



# L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre – Chabad NSW Headquarters  
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## Living with the Rebbe



This week's Torah portion, Vayeira, speaks about the greatness of our forefather Abraham, the very first Jew. Through Abraham's service, G-d's Name was made known throughout the world, and many people were brought to believe in Him.

The Torah states: "And Abraham planted an eishel [literally a grove] in Be'er Sheva, and called there in the name of G-d." The Torah specifically mentions Abraham's planting of the eishel, as this was considered a very great deed and a unique accomplishment.

The Midrash explains that an eishel is more than just a stand of trees under which wayfarers may find protection from the burning sun. An eishel is an inn, a place of lodging. Our Patriarch Abraham established his eishel in Be'er Sheva, in the heart of the desert, to cater to travelers in that inhospitable climate.

Did Abraham know these travelers personally? Of course not. He had no idea who might arrive. All he knew was that these strangers would no doubt be hungry, thirsty and tired from their trek across the desert. His motivation was to make their journey more pleasant and less taxing.

Abraham provided his guests with all kinds of amenities, not just bread and water to satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst. His visitors were offered meat, fine wines, fruit and a wide array of delicacies, as well as a place to sleep to rest from their travels.

His visitors' spiritual needs were also taken into consideration. Next to the inn that provided all their physical necessities, Abraham established a Sanhedrin, a court of law, so that wise men could answer the travelers' questions and find solutions to their personal and business problems.

This same attribute of kindness and justice is the birthright of every Jew, an inheritance from our forefather Abraham. And the Torah portion of Vayeira teaches us how we are supposed to fulfill the mitzva of tzedaka (charity):

It isn't enough to provide a poor person with the basic requirements necessary to sustain life. We must offer him more than just the bare minimum, bringing him pleasure and enjoyment. And not only must his physical needs be met, but we must also try to help him resolve his spiritual struggles. This applies to every single Jew, even those we do not know personally, and constitutes the true meaning of the commandment of tzedaka.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 3*

## Make Up Your Mind

Why can't I make up my mind? - Have you ever asked yourself that?

We've all encountered that problem when having to make decisions. Sometimes the decisions are minor, even trivial: should I wear the brown shoes or the black shoes?

Sometimes the decisions are only momentarily important. When we're grocery shopping, for instance, we may stand for a few minutes debating which breakfast cereal to buy.

Sometimes the decisions are important, but not significant. When choosing a car, for instance, a lot of features - an iPod dock, a dark blue interior - may be important, but they're not significant.

Other decisions are much more critical: a choice of occupation, a choice of spouse, how to handle a conflict with a child or parent - or boss.

In all these cases we have to make a decision, and often just can't make up our minds, agonizing over the possibilities, unsure of what's the best route - or the right thing.

And sometimes even after we've made a decision, we revisit it, debating it again, doubting the decision - more, doubting ourselves.

There's a word for this: ambivalence. Psychiatrists describe it as the feeling of being torn between opposing paths.

We often think that, when it comes to decisions, we should be decisive. We should know our minds, be able to total pros and cons like a ledger and choose.

In fact, though, if the choice was so obvious, there would be no choice. All real decisions involve some degree of ambivalence and uncertainty.

We have to recognize that ambivalence is part of the process, that we can't make up our minds until we go through the uncertainty and, yes, discomfort of considering consequences, of realizing that every decision involves risk. We have to see that ambivalence is itself "a tool for exploring alternatives and seeing the larger picture."

A famous story of Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev goes something like this: arguing with G-d that He should be lenient in judging people, he said: "You put the difficulties of observing commandments in this world and the rewards in the next, the pleasures of sin in this world and the punishment in the next. Reverse the placement and You will see how little people sin and how many mitzvot they do."

Experiencing doubt and uncertainty - ambivalence - shouldn't stop us from making a decision. On the contrary, when we feel ambivalent, we know we have a decision to make.

And here the ambivalence itself can tell us which decision to make. For instance, you've started trying to keep kosher. You stopped eating cheeseburgers, or gave up shellfish and non-kosher meat. And now you're debating, is this enough? How will taking the next step affect your life? What will my (fill-in-the-blank: parents, friends, children) say?

Or let's say you're already keeping kosher, but you learn about a higher standard. Should you go there? It's inconvenient, it'll be more expensive, but, it's really the best way to go.

In these cases - and many more (should I make a commitment to that weekly Torah class?) - we have to make a decision. And we have to be honest with ourselves about our ambivalence. Because, whatever we choose, we're going to be uncomfortable, for a while, and we may even have second thoughts.

