

Parshas Vayeira in a Nutshell
(Genesis 18:1–22:24)

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Anshei Lubavitch Congregation
Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:
Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

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Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Oct 22 / Cheshvan 16

Candle Lighting 5:47 pm
Mincha 5:50 pm

Shabbos Day – Oct 23 / Cheshvan 17

Shacharis..... 9:30 am*
Torah Reading..... 10:40 am
Kiddush 12:20 pm

Mincha 5:45 pm
Rabbi’s Drasha 6:10 pm
Shabbos Ends..... 6:45 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:56 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

**Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):
Minyan**

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) 6:15 am
Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am
Mincha (Sun-Thurs) 1:45 pm
Maariv (Sun-Thurs) 9:15 pm

Bulletin
*This week’s Bulletin
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The Shul .*

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.

(continued next column)



Every situation in which we are found, every person whom we meet, gives us an opportunity to advance in our knowledge of G-d and our connection to Him.

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. ❖

Halachic Zmanim
Shabbos, Oct 23, 2021
Daylight Savings Time

Earliest Tallis..... 6:20 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:56 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola).. 1:08 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 5:00 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 6:32 PM

Chassidic Masters

The Binding of Isaac

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

The founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, once related:

In Mezeritch, it was extremely difficult to be accepted as a disciple of our master, Rabbi DovBer. There was a group of chassidim who, having failed to merit to learn directly from our master, wanted to at least serve his pupils: to bring them water to wash their hands upon waking, to sweep the floors of the study hall, to heat the ovens during the winter months, and so on. These were known as “the oven-stokers.”

One winter night, as I lay on a bench in the study hall, I overheard a conversation between three of the oven-stokers. “What was so special about the test of the akeidah (binding of Isaac)?” the first one asked. “If G-d had revealed Himself to me and commanded me to sacrifice my only son, would I not obey?”

Answering his own question, he said: “If G-d told me to sacrifice my only son, I would delay my doing so for a while, to keep him with me for a few days. Abraham’s greatness lay in that he arose early in the morning to immediately fulfill the divine command.”

Said the second one: “If G-d told me to sacrifice my only son, I too would waste not a moment to carry out His command. But I would do so with a heavy heart.

Abraham’s greatness lay in that he went to the akeidah with a heart full of joy over the opportunity to fulfill G-d’s will.”

Said the third: “I, too, would carry out G-d’s will with joy. I think that Abraham’s uniqueness lies in his reaction upon finding out that it was all a test. When G-d commanded him, ‘Do not touch the child, and do nothing to him,’ Abraham was overjoyed—not because his only child would not die, but because he was being given the opportunity to carry out another command of G-d.”

Rabbi Schneur Zalman concluded: “Do you think this was mere talk? Each of them was describing the degree of self-sacrifice he himself had attained in his service of the Almighty.”

This particular question—what is it that sets apart the akeidah from the countless other instances of human martyrdom and self-sacrifice?—is raised by almost all the commentaries and expounders of the Torah.

For the binding of Isaac has come to represent the ultimate in the Jew’s devotion to G-d. Every morning, we preface our prayers by reading the Torah’s account of the akeidah, and then say: “Master of the Universe! Just as Abraham our father suppressed his compassion for his only son to do Your will with a whole heart, so may Your compassion suppress Your wrath against us, and may Your mercy prevail over Your attributes of strict justice.”

And on Rosh Hashanah, when the world trembles in judgment before G-d, we evoke the binding of Isaac by sounding the horn of a ram

(reminiscent of the ram which replaced Isaac as an offering), as if to say: If we have no other merit, remember Abraham’s deed. Remember how the first Jew bound all succeeding generations of Jews in a covenant of self-sacrifice to You.

Obviously, the supreme test of a person’s faith is his willingness to sacrifice his very existence for its sake. But what is so unique about Abraham’s sacrifice? Have not countless thousands of Jews given their lives rather than renounce their covenant with the Almighty?

One might perhaps explain that the willingness to sacrifice one’s child is a far greater demonstration of faith than to forfeit one’s own life. But in this, too, Abraham was not unique. Time and again through the generations, Jews have encouraged their children to go to their deaths rather than violate their faith. Typical is the story of Chanah, who, seeing her seven children tortured to death rather than bow before a Greek idol, proclaimed: “My children! Go to Abraham your father and say to him: You bound one offering upon the altar, and I have bound seven offerings . . .”

Furthermore, while Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son, in thousands of akeidahs throughout our history, Jews actually gave up their lives and the lives of their entire families. And, unlike with Abraham, G-d had not directly spoken to them and requested their sacrifice.

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Their deeds were based on their own convictions and the strength of their commitment to an invisible and often elusive G-d. And many gave their lives rather than violate even a relatively minor tenet of their faith, even in cases in which the Torah does not require the Jew to do so.

Nevertheless, as Abarbanel writes in his commentary on Genesis, it is the binding of Isaac “that is forever on our lips in our prayers . . . For in it lies the entire strength of Israel and their merit before their Heavenly Father . . .” Why? What about the many thousands who made the ultimate sacrifice in reiteration of our loyalty to G-d?

