

LAMPLIGHTER

21 Cheshvan
Parshas
Chayei Sara
1321
10 November
5778/2017

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The end of this week's Torah portion, Chayei Sara, tells of the passing of Abraham and the order of succession of his descendants: "And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac." Isaac, Abraham's only son from his beloved wife Sara, was chosen to continue the new path he had forged in the service of G-d. The children of Abraham's concubines, however, received only a token of their father's wealth: "But to the sons of the concubines...Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son." Isaac was designated his father's heir, despite being younger than Ishmael and the others.

This week's Haftara contains a similar incident that occurred toward the end of King David's life. When Adoniyahu, David's eldest son, sought to usurp his father's throne, Batsheva reminded David of the oath he had made that Solomon, the younger son, would reign. King David agreed to honor the oath and Batsheva declared, "May my lord, the King David, live forever!"

What is the significance of both these choices? When Abraham designated Isaac his heir, he thereby bestowed upon him the special relationship he enjoyed with G-d, the essential "chosenness" he would pass on to his children after him. Abraham's choice of Isaac allowed every Jew to acquire that same eternal bond with G-d as his birthright, an immutable bond that can never be severed.

Similarly, Batsheva's declaration, "May my lord, the King David, live forever!" is an expression of G-d's promise that "the kingship will never be cut off from the progeny of David." Dominion over the Jewish people belongs solely to the descendants of King David through his son Solomon, ultimately one of whom is King Moshiach.

The common thread between these two incidents is the underlying principle that the actions of an immutable G-d are eternal and unchanging. Just as G-d Himself experiences no change, so too are His choices fixed and immutable. Batsheva's declaration, "May my lord, the King David, live forever!" will find ultimate fulfillment when King Moshiach arises and ushers in the Final Redemption.

Indeed, we find that the wholeness of the Jewish people is connected to the concept of kingship, for it was only after King David's descendants were chosen to rule that the Jewish nation was at peace, the Holy Temple was built in Jerusalem and G-d's Divine Presence dwelt in the Holy Temple. Likewise, the Final Redemption of the Jewish people will only commence when the ultimate King of the House of David arises, to initiate the Ingathering of the Exiles and build the final and indestructible Third Holy Temple, speedily in our day.

Someone Has to Pay Retail

By Elisha Greenbaum

A friend of mine used to be mortified when shopping with his mother over her insistence on haggling over each and every item purchased. She would negotiate with everyone: store owners, door-to-door salesmen, even the check-out clerks at the supermarket. Poor kid would be absolutely squirming with embarrassment every time his mother went through her "is this the best price you can offer?" routine.

He must have picked up something though, because now he's the one intimidating shop assistants and bargain hunting his way through life. He claims it's not Jewish to pay retail and the only thing better than 50% off, is 2 for the price of 1.

Strange then that the archetype Jew, our ancestor Abraham, turned down an even better bargain. After his beloved wife passed away, Abraham went plot shopping. He discovered the perfect piece of real estate, a burial cave in Hebron, and enquired about the purchase price.

He was offered the "bargain" of a lifetime: free land. The locals held him in such high regard that they begged him to accept the burial plot, free of charge. Incredibly, not only did he refuse this gift, Abraham insisted on paying full price on his eventual purchase (Genesis 23:9).

But why be so high-principled? Would it have made a difference had he graciously accepted their offer? Why should the way in which he assumed possession affect the end-use of the land?

What's wrong with it?

My wife Leah and I recently noticed something peculiar about the functions we organize for our synagogue. Over the years we've played around with a number of formats and systems to attract locals and members to Torah classes and activities. When we first started, we believed that advertising free-entry was a sure catch to draw in the locals. After all, aren't we here to demonstrate the accessibility and appeal of Judaism?

On reflection, we've noticed that those lecture-series and programs for which we advertise a cover charge seem to attract almost double the turnout than for those where we charge no entry fee, and rely on outside sponsorship to make up the shortfall. Of course we make certain to publicize that no one will ever be turned away for lack of funds, but in general we now charge at least a token fee for most activities.