But that's where a teaching from the Tanya, the primary work of Chabad philosophy comes in: only the tzadik, the completely righteous individual, doesn't have any internal conflict, any ambivalence.

The rest of us, we were born to struggle, to constantly confront ambivalence - should we do the mitzva (commandment) or not? - precisely so we could make the right decision.

And when it comes to matters of Judaism, the Tanya tells us, G-d Himself is there to help us make up our mind.

## Aliyot Summary

**General Overview:** In this week's Torah reading, *Vayeira*, angels visit Abraham and Sarah, informing them that Sarah would give birth to a child despite her advanced age. The angels whisk Lot and his daughters out of Sodom, and overturn and destroy the entire region. Abimelech, king of the Philistines, attempts to make Sarah part of his harem, but through divine intervention she is released unharmed. Isaac is born and Ishmael is expelled from Abraham's household. Abraham makes a peace treaty with Abimelech. The story of the "Binding of Isaac" is recounted – Isaac's "near-sacrifice" experience.

**First Aliyah:** G-d paid Abraham a visit, as he sat at the entrance of his tent. Abraham suddenly noticed three travelers passing by, and ran to invite them into his home. These passersby, who were actually angels in human disguise, accepted the invitation, and Abraham and Sarah prepared a sumptuous feast for them. The angels informed Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a child exactly one year later. Eighty-nine-year-old, post-menopausal Sarah, who was standing nearby, heard this assurance, and laughed. G-d was displeased with Sarah's lack of faith.

**Second Aliyah:** The angels departed, with Abraham escorting them on their journey. Their destination: the Sodom region; their mission: to destroy the five cities of the region, and rescue Lot (Abraham's nephew) and his family, who resided there. G-d informed Abraham of His intention to destroy Sodom because of the great evil of its inhabitants. Abraham attempted to save the region, asking that it be spared if it contains fifty righteous people. When it was apparent that this was not the case, Abraham "bargains" with G-d – eventually asking Him to spare Sodom even if there are only ten righteous individuals there, but even ten were not to be found.

**Third Aliyah:** The angels arrived in Sodom, and Lot invited them to his home to eat and rest. Word of Lot's guests spread throughout the city – a city that abhorred all acts of kindness – and the incensed residents of Sodom surrounded Lot's house, with intent to assault the guests. Lot refused the demands that he surrender his guests, and – as the Sodomites prepared to break down the door – the angels struck all those surrounding the house with blindness. The angels informed Lot of their mission, and encouraged him to flee. Lot, his wife, and two of his daughters were escorted out of the city to safety, and were warned not to look back as the city was being destroyed.

**Fourth Aliyah:** G-d rained fire and sulfur on Sodom, and then overturned the entire region. Lot's wife looked back, and was transformed into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters took shelter in a cave. Assuming that the entire

world was destroyed, Lot's daughter's intoxicated their father with wine, and seduced him – in order to repopulate the world. They each gave birth to a son – the antecedents of the Ammonite and Moabite nations. Abraham relocated to the Philistine city of Gerar. Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, took Sarah – who was presented as Abraham's sister – to his palace. G-d afflicted the members of Abimelech's palace with a disease, and appeared to Abimelech in a dream warning him to return Sarah to her husband, Abraham. Abimelech obeyed, and also showered Abraham and Sarah with gifts, and he and his household were healed. Sarah conceived, and at the age of ninety gave birth to a son, who was named Isaac. Abraham circumcised Isaac when he was eight days old.

**Fifth Aliyah:** Isaac grew, and Sarah noticed that Ishmael, Isaac's older half-brother, was a potentially negative influence on her young child. She demanded of Abraham to expel Ishmael, along with his mother Hagar, from the household. Despite Abraham's initial misgivings, G-d tells him: "Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice!" Hagar and Ishmael wandered in the desert and eventually ran out of water. Ishmael was about to perish from thirst when an angel "opened Hagar's eyes" and showed her a well of water. Ishmael grew up in the desert and became a skilled archer.

**Sixth Aliyah:** At that point, Abimelech approached Abraham and requested to enter into a treaty with him, whereby neither party will harm the other for three generations. Abraham agreed, but reprimanded Abimelech concerning a well of water which he had dug which was stolen by Abimelech's subjects. Abraham set apart seven ewes, telling Abimelech to take them as a testimony that he, Abraham, dug the well. Abraham planted an orchard and established an inn in Beer Sheba and proclaimed the name of G-d to all passersby.

