

LAMPLIGHTER

14 Cheshvan
Parshas
Vayeira
1320
3 November
5778/2017

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Vayeira, hints at a spiritual yet mundane aspect of Abraham and Sara's relationship.

Our Sages of the Talmud teach: "How does a woman help a man?...If a man brings wheat, does he chew the wheat? If he brings flax, does he wear the flax? It follows, then, that she brings light to his eyes and puts him on his feet!"

A person's mission in life is to elevate and refine the material aspects of the world, imbuing them with spiritual content. But man brings only wheat and flax, he is concerned with raw materials, with generalities. He is somewhat removed from the down-to-earth realities, the details. It is woman who transforms the wheat into food and the flax into clothing, who tangibly implements our lifetime mission.

Abraham and Sara. Man and woman. When Abraham found out that his wife, Sara, was to bear a child, he prayed. From the lofty, detached viewpoint of his great saintliness he asked, "Would that Ishmael might live before You!" He hoped that Ishmael would continue to live in fear of and worship G-d. Abraham saw in Ishmael, future father of the Arab nations, the potential for living a G-d-fearing life.

But Sara saw reality. She saw Ishmael's devastating influence in the home, particularly over her son Isaac. She demanded that Abraham remove the harmful influence of Ishmael from the home.

Abraham could not find peace with the idea of sending his oldest son away. Although G-d had already informed Abraham that He would fulfill His covenant specifically and exclusively through Isaac, from Abraham's perspective it seemed that Ishmael should stay in the house. Only in his own home could Abraham hope to influence Ishmael in a positive manner.

But G-d declared to Abraham, "In all that Sara says to you, listen to her voice, for in Isaac shall descendants be called to you." The commentator Rashi explains that this statement indicates that Sara's power of prophecy was superior to Abraham's. It was Sara, the down-to-earth woman, the foundation of the home, who recognized the harmful influence.

An Impromptu Intervention

By Eli Block

When the car flips, or flames leap from a crumbling home, there are those ordinary people who do extraordinary things. What is the process? What propels these men and women to defy the natural instinct for self-preservation and save a stranger? Is there a pause of deliberation where one consciously overrides personal risk in favor of another's life? Or is it instinctive, an internal flip of the switch that sends one to act first and reflect later?

A team of Yale researchers collected 51 statements by some of these situational heroes.

"I'm thankful I was able to act and not think about it."

"I just did what I felt like I needed to do. You don't think about someone making that big a deal out of it."

"...I think it was just instinct. Kind of like my tendency...."

They then asked 300 volunteers to assess these statements. Unsurprisingly, faced with these testimonies, the volunteers described the bravery as "intuitive," and not "carefully reasoned."

Abraham was kindness incarnate. The Midrash colorfully describes the Divine attribute of kindness pouting, "as long as Abraham treads the earth, I have no work to do." Abraham's tendency was gentle, not combative; warm and respectful, not abrasive. So when a conflict rose between the shepherds of Abraham and his nephew Lot, Abraham assumed a conciliatory stance and offered Lot his choice of the land.

Which makes his protestation of Sodom and Gomorrah's impending destruction so remarkable. G-d comes to Abraham to reveal his designs for Sodom; what follows is man's first rebuke of G-d.

...And Abraham was still standing before the L-rd. And Abraham approached and said, "Will You sweep away the righteous with the wicked...Far be it from You! Will the Judge of all the earth not do justice?"

That Abraham should be the first mortal to challenge the very moral arbiter of the universe is arresting. Abraham loved G-d and was prepared to undergo great personal harm in pursuit of spreading awareness of Him. How did Abraham override his soft, obedient nature to stand up to the G-d he would die for?

Read those introductory phrases closely, "Abraham was still standing before the L-rd. And Abraham approached...." Why does Abraham "approach" if he was "still standing before" G-d? What transpires in the space between those verses? Rashi, the classic commentator, offers that Abraham did not close a geographic gap, but an internal one. He trespassed his own proclivity for peaceful reconciliation into the foreign land of confrontation. Faced with the possibly unjust destruction of an entire city, Abraham discarded his natural composition and "approached—to speak harshly."

Abraham, then, wrote the primordial script for heroic intervention.

