



The Chabad Weekly

Vol. 23 Issue 4



Candlelighting
(Los Angeles)

4:31 PM

Friday Mincha:

4:45 PM

LATEST SHEMA: 9:01 AM

Shabbat Schedule

- **Tanya** 8:45 AM
- **Shacharit** 9:30 AM
followed by
Kiddush,
Cholent &
Farbrengen
- **Class** 3:55 PM
- **Mincha** 4:25 PM
followed by
Seuda
Shlishit
- **Shabbat ends** 5:31 PM

Announcements:

Yartzeits: Ester Cherry - Cheshvan 23, Oscar Tanenbaum - Cheshvan 23.

Happy Birthday to to Rafael Sulami, Jamie Mahtaban, Neely Antebi and Rivka Sulami.

This Monday, Cheshvan 20 is the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab - R. Sholom Dovber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

GOOD SHABBOS!

Parshas Vayera

Friday, Cheshvan 17, 5780 / Nov. 15, 2019

One day, while on shlichus in Bangkok, Rabbi Chezki Lifshitz was riding in a taxi stuck in heavy Bangkok traffic. Calculating that it would take less time to walk to his destination, Chezki paid the fare and got out. As he was walking down the street, a well-dressed foreigner approached him.

"Excuse me for stopping you on the street like this," the man began. "But if have this feeling that you could advise me. My wife and I are from America, and we have a business here. We're expecting the birth of a baby boy any day now. Where would we be able to find a mohel to perform the circumcision?"

"I am a mohel," Rabbi Lifshitz replied with a smile, "and I'll be happy to be of service."

The man later told the Rabbi that the day before they had met, his wife had asked him if he had done anything more to find a mohel. Anxiously, she had questioned him: "What do you expect? Do you think you'll bump into a mohel on the streets of Bangkok?"

Which is, of course, exactly what had happened.

Parshas Vayera

The commentaries on this week's Torah reading relate that there was an argument between Abraham's two sons: Yishmael — the progenitor of the Arabs — and Isaac, from whom the Jews descend. Yishmael bragged to Isaac that he performed the circumcision when he was 13, while Isaac did so at the age of 8 days.

Yishmael was pointing out his positive quality. He had been willing to accept the circumcision at a more advanced age when the pain was greater and he was aware of what he was doing. Despite the pain, he made a conscious decision to carry out G-d's will. Isaac, Yishmael argued, had never made such a choice. He had been circumcised as an infant when he was not aware of what was happening to him.

Seemingly, there is merit to Yishmael's argument. Nevertheless, the Torah commands us to circumcise our children at the more tender age. Why? The circumcision represents

our covenant with G-d, a physical sign of our bond with Him. Why is the child forced to be a passive partner in this act? Why not wait until he is older and the act becomes a conscious affirmation of G-d's will?

This point, however, reflects a fundamental distinction between the manner in which a Jew relates to G-d and the manner in which humanity at large relates to Him. Ask a person in the street if he is willing to do something for G-d. He will agree, provided, of course, he understands that G-d exists and he knows what G-d wants from him. There's nothing wrong with that; it's normal and natural.

But a Jew's relationship with G-d goes above the normal and the natural. This difference is reflected in our Sages' description of the giving of the Torah. They relate that before G-d gave the Torah to the Jews, He offered it to several of the other nations. Before accepting, however, each of them questioned G-d: "What is stated within it?" And when they received the answer that one of the Torah's commandments ran contrary to their way of life, they graciously declined.

When G-d offered the Torah to the Jewish people, they answered naaseh venishmah, "We will do and we will listen," giving G-d a blanket promise of acceptance before they even heard what was asked of them. The emphasis is not that they trusted that whatever G-d would say would be to their benefit, but rather that they committed themselves blindly, promising to do His will because He is G-d, no matter what He would ask.

Similarly, with regard to establishing a covenant with G-d through circumcision, the ordinary, human approach is to wait until one understands. When the act is meaningful and significant, a person will commit himself. A Jew, by contrast, makes his commitment above knowledge; it is not dependent on his understanding.

The ultimate example of this is a child who is circumcised at eight days. He is brought into a covenant with G-d by his parents without even realizing what is happening to him. Nevertheless, it is this covenant that nurtures his relationship with G-d throughout his life. (From: Keeping in Touch, Vol 3)

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Next Monday is the 20th of Cheshvan, the birthday of Rabbi Shalom Dovber, the fifth Chabad leader known by his initials as the Rebbe Rashab.