**Seventh Aliyah:** G-d commanded Abraham to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice on a mountain. Abraham took along Isaac and necessary provisions, and set out for the mountain. They arrived and Abraham built the altar and bound Isaac. As Abraham stretched out his hand to take the slaughtering knife, an angel ordered him to desist. Abraham offered a ram, which was caught in a nearby thicket, in lieu of his son. G-d promised Abraham great blessings as a reward for passing this difficult test. After these events, Abraham was notified that his sister-in-law had given birth to children. One of these children, Bethuel, was the father of Rebecca, Isaac's future wife.

## Thoughts that Count

And Abraham called the name of his son...Isaac (Yitzchak) (Gen. 21:3)

In the Messianic age, it is specifically of Isaac that we will say "for you are our father" (a verse from the book of Isaiah). According to Chasidut, the name Yitzchak is an expression of laughter and delight; when Moshiach comes, the supernal joy and delight of our present service of G-d will be fully revealed.

*(Likutei Sichot, Vol. 1)*

He took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed (Gen. 18:8)

How could Abraham have served his guests both dairy and meat at the same time? Rather, Abraham offered his guests both types of food; it was then up to the individual to decide which kind he preferred. Those who chose meat dishes did not partake of the dairy. Alternatively, they first ate the dairy, and only later did they eat the meat (as in the order it is written in the Torah). *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

And Abraham drew near (Gen. 18:3)

Rashi notes that Abraham approached G-d "to speak [with Him] in a harsh manner," to plead that He change His mind and not destroy Sodom. Abraham, the epitome of loving-kindness, nonetheless saw fit to go against his natural inclination and "speak harshly" with G-d! We learn from this that when it comes to saving lives, either literally or in the spiritual sense, a Jew must pull out all the stops and do all in his power, even if it goes against his very nature. *(Likrat Shabbat)*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



This coming week, on 20 Cheshvan (Tuesday, Nov. 18), we commemorate the birthday of Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber, the fifth Chabad Rebbe.

In the writings of the Previous Rebbe is an account of what the Mittlerer Rebbe (the second Chabad Rebbe) said about the day on which a tzadik is born, and specifically about the day on which the leader of the generation - a "comprehensive soul" - is born:

"He [the Mittlerer Rebbe] spoke of the festive meal which celebrates the occasion in the Garden of Eden. This spiritual repast consists of the sublime bliss which souls derive from the radiance of the Divine Presence, when they behold the essence of G-dliness. All the souls present take leave of the soul of the tzadik which is about to descend to the world, and offer it their blessings for success in realizing the ultimate purpose of its descent into a body.

"The nature of the festive meal which is held in honor of the comprehensive soul is quite different from that of an ordinary righteous person. Once the Heavenly Court has decreed that a particular comprehensive soul must descend to the world at a certain time and be born to specific parents, then some time before the body of the infant is formed, the Court assigns this soul a particular charge, and there it heads a heavenly academy. As it awaits its mission, this soul expounds the Torah to the souls of the righteous. With the approach of the time appointed for the soul to set out on its descent, the soul of Moses leads all the comprehensive souls who gather for the festive occasion. They give the embarking soul their blessings for success in its mission for the public welfare, and promise to aid it in its endeavors.

"The day destined for the birth of a tzadik (and, even more so, for the birth of a tzadik with a comprehensive soul) is thus a Yom Tov that is celebrated in all the supernal worlds...."

May we merit this year to celebrate Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber's birthday together with him and with all the great tzadikim of all generations led by Moshiach.

*Pinchus Feldman*

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

## Smile its Friday

A man is speeding the highway at 1 a.m. A policeman stops him and asks, "Where are you racing at this hour?" "To a lecture," the man responds. "Who will give you a lecture at this hour," the policeman asks. "My wife," was the reply.

## Holy Golfball! by Dr. Ed Mazer

As parents, we do our utmost to raise our children with the best tools we can give them to enable them to live a happy and fulfilling life. As Jews, we also want them to know about Judaism, observe the rituals (Passover, High Holidays, etc.) and fulfill our covenant with G-d. How can all this be accomplished? This was a deep and serious question that my wife Fran and I had when our daughter Masha was born.

We lived in Philadelphia at the time, and we were told by a rabbi there that as parents, we should do everything possible to make our home and our lives more Jewish. Immersion into Judaism would guarantee that she would stay in Judaism, we were told. It was such good advice that I wish I could remember the name of the rabbi who gave it to me, to thank him.

