wash your feet (Gen. 18:4)

At first glance it seems odd that Abraham, who personally provided every amenity for his guests, should ask them to fetch their own water to wash their feet. But as Rashi explains, in those days the Arabs who traveled the desert worshiped the dust. Abraham, whose mission was to teach people about G-d, did not want even a trace of idolatry tracked into his tent. Had Abraham brought the water (or performed any other action to nullify their idolatry), it would not have been considered a true nullification, as the concept of idolatry is already completely alien to the Jew. His Arab guests had to do it themselves, thereby sanctifying G-d's Name even more.

(Eil HaMiluim)

And when he saw them, he ran to meet them (Gen. 18:2)

"Receive every person with a cheerful countenance," declared Shammai, the great Torah Sage. Even if one bestows all the treasures in the world on another, if his face is angry, it is considered as if he gave him nothing. On the other hand, if a person greets his fellow in a friendly manner, even if he gives him nothing it is considered as if he gave him a great fortune.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 18-19 November	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:55	8:49
Adelaide	7:44	8:46
Brisbane	6:01	6:58
Darwin	6:35	7:28
Gold Coast	6:01	6:58
Perth	6:39	7:38
Sydney	7:29	8:22
Canberra	7:33	8:34
Launceston	7:56	9:03
Auckland	7:54	8:57
Wellington	8:05	9:12
Hobart	7:59	9:08
Byron Bay	7:01	7:59

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEIRA • 17 CHESHVAN • 18 NOVEMBER

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:55 PM
	MINCHA:	8:05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:30 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:29 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	7:50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:49 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS:	8:00/9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:50 PM
	MAARIV:	8:50 PM