In the summer of 1960 the Lubavitcher Rebbe visited Camp Gan Israel in upstate New York, during which he related a little-known story about the Rebbe Rashab. It seems that one time the Rebbe Rashab had left Lubavitch in Russia and traveled to Vienna, to be treated by doctors. While in Vienna, the Rebbe had suddenly announced that he wished to visit a certain village 100 kilometers away. Before he left, he went to a store and purchased several articles of clothing, and various other items. When the Rebbe Rashab arrived in the town he sought out the home of a widow and her two daughters. He gave her the things he had bought and some money, and told her it was to help her marry off her daughters. In fact, the widow had been too poor to do so.

In the Rebbe's words: "Just think about it: In a far-off town 100 kilometers from Vienna, the Rebbe found an opportunity to bring G-d nachas. In truth, the Rebbe had made the lengthy trip solely for that purpose. And he himself went to the store to make the purchases, just so a poor bride could get married.

"This, then, is the lesson to be learned: Regardless of where we are, we must always look for a good deed to perform. For we will certainly find one, and thereby bring pleasure to G-d."

May we merit this year to celebrate the Rebbe Rashab's birthday together with him and with all the great tzadikim of all generations, led by our Righteous Moshiach.

(L'Chaim #1142) - lchaimweekly.org

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Sunday 8:00 AM

**Gemara – Tractate Sanhedrin
(men)**

Monday 8:00 PM

Chumash (men and women)

Tuesday 8:00 PM

**Gemara B'Iyun
Tractate Kesuvos (men)**

Wednesday 8:00 PM

Halacha and Tanya (women)

Thursday 10:00 AM

Chassidus (women)

Daily

Chassidus 6:45 AM– 7:15 AM

**Halacha Between Mincha
and Maariv**

Daily Minyonim

**Weekday Shacharis:
6:00 AM & 7:30 AM**

**Sunday Shacharis:
7:00 AM & 9:00 AM**

**Mincha/Maariv:
4:45 PM**

"From G-d are man's steps established." (Tehillim 37:23) Every one of Israel has a spiritual mission in life - which is to occupy himself with the work of construction, to make a "dwelling-place" for G-d. Every one, regardless of his station or location, must, through an exhaustive search, seek out a spiritual livelihood with all the intensity of his strength, just as he seeks a material livelihood.

This is so because, (as the above verse concludes) "he desires His (G-d's) way."² As it is written of Abraham: "For I know and love him because etc. and they will keep the way of Havayah."³ There are two "ways": The way of nature and the way that transcends nature. G-d created the universe in such a way that, in man's eyes, it appears to follow a set pattern of nature; this is the "way" of Elokim.⁴ Torah and Mitzvot are the "way" of Havayah, drawing that which transcends nature into nature. By virtue of this (conduct of Israel) G-d endows Israel from that which is beyond nature into the natural. (HaYom Yom Cheshvan 14)

Story of the Week

For Generations to Come

In 1973, just before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, I [Mrs. Zlata (Freiman) Hertz] had traveled from Israel where I was living to New York to attend my brother's wedding, and while there, I came to see the Rebbe.

Before the audience was to take place, Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, instructed me to write down my requests on a piece of paper which would be handed into the Rebbe in advance. I did as he instructed - I wrote that I was married with children, that I was teaching in the Chabad school in Lod, and that my children were in daycare which was costing more than the money I was making. I wanted the Rebbe's advice - should I leave my job and stay home with my kids, instead of borrowing every month to make ends meet?

When I walked into the Rebbe's office, he had a big pile of letters on his desk and he reached into it to extract my letter - he pulled it out just like that without even looking for it. He read it quickly and then answered my question with this statement:

"I see you are teaching the children of Israel at the school Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchak, which is named after my holy father-in law," he began. "You should know that the education of Jewish children is a conduit for blessing - both material and spiritual - for you and your family for generations to come."

Then he repeated those words again, and I felt that the audience was over.

It was only after I left that the Rebbe's words started sinking in. I thought: "The Rebbe is telling me that my job educating children is a conduit for blessings. So clearly, there is only one thing I can do - keep working." I called my husband, Meir, and after I told him what the Rebbe said, he concurred with my decision.

Before I could return to Israel, however, the Yom Kippur War broke out and the news we were hearing was not good.