We tried to follow his advice somewhat for the first three years of Masha's life. But we were still not clear ourselves.... Would she learn values? Would she experience true happiness? We wanted to know what would help guide her decisions in life

When we first moved to Arizona, we did not find a comfortable place to express our Judaism. It took a while before we found Rabbi Mendy and Rebbetzin Shternie Deitsch of Chabad of the East Valley, in Chandler, Arizona. My daughter began attending Hebrew school on Sunday mornings and learning with Shternie. I began attending synagogue and learning with Rabbi Deitsch. I gradually realized, "This is great stuff, this is amazing, this is what I have been looking for." My wife, being a wise woman, realized the joy and beauty of Judaism much sooner than I did.

Although I slowly became absorbed in the meaning and observance of Judaism, especially of Shabbat, I still could not get myself to stop playing golf on Shabbat.

In fact, one of my main motivations for moving to Arizona was the better weather. I wanted to live in a place where it's always warm and where I could play golf all year round. I had a great job offer in Arizona, and the thought of leaving Philadelphia was tempting. So we moved.

I used to come to shul on Shabbat in my shorts and with my water bottle, straight from the golf course. Rabbi Deitsch was always patient and respectful, never judgmental. He made me feel comfortable no matter what I wore to services, where I was coming from, or what I was holding in my hand.

I kept up this pattern for a long time, but began to feel growing stirrings in my soul to take a closer look at Shabbat. One Saturday morning, as I was on the 9th hole, a par 5, I took out my pitching wedge and hit the golf ball towards the green. It landed in a palm tree and did not come down. We searched and searched and no one could find it, forcing me to take out a new ball and continue the round.

The next day, Sunday, I headed out to the golf course. As I approached the green of the 9th hole where I had lost my golf ball the day before, something fell out of the palm tree and landed 10 feet in front of me. I walked over to see what had fallen, and lo and behold, it was my golf ball from Saturday. I knew it was mine because I take care to mark all of my golf balls with a Jewish star. My golf partner, who happened to be the same man I had played with on Saturday, witnessed this event and exclaimed, "Look at that! That's your ball from yesterday, this is where it landed!"

I took this occurrence as a sign that G-d was truly watching out for me. He caught my ball on Shabbat and then released it on Sunday as if to say: "Okay Ed, it's time to start keeping Shabbat. Here is your ball back on Sunday; you can play now."

I decided right then and there not to play golf on Shabbat anymore and to start keeping Shabbat seriously. My wife, Fran, and my daughter, Masha, had already made that commitment and were keeping Shabbat. Now I joined them.

Recently there was a tournament planned for Shabbat, and my buddies were trying their utmost to convince me to join them. "Come on," they said, "ask the rabbi for a special dispensation this time." I was happy to notice that I wasn't even tempted. I love golf, but I love Shabbat more. I've been keeping Shabbat for four years, and I look forward to Shabbat. Why would I throw away a treasure that is handed to me every week?

And now, back to the question that brought us to the rabbi in Philadelphia so many years ago: How can we as parents have success guaranteed (as much as it can be in this unsure world) to raise our children with solid, moral values? Read the following letter written by my now-teenage daughter and we have a place to start:

As I sit on a plane, the Friday before Super Bowl Sunday, I observe the day-to-day happenings of the secular world around me. The man behind me discusses personal (and inappropriate) details of his life. The man sitting beside me is looking through magazines filled with degrading pictures of women.

It may seem that this one-hour plane ride is a terrible experience that just displays the crudeness of the year 2008. However, after contemplating the deeper reason for G-d putting these people and me together on an airplane, I realize it is all a matter of Divine Providence.

This incident made me think about the way I live my life, and how truly thankful I am for being Jewish, and even more so, for finding Chabad. Watching the way these young men act made me realize something new: If we didn't have the Torah guiding our choices between right and wrong, who knows the trouble we might get into. This incident on the airplane really made me appreciate having the Torah to guide me, and of course, having Chabad in my life.

### What's New

#### New Book - Around the Shabbos Table

It all began one Friday night when Tova Leiba changed places with her brother at the Shabbos table because he wasn't happy there. But then her sister wasn't satisfied with her seat, and her baby brother wanted to switch, too! Join Tova Leiba as she makes her way... around the Shabbos table! This new book from Hachai Publishing illustrates the point that we can find something positive about every situation. By Seryl Berman, illustrated by Ari Binus.

### Customs

#### Why is the Torah raised at the end of the Torah reading before being rolled up and put back into the ark?

A verse in the Torah (Deut. 27:26) reads, "Cursed is he who does not confirm - yakim - the word of this Law." "Yakim," translated in this verse as "confirm" can also mean "uphold." To satisfy both interpretations of the verse we publicly confirm the sanctity of the Torah by holding it up for all to see.