The same question may be asked in regard to Abraham himself. The akeidah was the tenth and final “test” in Abraham’s life. In his first test of faith, Abraham was cast into a fiery furnace for his refusal to acknowledge the the emperor Nimrod, arch-idol of his native Ur Casdim, and for his continued commitment to teaching the world the truth of a one, non-corporeal and omnipotent G-d. All this before G-d had revealed Himself to him and had chosen him and his descendants to serve as a “light unto the nations” and the purveyors of His word to humanity.

This early act of self-sacrifice seems, in a certain respect, to be even greater than the latter ones. A man, all on his own, comes to recognize the truth and devotes himself to its dissemination—to the extent that he is even willing to sacrifice his very life to this end. All this without a command, or even sign, from Above.

And yet, the binding of Isaac is considered the most important test of Abraham’s faith. The Talmud asks: “Why did G-d, in commanding Abraham regarding the akeidah, say, ‘Please, take your son?’” Answers the Talmud: “G-d said to Abraham: ‘I have tried you with many tests, and you have withstood them all. Now, I beg you, please withstand this test for Me, lest they say that the earlier ones were of no substance’” (Talmud, Sanhedrin 89b).

Again we ask: why? Granted that the akeidah was the most demanding test of all, why are the others “of no substance” without it?

The chassidic masters explain the significance of the akeidah with a metaphor:

Once there was an untamed wilderness. Not a trail penetrated its thick underbrush, not a map charted its forbidding terrain. But one day there came a man who accomplished the impossible: he cut a path through this impregnable land.

Many trod in his footsteps. It was still a most difficult journey, but they had his charts to consult, his trail to follow. Over the years, there were some who made the journey under even more trying conditions than those which had challenged the first pioneer. While he had done his work in broad daylight, they stumbled about in the black of night; while he had only his determination for company, they made the trip weighed down by heavy burdens. But all were equally indebted to him. Indeed, all their attainments could be said to be but

extensions of his own great deed.

Abraham was the pioneer of self-sacrifice. And the first instance of true self-sacrifice in all of history was the binding of Isaac.

For to sacrifice one’s self is not the same as to sacrifice one’s life. There is a world of difference between the two.

The human story includes many chapters of heroic sacrifice. Every generation and society has had its martyrs—individuals who gave their lives for their faith, for their homeland, and for virtually every cause under the sun. They did so for a variety of reasons. For some it was an act of desperation. To them, their lives were not worth living unless a certain objective could be attained. Others believed that their deed would be richly rewarded in the hereafter, so they readily exchanged the temporal benefits of physical life for the soul’s eternal gain. Finally, there were those for whom their cause had grown to be more significant to them than their lives. They had come to so completely identify with a certain goal that it became more integral to their “self” than did their existence as individuals.

In all the above cases, the martyr is sacrificing his life, but not his self. Indeed, he is sacrificing his physical life for the sake of his self, whether it is for the sake of the self projected by his obsession, the spiritual self of his immortal soul, or a broader, universal “self” he has come to identify with.

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Ultimately, his is a selfish act, “selfish” in the most positive and altruistic sense of the word—here is an individual who has succeeded in transcending the narrow, material definition of “self” which dominates our corporeal world—but selfish nonetheless.

Abraham was a man with a mission. A mission for which he sacrificed everything, a mission more important to him than his own life.

For many years he had agonized over the fact that there was no heir to this mission, that his work of bringing the beliefs and ethics of monotheism to a pagan world would cease with his passing from the world. Then came the divine promise: miraculously, at the age of one hundred, he will have a son, out of whom will stem the people of Israel. “You shall call his name Isaac,” said G-d, “and I shall establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.”

And then G-d told him to destroy it all.

When Abraham bound Isaac upon the altar, it was not in the service of any calling or cause. In fact, it ran contrary to everything he believed in and taught, to everything for which he had sacrificed his life, to everything G-d Himself had told him. He could see no reason, no purpose for his act. Every element of his self cried out against it—his material self, his spiritual self, his transcendent and altruistic self. But he did it. Why? Because G-d had told him to.

Abraham was the pioneer of self-sacrifice. Before Abraham, the self was inviolable territory. Man could enlighten the self’s priorities, he could even broaden and sublimate it, but he could not supersede it. Indeed, how could he? As a creature of free choice, man’s every act stems from within. His every deed has a motive (conscious or otherwise), and his every motive has a rationale, a reason why it is beneficial to his own existence. So how could he be motivated to annihilate his own self?

The instinct to preserve and enhance one’s self is the source and objective of a creature’s every drive and desire; man could no more transcend it than lift himself up by pulling on the hair of his own head.