Not only does this not seem to deter attendance, but I honestly believe people value their time more for having paid for it. It is almost as if when people shell out for entertainment, they give themselves the liberty to drain the cup of amusement to the full, and make certain to gain as much as possible from the lecture and classes they've paid for. Economists have some fancy formula describing how people are influenced by the "sunk-cost," but from my observation, people become suspicious when offered something for free.

Abraham was not just looking for a cheap plot in which to bury his wife; he was investing in the future. His children and grandchildren visit that burial site till today and when we pray to G-d there, and ask our zeida and bubbe to intercede on our behalf, we're demonstrating our appreciation for his priorities.

Bargain hunting for luxuries may be fun, but when it comes to the fundamentals of life: our professional pride, choice of spouse, and commitment to G-d, everyone wants to know that they've put in maximum effort to succeed, and that the final reward will be worth the price.

Slice of LIFE

How I Became a Halachic Jew

By Rachel Barmatz

Over the years, I've had the privilege of meeting, befriending and reading about many righteous converts. They come from all walks of life, like my close friend who is the daughter of Dominican immigrants or another friend raised by Bible-thumpers on a remote ranch in Texas. There's still another who grew up atheist in Communist Russia. They are holy souls plucked from the most improbable origins. Their backstories are sometimes so remote and obscure that surely only Divine providence could have led them into the fold.

And then there's me—the boring kind. The kind who lacks an exotic story. My story is similar to those of many Jewish baalei teshuva who grew up with a Jewish identity, but only discovered observance later in life. There was just one hitch in my case. My mother's conversion had never been a halachic one, so it wasn't until I was nearing adulthood that I realized that my Jewishness was in question. I look like a typical Hollywood rendering of a Jew; I studied Hebrew as a child; I went to a Reform Jewish day school and learned the basics of the songs, holidays and customs. So acquaintances are often surprised to learn that I am a convert. With non-observant friends, it becomes even more difficult to explain. “But you were always Jewish. You mean you converted to Orthodoxy, right?” Well, not exactly.

It all started when my mom started to explore Orthodoxy when I was a teen. She had always wondered at

the modestly dressed Jews walking the streets around our Baltimore neighborhood on Saturdays.

“Aren't you curious about the way they live? How they devote their lives with so much conviction and passion?” my mom would ask me staring out her car window as we drove by.

“Huh?” I would respond, looking around me as if for the first time. “No, not really.”

I barely ever took notice of those people. I figured they just liked to walk for exercise. When she finally decided she was going to “convert,” this time according to halachah, I did not think much of it because I figured that there was a conversion process for becoming Orthodox. Even when she explained to me that she had never been Jewish in a valid way and that the same was true for me, at the time I just brushed it off. “But only Orthodox people think that and I'm not Orthodox, so why should I care?” Still, being Jewish was an important part of how I saw myself, and it silently irked me that anyone would ever think otherwise about me.

When I went off to college and met other Orthodox Jews my age for the first time at Hillel, and started hanging out at the Chabad House and attending Jewish events in the city, I started to feel differently. The Torah wasn't something defunct or a bunch of old fables; it was something entirely true that you could live with every day of your life thousands of years since its inception. What I was getting glimpses of was special—something I wanted to be a part of but couldn't fully be a part of, at least without feeling like an impostor. I decided that my desire to learn more about a Torah lifestyle was worth more than my indignation over how Orthodox Jews viewed me. And from there, I started a long road to becoming a Jew.

I went to my first Orthodox minyan (traumatizing; I had no idea what was going on). I started attending and

hosting Shabbat meals, even though I had to get Jews to help me with the cooking. I read books and joined Jewish learning initiatives through outstanding outreach organizations, and slowly let go of any resentment about how others might view me. Instead, my focus turned to how I viewed myself. Eventually, the desire to be a halachic Jew became all-consuming and all-encompassing. The experience of one friend before she converted sums it up: Each week she would cry anguished tears when she was compelled to commit an act to break Shabbat since a non-Jew is prohibited from keeping a complete Shabbat.

