



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

In a small corner of the vast expanse of Russia there lived a Jewish innkeeper. In appearance, there was nothing special about him. He dressed like a peasant and spoke like a peasant. But this simple, earthy man was admired and respected by villagers all over his district. It was known to one and all that he was in reality a holy man, a miracle worker. Whomever he blessed, was sure that the blessing would be fulfilled.

So, after a time, the reputation of the innkeeper wonder-worker spread, until word of him reached the Rebbe of Apta, who then lived in Medzibuzh. The Rebbe became curious to meet this man and learn his secret. If the man was, indeed, as simple as they all said, then whence his mystical power?

The Apter Rebbe harnessed his horses and went to the tavern. When he arrived, he looked the tavern-keeper up and down, but could perceive no nuance of greatness in him. He studied his movements, but saw nothing remarkable in anything the innkeeper did. Finally, the Rebbe approached the man and questioned him, "Tell me, please, from where are your special powers? Why does Heaven grant all of Your blessings?"

The man smiled, and replied straightforwardly, "My powers come from my faith in G-d which is as strong as a mighty oak.

"Since my youth, I have always trusted in G-d, and no matter what ever happened to me I was always certain that it would be ultimately for the best, since it came from G-d. I never despaired and I always gave tzedaka generously, particularly when times were tough. As for guests, I have always kept an open house and treated passersby with the greatest hospitality."

The innkeeper paused and then continued, "One night, when I had a house full of guests, there came a knock at my door. It was a messenger from the poretz [landowner] saying that I was to appear before him at once or else he would have me thrown into prison.

"Now, I had a problem, for I had a lot of hungry people to feed. If I left at once, they would probably go to bed hungry. I stayed and took care of my guests, putting my trust in G-d that no harm would come to me.

"Only hours later, after my guests were comfortably in their rooms did I venture out to meet my landlord. When I arrived, he was brimming with goodwill; apparently he had had a change of heart. Not only didn't he throw me into jail, but he greeted me like an old friend. Everything worked out all right.

"Whenever I put my trust in G-d, I have nothing to worry about. Two years ago I lost all my money. I had no trouble maintaining my faith, but it was a different thing for my family. They were desperate and begged me to go and find a partner. They could see no other solution.

"This was against my own ideas. Why should I suddenly begin to rely on flesh and blood when all my life I had trusted only in G-d, and He had never let me down? In the end, I couldn't hold out against them, and so, I set out to find a business partner.

"I walked through the green countryside, bursting with G-d's goodness and bounty, red apples here, luscious grapes to the other side, contented cows grazing lazily, and I stopped in my tracks. My heart was almost bursting with my love of G-d, and my trust in Him had never been greater. Could not the One Who created all of the beautiful greenery and sustained it eternally also care for me and my little family? Why was I seeking out some human being to lift me up from all my troubles. I raised my eyes to the heavens and prayed, 'G-d, You are the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, please grant my prayer. I have lost all my money, and I cannot operate my inn. My family tells me to get myself a partner, a mere mortal of flesh and blood. Why can't You become my partner? We'll split everything down the middle. Your half, I'll distribute to the poor, and my half, I'll use to support my family.

"No sooner had I finished, when I felt something in my pocket. I reached for it, and

to my astonishment it was a silver coin of such value that I had never owned one like it. And I knew that G-d had accepted my proposition; we were partners, and this was the first profit.

"With this coin I replenished my stock and resumed my trade. When the first profits came in, I put one half aside for my 'partner' in a box which I keep behind the counter. I am scrupulously careful with these funds, even more so than with my own money. This is my whole story."

The Apter Rebbe, who had been listening with rapt attention, rose, thanked the tavern-keeper, and left. When he returned to his own shul in Medzibuzh he told the entire tale to his chasidim, and concluded "When one enters a partnership with G-d, and is completely honest in his business dealings, G-d enables him to perform wonders."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

**"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him." (Gen. 18:19)**

Rashi comments that the phrase "for I know him" implies love and affection for Abraham. G-d loved Abraham because He knew that Abraham would teach his children to follow in his footsteps. As great and impressive as Abraham's worship of G-d was, more worthy of merit was the fact that he could be counted on to instruct others. (*Hayom Yom*)

**To do righteousness and justice (Gen. 18:19)**

When G-d bestows wealth and abundance on a Jew, he must honestly judge himself and ask: "Am I really worthy of all this goodness? What have I done to deserve these blessings?" When a person is thus honest with himself, it will cause him to realize that the sharing of his wealth with those less fortunate is truly tzedaka--righteousness. (*Sefer HaMaamarim*)

**And the two angels came to Sodom (Gen. 19:1)**

When Abraham was paid a visit by angels, they appeared as human beings. Why, when they presented themselves to Lot, did they appear in their form as angels? Abraham, known as he was for his hospitality, treated everyone he came into contact with in the same equal manner; simple people were honored as much as those more "important." Had Lot, however, seen mere humans at his door, he would have never allowed them to cross the threshold of his home. (*Rabbi Leib Sarah's*)

**In all that Sarah may say to you--hearken unto her voice (Gen. 21:12)**

The Talmud states: Three tzadikim were given a taste of the World to Come in this world--Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the World to Come, the prophecy--"the female will surround and encompass the male," and "a woman of valor is the crown of her husband" (Proverbs) will be fulfilled. Abraham was given a glimpse of this when G-d told him to heed the words of Sarah, who was an even greater prophet than he. (*Likutei Torah*)



**4:20 Candle Lighting Time**  
 NY Metro Area  
**14 Cheshvan / November 15**  
 Torah Portion Vayeira  
 Shabbat ends 5:20 PM

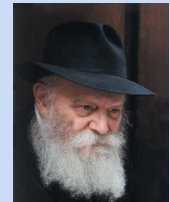
Dedicated In Honor of a dear friend of the  
 Lubavitch Youth Organization  
**Mr. Victor Braha**

בס"ד  
**1848**  
 14 Cheshvan, 5785  
 November 15, 2024

**The Weekly Publication  
 for Every Jewish Person**  
 נוסד תור ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson  
 "To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Vayeira, introduces us to the second of our forefathers, Isaac. It also relates that Isaac was occupied with digging wells.