It happens in one transformative moment. The heroes of the Yale study do not pause to weigh the predicament of another against their own natural interests and habits. Just as Abraham did not consider the repercussions of railing against the all-powerful Being whom he served.

On a less dramatic but no less meaningful scale, we are all presented with injustices that challenge our moral mettle. Almost twenty percent of the population has a disability, which translates into almost everyone knowing a friend, family member, or acquaintance with a disability. It is almost inevitable that this individual will confront some sort of barrier in his or her daily routine—this can be infrastructure that inhibits mobility and access, or attitudinal discrimination spurred by harmful stereotypes.

And then it happens as you are sitting in a meeting, or taking a walk, or with a friend for coffee, or at your family gathering—and there's no smoldering car or city about to be decimated, but a fellow man or woman being treated as less than that. But your superior is your superior, and the system was designed by powerful people, and the owner of the shop is none of your business. You are on Abraham's stage; he has already written the script. Discard your calculation, and "approach" with the innate knowledge that every one of us deserves respect and dignity.

Slice of LIFE

The Rebbe's Children

By Diane Abrams

I first met Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, after I had just become engaged to the Bronx borough president, Robert Abrams. Rabbi Mowshowitz, an acquaintance of Bob's, arranged an appointment for us with the Rebbe, for us to receive a blessing prior to our marriage.

I remember arriving at 770 at midnight, but we did not enter the Rebbe's room until 3:00 AM. The Rebbe was very gracious, and that appointment started an ongoing relationship which continued for many years.

The Rebbe believed in women's involvement in communal affairs. On one of our visits to the Rebbe, Bob, as a public officer, was describing his communal activities since he last saw the Rebbe. At one point he requested the Rebbe's guidance on a particular communal issue. The Rebbe turned to me and asked, "So what about you? We are in the period of women's liberation. You must have a view. What's your opinion on the issue?"

Another story: One time, in the course of a farbrengen (public chassidic gathering), Bob presented the Rebbe with an honorary proclamation in honor of his birthday. He informed the Rebbe that he was bringing this proclamation on behalf of all the citizens of the Bronx, Jews and non-Jews alike. The Rebbe asked him, "Where is your wife?" I remember seeing Bob pointing towards the women's section. Later Bob told me that he had told the Rebbe that I was right there, behind the glass window.

When I was forty-eight years of age I had only one child, Rachel, and my husband and I wanted another child. We went to a doctor who was

considered an expert in the field, and she told us that we had less than a five percent chance of having another child. Throughout the time when we were visiting doctors and doing research on the possibility of having another child, we had not told anyone about this, not even our parents. We were hoping and praying alone that we would have another child.

Every year on Hoshana Rabbah (the final day of the holiday of Sukkot), we would come to the Rebbe to receive a traditional piece of honey cake and a blessing for a good and sweet year. That year we arrived directly from a funeral which Bob and I had attended; it was the first time we had not brought Rachel with us to the Rebbe.

Out of the blue, the Rebbe looked at us and gave us his blessing for "an addition to the family within the next year." I was stunned. How could he have known that this is what we wanted? We had made no such request of the Rebbe, nor did we tell any of the Rebbe's secretaries about our wish. It was tremendously encouraging to me, and many times throughout the year I thought about the Rebbe's blessings, picturing the moment when the Rebbe gave us that special blessing.

Six weeks later, on Thanksgiving, I tested myself on one of those home pregnancy tests and it turned blue, indicating a positive result. I remember asking Rachel what color it was, and she said it was blue. I asked her again, "Are you sure it's not white?" And she said, "No, Mom, it is definitely blue!"

I immediately went to the doctor's office for a "real" test. Actually, it was our daughter's pediatrician, because most doctors were not in on Thanksgiving Day. He called back to say that the test was positive . . . but there must be some mistake, because it simply could not be that I was pregnant! Instead, he advised that I take another test. Sure enough, the second test was positive as well. I was absolutely ecstatic.

A year later, in my fiftieth year, I gave birth to a wonderful girl, Binyomina, or Becky, named after my father-in-law, Binyomin, who was a very fine and special man.