Yet Abraham did the impossible. He sacrificed his self for the sake of something beyond the scope of the most transcendent of identities. Had he not done so, no other act of self-sacrifice—previous or subsequent, of his own or of his descendants—could be presumed to be of any “substance,” to be anything more than a product of the self. But when Abraham bound Isaac upon the altar, the heavenly voice proclaimed: “Now I know that you fear G-d.” Now I know that the will of G-d supersedes even your most basic instincts. Now I know that all your deeds, including those which could be explained as self-motivated, are, in essence, driven by the desire to serve your Creator. Now I know that your entire life was of true, selfless substance.

So when we speak of the akeidah, we also speak of those who trod the path that this great deed blazed. Of the countless thousands who died for the creed of Abraham, of the many millions who lived for its sake. Their sacrifices—great and petty, cataclysmic and everyday—may, on the surface, seem but the outgrowth of their personal beliefs and aspirations: commendable and extraordinary, but only the fulfillment of an individual soul’s identity. But the akeidah revealed them to be so much more than that.

For Abraham bequeathed to his descendants the essence of Jewishness: that at the core of one’s very being lies not the self but one’s commitment to the Creator. And that, ultimately, one’s every choice and act is an expression of that “spark of divinity” within. ❖

***Thank You to:
The Baal Korei, and
The Security Volunteers***

From Our Sages

He said: "My Lord! If now I have found favor in your eyes, pass not away, I beg you, from your servant." (Genesis 18:4)

This verse has two meanings. One meaning is that Abraham is addressing the most prominent of the three guests, asking him and the others not to pass by his tent without availing themselves of his hospitality. Another meaning is that Abraham is addressing G-d, asking Him to stand by while he attends to his guests.

Said Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav: This is to teach us that taking in guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence.

-- (Rashi on this verse; Talmud, Shevuot 35b)

The way of G-d, to do tzedakah and justice (Genesis 18:19)

What is the meaning of the verse, "You shall walk after the L-rd your G-d?" Is it then possible for a human being to walk after the divine, which is described as a "devouring fire"? But the meaning is to follow the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He.

G-d clothes the naked, as it is written, "G-d made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21); so should you too clothe the naked.

G-d visits the sick, as it is written, "G-d appeared to him in the plains of Mamre"; so should you too visit the sick.

G-d comforts mourners, as it is written, "It came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that G-d blessed Isaac his son" (Genesis 25:11); so should you too comfort mourners.

G-d buries the dead, as it is written, "He buried him in the valley" (Deuteronomy 34:6); so should you too bury the dead.

-- (Talmud, Sotah 14a)

Because the cry of [the victims of] Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous (Genesis 18:20)

In Sodom it was decreed: "Whoever hands a piece of bread to a pauper or stranger shall be burned at the stake."

Plotit, a daughter of Lot, was married to one of the leading citizens of Sodom. One day she saw a pauper starving in the street, and her soul was saddened over him. What did she do? Every day, when she went to draw water from the well, she would take some of the food from her home in her pitcher and feed the pauper. But the people of Sodom wondered, "This pauper, how is he surviving?" Eventually the matter became known and she was taken out to be burned, and her cries rose to the divine throne.

-- (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 25)

For G-d has heard the voice of the lad where he is (Genesis 21:17)

The ministering angels hastened to indict him, exclaiming: "Sovereign of the Universe! Would You bring up a well for one who will one day kill Your children with thirst?" "What is he now?" asked G-d. "Righteous," said the angels. Said G-d: "I judge man only as he is at the moment."

-- (Midrash Rabbah; Rashi) ❖

Haftorah for Vayeira in a nutshell

Kings II 4:1-37

In this week's Torah reading, G-d promises a child to Abraham and Sarah, despite childless Sarah's advanced age. This week's haftorah describes a similar incident that occurred many years later — the prophet Elisha assuring an elderly childless woman that she will bear a child.

The haftorah discusses two miracles performed by the prophet Elisha. The first miracle involved a widow who was heavily in debt, and her creditors were threatening to take her two sons as slaves to satisfy the debt. When the prophet asked her what she had in her home, the widow responded that she had nothing but a vial of oil. Elisha told her to gather as many empty containers as possible — borrowing from neighbors and friends as well. She should then pour oil from her vial into the empty containers. She did as commanded, and miraculously the oil continued to flow until the last empty jug was filled. The woman sold the oil for a handsome profit, and had enough money to repay her debts and live comfortably.

The second miracle: Elisha would often pass by the city of Shunam, where he would dine and rest at the home of a certain hospitable couple. This couple even made a special addition to their home, a guest room designated for Elisha's use. When the prophet learned that the couple was childless, he blessed the woman that she should give birth to a child in exactly one year's time. And indeed, one year later a son was born to the aged couple.

A few years later the son complained of a headache and died shortly thereafter. The Shunamit woman laid the lifeless body on the bed in Elisha's designated room, and quickly summoned the prophet. Elisha hurried to the woman's home and miraculously brought the boy back to life. ❖

Eruv website:

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**Join us weekday mornings
as we delve into the mysteries of
Chassidic concepts.**

**5:55 am followed immediately
by Shacharis.**

שבת שלום גוט שבת!



Good Shabbos to all!