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# Moshiaich

The Mishna (Sotah 49b) describes the world-condition in the days before the Messianic Redemption as follows: increase in insolence and impudence; oppressing inflation; unbridled irresponsibility on the part of authorities; centers of learning will turn into bawdy houses; wars; many destitute people begging, with none to pity them; wisdom shall be putrid; the pious shall be despised; truth will be abandoned; the young will insult the old; family-breakup with mutual recriminations; impudent leadership. (From *Mashiach*, by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet)

# It Happened Once

One day, she awoke early with a nebulous feeling that something was very wrong. Maybe it was just that everything looked so desolate in the stark grayness of the morning. She got out of bed and looked around the one room dwelling. The children were sleeping soundly, huddled under the ragged blanket like a litter of kittens in the one bed they shared.

She never expected that her husband would leave, and without warning... She opened the heavy wooden door and allowed her eyes to wander across the empty yard. The fear in the pit of her stomach made her nauseous, and she walked inside and sat down on a chair. It was true - he was gone.

The next day it was a little easier to think, to plan. She would travel to Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, known as the Rebbe Rashab. Only the holy Rebbe would know how to help her out of this terrible situation. Sympathetic neighbors watched her little ones, and even lent her the money for the trip, and soon she was sitting nervously on the train traveling to the Rebbe's court.

When she alighted from the train, she had no trouble finding the Rebbe's synagogue, but gaining a private audience with the Rebbe was another thing altogether. Some had been waiting for days, some for weeks, some even longer. Finally, one man told her, "Your best chance is to write the Rebbe a letter. Explain the whole situation, and he will surely answer you."

The poor woman, now even more distraught, wrote the letter. The Rebbe's shamash (assistant) took it and promised to present it to the Rebbe at an opportune moment. Not more than a couple of days passed when the woman was called to the shamash. "Come quickly," she was told, "The Rebbe has answered your letter."

The woman came running to the Rebbe's residence. "Here," said the Rebbe's shamash, "here is your answer." She unfolded the sheet of paper and on it was written but one sentence: "Go to Warsaw."

What could it mean? she wondered. And how in the world would she get to Warsaw? It was wartime; she had no money; she had small children.

Perplexed, she returned to her town and showed the Rebbe's answer to the Chasidim there. "If the Rebbe says, 'Go to Warsaw,' then go to Warsaw you must," they concurred. They gathered money for the woman and soon she was sitting on the train to Warsaw.

When she arrived in the metropolis, she had no idea where

to go or what to do, for the Rebbe had given her no further direction. Suddenly, she was stopped by a Chasid.

"What do you need?" he asked. She replied that she had come to find her husband. The Rebbe had sent her to Warsaw, but she had no clue where to begin her search. "Go to - Street. There is a factory where many immigrants go to work. You will most likely find your husband there."

With nothing to lose, she made her way to that street and asked to speak to the foreman. He was a kind-hearted man and, after hearing her story, allowed her to search through the list of workers. Her eyes widened with shock as her husband's name leaped up at her from the page. She went to him and pleaded with him to return home with her. He remained adamant until she told him how she had managed to find him. If the Rebbe had sent his wife to him, then he would return home with her.

She decided it was only right to return to the Rebbe's court and thank him for the miracle he had done for her, and so she traveled there once more.

This time, as well, she was not permitted to enter the Rebbe's chambers. "Wait until the Rebbe comes out to pray, and then approach him," she was told. So, she waited by the door, mentally composing the words she would use to thank the Rebbe. Suddenly the door opened. Upon seeing the Rebbe's face she fell down in a dead faint.

The Chasidim surrounded her, all wanting to know what had happened. When she was revived she told them, "When I saw the Rebbe's face, I realized that the chasid who had suddenly appeared and helped me on the street in Warsaw was the Rebbe!" Word of this amazing happening spread like wildfire. The Chasidim calculated and figured and finally determined the exact time that this strange meeting had occurred.

It had been on a day when the Rebbe had not prayed publicly with the minyan as usual. The Chasidim had been concerned about his welfare, and one young student had gotten up the nerve to climb up a tree and peer into the Rebbe's room. He put his face near the window, and looked in. There stood the Rebbe, looking like nothing he had ever seen. The Rebbe's face was aflame and his eyes were peering into the distance, totally unseeing. The boy was so overcome by the sight that he lost his balance and fell to the ground.

This story was related by the one who had been that young student during World War I and had himself witnessed the events described here.



## Candle Lighting Times Friday 14 November 2008

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