Abraham and Isaac achieved greatness by paving two distinct paths to spirituality. Abraham traveled from place to place, both within the borders of Israel and in other lands, and caused G-d's name to be known everywhere he went. Through his boundless hospitality, as well as through other means, he caused countless wayfarers to thank G-d for His bounty and goodness. Abraham's basic nature was kindness-- giving and favorably influencing his fellow man.

Isaac, on the other hand, had a totally different approach. He never left the Holy Land and his basic nature was the personification of gevura (strength). Isaac's way of bringing holiness into the world involved elevating the lowly and bringing it closer to G-dliness; Abraham's method was to bring G-dliness down into the lower realms.

This path to spirituality is even apparent in Isaac's preoccupation with digging wells. A well is made when one digs and uncovers the water that was always there, albeit in an unrevealed state. Isaac did not bring the water to the well from an outside source; he merely removed the soil and rocks so that the water could flow forth on its own.

Whereas his father Abraham was primarily occupied with bringing holiness down into this world, Isaac spent his life uncovering the inherent holiness that already existed in the world. Isaac taught others that through their own efforts they could uncover the good and arrive at Divine truth.

From Abraham we learn how to elevate the physical world through studying Torah and performing mitzvot, causing the Divine light to descend and illuminate our surroundings. We also learn from him the obligation to spread the knowledge and appreciation of G-d through our own example and influence on others.

But this in itself is not enough. We must also learn from Isaac how to "dig wells"--how to uncover and reveal that spark of goodness and spirituality which exists within ourselves and every Jew. It is not sufficient to merely teach others about G-dliness; we must also know how to dig under the surface and reveal the "pintele Yid"--the inherent faith in G-d and spark of holiness--which is our birthright.

Even if a Jew seems to be nothing but "dust, clay and stones," that is, his Jewish spark seems to be dormant and hidden underground, we can learn from Isaac not be discouraged--this appearance is merely a camouflage. Under the lifeless surface lies a rich source of running water, of goodness, faith and love of G-d. All we have to do is remove the superficial layer of "clay" to reveal the pure Jewish soul within.

And what can we answer a Jew who cries, "But I've tried! I've dug and I've dug, and I can't seem to uncover my Jewish spark!" We must direct him to the example of Isaac, who persevered in his digging and was not discouraged, even when his wells were deliberately stopped up by his enemies, time and time again. For we are promised success if we, too, persevere and are relentless in our quest for G-dliness.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Too Perfect?

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

Is "too perfect" a thing? Most of us worry that we aren't perfect enough. But I know of at least one person who worried about being too perfect. Our collective grandfather, Abraham.

The Midrash informs us that when G-d instructed Abraham to be circumcised, he consulted his friends, Aner, Eshkol and Mamre.

Aner advised him against circumcision. Eshkol advised him to circumcise in private lest his enemies attack him. Mamre told him that if G-d told him to circumcise, he should obey. Abraham chose Mamre's home to recover from his circumcision.

Why would Abraham ask his friends whether to circumcise if G-d appeared to him directly and instructed him to do so?

Jewish mystics explained that this was one instruction that Abraham feared more than anything. Essentially, his fear was that he would become too perfect.

### ANGELS AND HUMANS

You would think that G-d would prefer angels to humans, but no. G-d wants the imperfect human. Why? G-d wants the imperfect human who is drawn to pleasure and sin, but overcomes and does the right thing.

When G-d gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, the angels complained that the Torah should be given to them. G-d told Moses to offer a defense.

Moses replied that the Torah enjoins us not to steal or kill. Do you have an evil inclination, he asked them, that you would need to be told not to succumb to it? The

Torah was meant for imperfect humans.

### ABRAHAM'S FEAR

We now return to Abraham's fear. Although Abraham stood ready to obey any of G-d's directives, he was afraid of this one. Circumcision would make Abraham too perfect. Without imperfections, he would have nothing to overcome.

To fulfill the Mitzvah of Bris Milah correctly, we must not only circumcise ourselves, but also treat it as a covenant between us and G-d.

For most of us, circumcision is mostly about the milah, not so much about the brit--the covenant. Abraham was different. For him, circumcision would be a complete covenant. A complete break with his human inclinations.

Abraham could already see that he would circumcise and he would become perfectly righteous. He would have only one passion: to fulfill G-d's will.

### ABRAHAM'S QUESTION

So, Abraham asked his friends, should he follow this one Mitzvah and lose out on a lifetime of pleasing G-d by struggling and overcoming? Mamre put him on the right track. Life is not about being the one to bring pleasure to G-d. Life is about obeying G-d.

There are two morals here. First, don't worry about our imperfections. G-d loves our struggles, He loves our triumphs, and He views our occasional failures as opportunities to rebound. Second, never worry about becoming too perfect. A perfect G-d loves it when imperfect humans strive for perfection.