The day I went to the hospital, Rachel, ten years old at the time, was at home. The phone rang, and Rachel answered. It was Rabbi Krinsky, one of the Rebbe's secretaries, calling at the Rebbe's behest. "Is everything okay with your mom?" he asked.

"I think so," Rachel responded. "She went to the hospital a few hours ago. I think she is about to have a baby." As it turned out, I was delivering our second child at that moment when Rabbi Krinsky called on the Rebbe's behalf!

When Becky was a few months old, we went for our traditional annual Hoshana Rabbah visit to the Rebbe. Normally, the line of people waiting to receive the Rebbe's blessings extended for three or four blocks along and around the Crown Heights streets, but the chassidim were always so very nice to us. When our car would arrive, somehow, somebody would come and lead us to the front of the line, sparing us the long wait.

We had the little infant in our hands. The Rebbe said, "I see you brought the addition to your family." This was a year later, and the Rebbe used the exact words he had used one year earlier. I said that we wanted to thank the Rebbe very much for giving us this beautiful child.

"No, it wasn't me," the Rebbe said. And he lifted his hand and pointed towards the heavens.

This was the Rebbe, always shifting the focus away from himself. I remember another occasion when Bob presented a proclamation to the Rebbe, and he praised the Rebbe for all his work. The Rebbe's response? "It is not me, it is the movement."

The Rebbe was always focused on the other person, his sensitivity to others heightened to an incredible degree. He practically never left his house, but he knew all that was going on worldwide. This was one of his great powers, his great strength. When standing before him, you felt that you were the only person in the world. He never made you feel that he was greater than you; he brought out the best in you.

The Rebbe himself had no children, yet he gave so many people blessings for children. We are all his children.

Published by The Chabad House of Caulfield in conjunction with the

Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.

Editor: Shlomie Naparstek

P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

The Lamplighter contains words from sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.

ISSUE 1320

WEEKLY VIDEO



Please do not scan or access this QR code on Shabbat or Yom Tov.

Content printed with permission from

Chabad.ORG

The Official homepage for worldwide Chabad-Lubavitch movement that promotes Judaism and provides daily Torah lectures and Jewish insights



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

The Lecturer's Focus

By the Grace of G-d
Lag B'Omer, 5721 [May 4, 1961]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of the 8th of Iyar [April 24th], and I was pleased to read in it about your efforts to strengthen Yiddishkeit [Judaism] among the youth.

You write that you have been invited to lecture to a youth group, and ask for some suggestions in this connection. You surely know my general principle, that the accent should be placed on action, in accordance with the teaching of our Sages, "The essential thing is the deed." This applies to every activity, including lectures, which must bring some practical benefit to the participants in their daily life, in the actual fulfillment of the Mitzvot [Divine commandments]. Thus, while it is difficult to give definitive suggestions with regard to the lecture, not knowing the actual background of the audience, the emphasis should be placed on the need of religious practice and experience in the everyday life, and not to limit it to special occasions or special days, such as the High Holy days, Shabbos and Yom Tov [Shabbat and Jewish holidays]. For, the greater part of life has to do with the everyday, and it is the purpose of Jewish life to bring in sanctity even into the week days, and in the every day contact with the secular environment.

As we are now in the days of Sifirah [days of counting between the holidays of Passover and Shavuot], connecting the Festival of Pesach [Passover], the Season of Our Liberation, with the Festival of Shavuot, the Season of Our Receiving the Torah, we are especially reminded that true freedom can be accomplished only through the Torah and Mitzvot, and on the principle of Naase before Nishma [doing before comprehension], again emphasizing that the practice must come before the theory.

May G-d grant you success in your activities to strengthen and disseminate true Yiddishkeit to the utmost of your ability, and this will surely be the channel and vessel to receive G-d's blessings also in your personal needs.

Hoping to hear good news from you,
With blessing,

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Is Flipping Burgers Charity?

Question: I know we are meant to give a tenth of our income to charity. What if I volunteer my time for a charity? Can I deduct that from the required ten percent?

Answer: There are two distinct types of charitable acts: tzedakah and chesed. Tzedakah means justice, doing that which is just and fair. Chesed means kindness, doing more than is fair and acting out of the goodness of your heart.