I have observed that converts vary widely in how they feel about their status and in their reticence to share that identity. A few friends are extremely private about it, even taking pains to hide it. This is easier for some than others, whose appearance or the basic facts and circumstances of their lives and their families make it more difficult to hide. On the other end of the spectrum, others speak publicly and proudly about the process, inspiring and educating our communities, and allowing a window of understanding into their experiences.

So what about me and others like me, the “boring” converts? Should we take advantage of the fact that our secret is safe? Once we've “dunked” in the mikvah, should we put it behind us, not having any reason to look back?

Luckily, the Torah allows each of us to process our conversion in our own individual way. It takes pains to protect and include converts, and ensure them their privacy to the greatest degree possible. But it also honors and praises converts, so that those who wish to be open about their identity can feel proud and treasured. In the end, this is a decision converts have the freedom to make for themselves, joining seamlessly into the collective or celebrating this difference as personally meaningful.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By The Way

By the Grace of G-d
4 Tammuz, 5711 [July 8, 1951]
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Greeting and Blessing:

Regarding your trip to Ireland, it would be appropriate if you could find a way that the trip should also generate spiritual "income." Obviously, earning a living in the material sense is an important thing, as explained in the "revealed" part of Torah and especially in the teachings of Chassidism; nevertheless, there is something not quite right when ten chassidim travel to a place twice and a third time, slaughter several hundred animals, receive their pay in pounds or francs, and return home without having had a refining effect--without having done anything to further their mission in life (at least not anything discernible to the physical eye).

It is told that in the time of the Mittler Rebbe there was a directive to all chassidim who came to Lubavitch, that while traveling - or, more correctly, walking - back home they should repeat the chassidic teachings they had learned in every place they passed through, even the smallest hamlet that was on their route home. For although the purpose of their journey was to be in Lubavitch and return home, [the Rebbe wanted that] the places they passed through should be an integral part of this purpose, not a hiatus.

I am certain that upon intensive contemplation (as my father-in-law the Rebbe elaborates in his writings on the nature of a true contemplation) you will indeed conclude that despite the fact that the purpose of your trip to Ireland is to earn a livelihood for yourself and your family (may they live) and return home, there is much to be achieved in your doings and your way-stations toward this end, so that it should be recognizable that this is the work of chassidim who are connected with my father-in-law the Rebbe.

May the Almighty grant that, beginning with your next trip, you should find the proper means to add at least a little bit of light to our dark world.

With blessings for a safe journey and success in your work, and regards to the entire group, may they live.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

I'm Ashamed of My Husband's Kippah

Question: *I have been married for nearly a year now. My husband is a wonderful guy, and I feel extremely blessed. However, I have one issue that does not seem to be going away. When we were dating, we were both newly religious. He was slightly more observant than I was, but we both respected and understood each other. The one thing I haven't gotten over is that he wears his kippah all the time. It's such a rarity in our social circles, so it makes me feel uncomfortable and, at times, even ashamed. As much as I wish I could simply not let this bother me, it does. Can you help me change my attitude?*

Answer: You need to examine why the kippah bothers you so much. Here's my guess:

Your husband's kippah doesn't bother you at all. It bothers other people, and you have internalized other people's opinions. So you feel ashamed.

Maybe someone in your family has made comments about it. Or maybe you have seen strangers giving him odd looks. Or maybe you think your friends think it's weird. And maybe you are right.

But it's not your problem. It's theirs.

We do this often. We take on other people's issues as our own, and we feel like we need to justify ourselves when others don't approve. But we don't.

The problem is not yours—but the husband is. And just as you respect him for so many other things, you can respect him for this too, as soon as you quiet down the internal voices that are making you feel self-conscious.

And there is a lot to respect about your husband. He does what he believes is right even though it is not the norm. He isn't just following the crowd. He is himself in all situations, without needing to adjust his image to fit in.

The rarity of your husband is not that he wears a kippah, but that he is who he is, and he is real about it. There aren't so many guys like that around. Be proud of him, and be proud of yourself. You chose well.

A WORD

from the Director

The Torah portion is Chayei Sara - the Life of Sara. Generally, the name of the Torah portion is taken from the first few words of that portion, and it reveals much about the content of the portion.