My husband was drafted into a combat unit on a moment's notice and, because I was still in New York, he distributed our children amongst our neighbors and relatives. I was informed that he was sent to the front lines at Ismailia, Egypt but that's all I knew. I immediately asked Rabbi Groner for another audience with the Rebbe, but he could not schedule it as I had just been to see the Rebbe a few days before. However, after I broke down in tears, he suggested that I wait outside the office and ask for a blessing for my husband when the Rebbe came out. My heart was pounding, but I mustered the courage to approach the Rebbe as he passed by and make my plea. The Rebbe responded, "When you return to the Holy Land, you will find that all your loved ones are healthy and whole. Be sure to keep in touch with me and let me know the good news. You can call me collect."

He said this three times - once in English, once in Yiddish and once in Hebrew - and I knew his words would come true. I was trembling with excitement because I was sure it was going to happen exactly as he said. And indeed it did.

I had a hard time getting a plane ticket back to Israel because all the flights were commandeered for returning soldiers, doctors and other essential personnel. But I begged the airline - telling them that my husband was in combat and I had no idea where my children were - and so they let me on the plane, even though I would have to sit on the floor.

Once I was on the plane, a soldier gave up his seat for me, and I told all the other passengers what the Rebbe had said. I believe they were greatly encouraged by his words. Even people who were not religious. All the men present put on their yarmulkes - those who didn't have them covered their heads with napkins - and the plane turned into one praying synagogue. It was very amazing and moving to see this.

At some point during our flight, the plane started zig-zagging in the sky because we had encountered a dogfight between our planes and Egyptian planes. I was so scared that I burst out crying when this was happening, but one of the soldiers said to me, "Why are you crying? Your Rebbe told you that everything would turn out all right for you and your loved ones." And that reminder calmed me down.

When we landed, the airport was absolutely dark, and there was no public transportation of any kind - everything had been turned over to the war effort. But I managed to make my way home, and I located my children.

The war lasted close to three weeks. When the dust settled, though many Israeli soldiers had been killed and injured, my husband came home safe and sound just as the Rebbe said he would. As the Rebbe had requested, I made sure to call New York to report that all was well with my family.

After the war, I returned to work, and I kept on working. I have now been a teacher in the Oholei Yosef Yitzchak system for thirty-five years. I never wanted to block the conduit that was bringing blessings to me and my family. Yes, there were financial difficulties at the beginning, but after a time, my salary increased and I no longer needed to borrow money to send my children to daycare. I saw the blessings increase from year to year. I saw my children growing up, being educated, becoming successful in marriage, in raising their own children. I saw the Rebbe's blessing in action from generation to generation. And today I would say to anyone involved in Jewish education: "It's a huge thing that you are doing; it's the most important thing in the world. Our children are our most valuable treasure, and they are in your hands."

For this reason, I never retired. People say to me, "What? At your age, you are still working? How do you have the energy for this?" And I answer, "I do it for the blessing and for the happiness it brings me."

Today, I live in Upper Nazareth (Nazareth Illit) where I am the principal of a girls' high school. The girls are bussed in from the entire region, and they are so pleased to come, so pleased with the school - the good education, the good teachers, the good atmosphere. Our school even won a regional prize for excellence. And I really see the Rebbe's blessing all around me, still flowing after more than forty years.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a mailing of "JEM - Here's My Story" (jemedia.org)

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Abraham was sitting: Before his circumcision, Abraham's body was not sufficiently refined to endure the spiritual intensity of God's revelation; as a result, it was sapped of its physical strength, causing him to fall.⁸ Through circumcision, his body became refined enough to withstand God's revelation. In fact, it was now capable of withstanding an even loftier revelation than Abraham had ever before experienced.

Of all the commandments, circumcision is the only one able to affect the body in this way, because it is the only one that visibly and permanently alters the physical body. Furthermore, specifically because it sanctifies the physical flesh—which is otherwise the driving force behind our basest impulses—circumcision accomplishes God's purpose in creating the world, which is to transform it into a home for Divine consciousness, more directly than any other commandment. Circumcision therefore has the power to elicit the most sublime levels of Divine revelation.

Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation: The phrase "great and mighty" is not to be understood literally, since Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, never became "great" or "mighty," neither in numbers or power. Rather, the phrase means that each individual Jew is spiritually "great and mighty," possessing all the strength necessary to transmit the message of Torah and goodness to the world. Through him all the nations of the world will be blessed: One of the manifestations of this promise is the immense contribution made by the Jewish people in all fields of human endeavor. - chabad.org

HaYom Yom Cheshvan 18

(At this point there appears in the Hebrew text emendations of Torah Or on this week's sedra, meaningful only in Hebrew. Translator).