A tenth of your income is not really yours. It was entrusted to you temporarily to give you the privilege of being able to help the needy. It is only fair that you pass it on to its rightful owner. This is tzedakah.

But beyond the obligation to give tzedakah, we must do acts of chesed. This is the kindness we do with our own time and money, like helping our friend move, visiting someone who is unwell or hosting a guest in our home.

Volunteering your time could be tzedakah, and it could be chesed, depending on the circumstances. The question is, would you normally have been paid for your time? A computer technician who offers to fix a charity's computer system pro bono can deduct the amount he would have earned from his ten percent tzedakah obligation, because he would normally have been paid for the work he did. But if that same guy manned the barbecue at a charity event, that is chesed, not tzedakah. He is not usually paid to flip burgers, so the time he spends doing it is not deductible from his tithing obligation.

Another difference between tzedakah and chesed: There is a limit placed on how much tzedakah one should give. Average income earners should not give more than a fifth of their income; otherwise they may endanger their financial stability. However, when it comes to chesed, there is no limit to the kindness you can do.

A WORD

from the Director

The twentieth of Cheshvan (this year November 9) is the birthday of Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber (1860 - 1920) known as the Rebbe Rashab.

There is a beautiful story concerning the Rebbe Rashab illustrating the high esteem in which he held every Jew.

One of the Rebbe Rashab's followers, Reb Monye Monissohn, was a wealthy gem dealer. Once, when they were sitting together, the Rebbe spoke very highly about some simple, unlearned Jews.

"Why do you make such a fuss about them?" Reb Monye asked the Rebbe.

"Each one of them has many special and noble qualities," explained the Rebbe.

"I can't see any of these qualities," said Reb Monye.

The Rebbe remained quiet. A while later, he asked Reb Monye if he had brought his package of diamonds with him. Indeed, Reb Monye had brought the diamonds but asked the Rebbe if he could display them later, when they could be seen to their best advantage.

Later, Reb Monye took the Rebbe into a different room and arranged the diamonds for him to see. Reb Monye pointed to one gem in particular, extolling its beautiful color and quality.

"I can't see anything special in it," the Rebbe said.

"That is because you have to be a "maven" to know how to look at diamonds!" explained Reb Monye.

"Every Jew, too, is something beautiful and extra-ordinary," the Rebbe said. "But you have to be a maven to know how to look at him."

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Six Hundred Dinars Minus Six

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (who lived in the 2nd century CE in the Holy Land) was possibly the holiest man that ever lived. Besides authoring the 'Zohar', being a master of the oral Torah and a miracle worker, he was one of the few Jews in history who spent every instant of his time learning Torah; no casual conversations, coffee breaks and certainly no vacations—only Torah.

So everyone was surprised when, the day after Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year's Day) he showed up at the door of his nephews' home and began to lecture them about the importance of giving charity to the poor.

Although they didn't really have money to spare and totally didn't understand the urgency of what he was saying, they listened attentively; when Rabbi Shimon spoke everyone listened.

"Give with an open hand," Rabbi Shimon adjured. "Don't worry about tomorrow, G-d will provide. And most important: write it all down. Every penny you give, write it down and carry the list with you at all times. I want to see a big sum at the end of the year."

Rabbi Shimon made them promise and he left.

Almost a year later they had another strange visit—from a posse of Roman soldiers with an order for their arrest. Someone accused them of selling silk without paying the tax to the government. They began weeping and protesting their innocence but to no avail.

Trembling with fear, they were led off to prison where they were given a choice: either pay an outrageous fine of six hundred dinar or produce an even more outrageously priced silk garment for the king, both of which were utterly beyond their means.

When Rabbi Shimon heard what had happened he immediately rushed to the prison and got special permission to visit his relatives.

"Where is the account of the charity you gave?" He asked. "How much did you give?"

"Here," they replied as one of them pulled the small parchment from his pocket.

Rabbi Shimon took the account and noticed that they had given almost six hundred dinar; they were just six dinar short. "Do you have any money with you?" he asked.

They produced six dinar that they had sewn into their garments in case they needed it. Rabbi Shimon took the money, bribed one of the officials, the charges were dropped and they were released.