This week's portion, however, at first glance seems to be different. It speaks of Sara's death and Abraham's purchase of a proper burial spot for her. It also discusses that Abraham sent his trusted disciple Eliezer on the mission of finding a wife for Isaac, and the subsequent marriage of Isaac to Rebecca. Why, then, is this portion, which deals not one iota with Sara's life here on earth, called the Life of Sara?

To this question the Rebbe brings the most exquisite answer. When speaking about life, life in its truest sense, and certainly the life of the first Matriarch of our people, we speak not of the transitory life of this world. We are, rather, indicating eternal life.

When a child continues in the righteous ways of his parents, the spiritual influence of the parents continues and endures forever, as the Talmud teaches: "As long as the offspring are alive, he is alive." As long as the offspring continue in the path of their parents, the parents are alive.

Since Isaac and his wife Rebecca followed in the footsteps of Sara, Sara truly remained "alive" in the most accurate sense.

May we all merit to have our children follow in the path of our righteous Matriarch Sara, thus assuring eternal life for ourselves and for them.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The Pious Thief

Of all the stories told about the great Rabbi Yisrael, the Maggid of Kozhnitz, this is perhaps one of the strangest and the most wondrous.

Among Rabbi Yisrael's many chassidim was a learned man, a pious Jew who was regarded by all as a righteous individual. Like so many others in Poland in those years, he was beset by poverty.

He had, thank G-d, many mouths to feed, but no steady source of income. "Rebbe," he said one day to Rabbi Yisrael, "please advise me. How can I support my wife and children? I simply cannot bear to watch them suffer, hungry and inadequately clothed. Is there anything I can do?"

"It appears to me," replied the holy man, "that all avenues of earning are closed to you. There is but one channel through which you can receive your sustenance, but it is a profession you would never consider."

"My dear teacher," replied the man, "I am so desperate to feed my family that I will do anything. No profession, no matter how lowly, is beneath my dignity."

"If you insist," said the sage grudgingly, "I can tell you, but you will not be happy with what you hear. It is revealed to me from the heavens that the only profession in which you can succeed is thievery. If you turn to stealing, nothing can stand in the way of your success."

Sadly, the chassid returned home. "How can I ever steal?" he thought to himself. "It is against the will of G-d."

Time passed, and the chassid and his family grew more and more hungry. One night, he began to reason with himself. "G-d allows us to break the holy Sabbath for the sake of saving a life," he figured. "Why should stealing be any different? My family will soon starve to death. Let me go out and see if I can steal a little something. As soon as G-d wills it, I will have a few coins of my own, and I will pay them back."

With that, he went to the deserted marketplace. He walked among the shuttered stalls and shops, trying the locks. Finally, he found an open door. He quietly slipped inside, tiptoed toward the back and rummaged around until he located the cash box, which was unlocked.

With his heart in his throat, he withdrew a single coin and fled homeward as fast as his legs would carry him. The next morning, he went to the baker and bought bread for his wife and children.

The following morning, the shopkeeper was greeted by an open door flapping in the breeze. Suspecting the worst, he entered his store and was surprised to see that none of the merchandise had been disturbed. In fact, even the cash was still in his box, save for a single coin.

Word spread quickly, and people began to talk about the strange robber who took just one coin.

After the poor man and his family finished their bread, the man tried his hardest to resist the temptation to "borrow" another coin. But the sight of his hungry children proved too much for him, and he found himself once again walking among the deserted market stalls. Once again he located an open door, and was soon holding another coin.

This became a regular occurrence. Every few weeks a single coin would be missing from another shop, and no one had the slightest idea who could be the one behind the rash of mini-robberies.

Guards were posted at every store in town. But the honest thief managed to slip through their fingers. After all, the righteous Rabbi Yisrael had assured him that he would find success in thievery.

One night, the mayor himself decided to stay up late and see if he could solve the mystery.

Dressed as a civilian, he waited in the shadows, watching for any sign of movement. Finally, he saw a hunched figure hurrying away from a shop.

"I got you!" he cried, grabbing hold of the man's collar. "You thought you could run away, but I'm not going to let go of you. Tomorrow I'll bring you to the mayor, and he'll see to it that you are properly dealt with."