Rabbi Shimon explained to them what had happened. "This past Rosh Hashanah I dozed off and dreamt that the government would demand of you six hundred dinars. That is why I told you to give charity, to negate the decree."

"Then why didn't you tell us about that?" they complained. "We would have given the money immediately and spared ourselves a lot of anguish."

"But then," replied Rabbi Shimon. "You wouldn't have done the mitzva for its own sake."

Challahs from Heaven

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was so poor that he and his wife often had nothing to cook for Shabbat. Every Friday, before Shabbat, she would throw a burning coal into the oven, so that smoke would drift out of her chimney and the neighbors would assume that she had what to cook.

A nasty neighbor said, "I know that they don't have anything. Let me go and see what all that smoke is about."

When she knocked on their door, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's wife was

mortified and went to hide in an inner room. The nosy neighbor entered anyway. A miracle occurred, and she found the oven full of loaves of bread and a mixing bowl full of dough.

She called, "Come! Come! Bring the spatula. Your bread is starting to burn, and you need to get it out quick!"

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's wife said, "That's what I went into the inner room for."

Indeed, the sages say, she was telling the truth. She was so accustomed to miracles that she wasn't surprised that coals had turned into bread.

Later, Rabbi Chanina's wife asked him, "How long will we have to suffer like this?"

"What should we do?" he replied.

She said, "Pray that we be given something of value."

He prayed, and a hand-like apparition stretched down from the heavens and gave him a golden table leg.

He later dreamed that he saw all the righteous people in the world to come eating at three-legged tables, while he and his wife were eating at a table with just two legs.

He asked his wife, "Will it be okay with you if all the other righteous people are eating at three-legged tables, while you and I are eating at a table that's missing one of its legs?"

"What should we do?" she asked. "Pray that it should be taken from you."

He prayed, and it was taken from him.

The sages remarked that the second miracle was greater than the first, because tradition says that the heavens give but they don't take back.

PARSHAS IN A NUTSHELL

G-d reveals Himself to Abraham three days after the first Jew's circumcision at age ninety-nine; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three guests who appear in the desert heat. One of the three—who are angels disguised as men—announces that, in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs.

Abraham pleads with G-d to spare the wicked city of Sodom. Two of the three disguised angels arrive in the doomed city, where Abraham's nephew Lot extends his hospitality to them and protects them from the evil intentions of a Sodomite mob. The two guests reveal that they have come to overturn the place, and to save Lot and his family. Lot's wife turns into a pillar of salt when she disobeys the command not to look back at the burning city as they flee.

While taking shelter in a cave, Lot's two daughters (believing that they and their father are the only ones left alive in the world) get their father drunk, lie with him and become pregnant. The two sons born from this incident father the nations of Moab and Ammon.

Abraham moves to Gerar, where the Philistine king Abimelech takes Sarah—who is presented as Abraham's sister—to his palace. In a dream, G-d warns Abimelech that he will die unless he returns the woman to her husband. Abraham explains that he feared he would be killed over the beautiful Sarah.

G-d remembers His promise to Sarah, and gives her and Abraham a son, who is named Isaac (Yitzchak, meaning "will laugh"). Isaac is circumcised at the age of eight days; Abraham is one hundred years old, and Sarah ninety, at their child's birth.

Hagar and Ishmael are banished from Abraham's home and wander in the desert; G-d hears the cry of the dying lad, and saves his life by showing his mother a well. Abimelech makes a treaty with Abraham at Beersheba, where Abraham gives him seven sheep as a sign of their truce.

G-d tests Abraham's devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son. A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac's place. Abraham receives the news of the birth of a daughter, Rebecca, to his nephew Bethuel.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 3 - 4 November	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:39	8:40
Adelaide	7:29	8:29
Brisbane	5:50	6:45
Darwin	6:30	7:21
Gold Coast	5:49	6:45
Perth	6:25	7:23
Sydney	7:07	8:06
Canberra	7:18	8:17
Launceston	7:37	8:42
Auckland	7:38	8:39
Wellington	7:46	8:51
Hobart	7:39	8:45
Byron Bay	6:49	7:45

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEIRA • 14 CHESHVAN • 3 NOVEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA:	7.45 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.15 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.35 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.35 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.40 PM
	MAARIV:	8.25 PM