"Please have mercy on me," begged the distraught thief. "I'm just a poor man trying to borrow a few coins to support my starving family. Everyone can attest that

I never took even a single penny more than what I needed. If the town finds out that I was the one, I will be ruined. This will stain my good name and standing in the community forever. Believe me, G-d is my witness that I plan to pay every penny back just as soon as I am able."

The thief continued to beg, and the undercover mayor finally relented. "I'll tell you what," he said. "You're obviously a skilled thief. Do me this one favor, and I'll let you free. I have secret knowledge that the mayor of this town just received a large sum of money. He has it in a box under his bed. There is a small window to his bedroom. If you can manage to squeeze into his room and come back with the box of treasures, we can split it evenly between ourselves, and I'll let you go free."

"I cannot do that," protested the chassid. "I'm not a burglar or criminal. I took just what I needed. How can I rob an innocent man of what is rightfully his?"

"That's your decision," replied the mayor. "Either you do as I say, or I report you in the morning."

Left with no choice, the chassid made his way to the mayor's house, but soon returned empty-handed.

"Thank G-d, I did not take a thing," he told his captor. "I crept into the room and was about to look for the box, when I heard voices. The mayor's household assistants were talking among themselves, saying that they were planning to slip some poison into their master's morning tea and then make off with his treasure. We must warn the mayor as soon as possible. He may even reward us."

As soon as the mayor heard the man's words, he said, "You go home, and I'll warn the mayor. Just give me your hat, so that I can later identify you."

With that, the mayor returned to his mansion. The following morning, as soon as his tea was served, he had it fed to one of the dogs, who immediately began showing signs of distress. He had caught his servants in their treacherous act.

As soon as the drama of his near-death had subsided, the mayor summoned the leaders of the Jewish community.

"Do you know who owns this hat?" he asked them. "He is the one who has been stealing from the market."

"It cannot be," they replied. "We know the owner of that hat. He is one of the most respected men in our community, a gentle, G-d-fearing scholar of the highest order."

"No matter," replied the mayor. "Summon him immediately." When the brokenhearted man was brought before him, the mayor asked, not unkindly, "Is this your hat?"

"The leaders of the community have told me about you, and it is truly out of character of you to have been out pilfering coins in the market," continued the mayor, whom the man now recognized as his captor from the night before. "It seems to me that you must have been sent by heaven to save me from the plot of my staff, who tried to take my life and steal my money. It is only right that you should have half of the treasure as reward for your actions last night."

The poor man had never seen so much money in his life. He immediately set aside a significant portion for charity, and then went back to repay all the shopkeepers from whom he had taken coins.

He then devoted the remainder of his life to charity, prayer, Torah study and other lofty pursuits.

PARSHAS IN A NUTSHELL

Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for four hundred shekels of silver.

Abraham's servant Eliezer is sent, laden with gifts, to Charan, to find a wife for Isaac. At the village well, Eliezer asks G-d for a sign: when the maidens come to the well, he will ask for some water to drink; the woman who will offer to give his camels to drink as well shall be the one destined for his master's son.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, appears at the well and passes the "test." Eliezer is invited to their home, where he repeats the story of the day's events. Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the land of Canaan, where they encounter Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, loves her, and is comforted over the loss of his mother.

Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah (Hagar), and fathers six additional sons, but Isaac is designated as his only heir. Abraham dies at age 175 and is buried beside Sarah by his two eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 10 - 11 November	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:46	8:49
Adelaide	7:36	8:36
Brisbane	5:55	6:51
Darwin	6:32	7:24
Gold Coast	5:54	6:51
Perth	6:31	7:30
Sydney	7:13	8:13
Canberra	7:25	8:25
Launceston	7:46	8:52
Auckland	7:45	8:47
Wellington	7:55	9:00
Hobart	7:49	8:56
Byron Bay	6:54	7:51

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS CHAYEI SARA • 21 CHESHVAN • 10 NOVEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:17 PM
	MINCHA:	7:55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:25 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:31 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	7:45 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8:00/9.15/10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	7:45 PM
	MAARIV:	8:35 PM