

Torah Weekly

ת"סג

November 20 - 26, 2022
26 Cheshvan – 2 Kislev, 5783
Torah reading:
Toldot: Genesis 25:19 - 28:9
Haftarah: Malachi 1:1 - 2:7
PARSHAT TOLDOT

Calendars
We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs
Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah
We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Keep Laughing

It's a strange name to give a child.

The child of Abraham and Sarah, the first child to be born to a Jewish family, was named Yitzchok, or Isaac, which means "laughter."

Why would Abraham and Sarah choose the name "laughter" for their child, who was destined to be a deeply spiritual person and a patriarch of the Jewish people?

The name Isaac is even more ironic when we consider that the nature and character of Isaac seems to be the polar opposite of laughter and joy. While Abraham was an outgoing extrovert, Isaac kept to himself; while Abraham is characterized in the Torah as the lover of G-d, Isaac is characterized as being in awe of G-d. While Abraham represents the attribute of kindness and giving, Isaac embodies strength and discipline. The name Isaac seems out of character with his identity and spiritual path.

But where does laughter stem from? A person may feel happy due to some goodness in his life, yet for the happiness to overflow from his heart and express itself in laughter, he must experience more than the expected measure of joy. Happiness becomes laughter the parent and educator is to dig the well, remove the dirt and discover the water.

Thus, Isaac embodied laughter. Isaac mastered the skill of seeing the good in unexpected places. He had the ability to mine the

when the joyous event surpasses all expectations, when one is confronted with the unpredictable.

The [Torah](#) describes Sarah's reaction to the birth of her son:

And Sarah said, "God has made joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice over me." And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children, for I have borne a son to his old age!"

Sarah's giving birth to a child in her old age was more than just a happy event; it was an event that defied all expectations.

Every time Sarah held her son in her arms, she was overwhelmed with joy—thus the name Isaac/"laughter." Sarah knew that, just as his birth was unexpected, Isaac would father a people whose destiny would defy predictions and expectations. Their very survival would be a miracle. Sarah understood that while Isaac might not be the most charismatic of the Patriarchs, he would possess the ability to create an unpredictable transformation by finding goodness in the most unlikely of places.

Indeed, this was a central theme of Isaac's life. While the Torah tells us precious little about the life of Isaac, the Torah does elaborate on Isaac's success as a well digger. The Kabbalists

holiness that lay in the heart of every person and in the soul of every activity.

As the children of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, we are heirs to the qualities and characteristics they embodied. From Isaac we

explain that Isaac's wells represent a departure from his father Abraham's approach. Abraham influenced people by "bringing the water to them." Abraham was a superb teacher and a charismatic communicator. He showered his listeners with love and, by the force of his character, compelled them to be influenced by his message of G-d and morality. Isaac, by contrast, did not bring the water to the people. Instead he helped people find the wellspring of G-dliness within themselves. Abraham would teach through sharing and enlightening; Isaac, by contrast, displayed discipline. He empowered the student to believe in his own ability to dig within himself, to remove the psychological barriers and discover the truth on his own.

Which is why Isaac loved Esau.

Esau was the child who seemed completely uninterested in the ideas of his father and grandfather. He loved the thrill of hunting more than the excitement of ideas. On the surface, he seemed to be in a spiritual desert, devoid of water. Yet Isaac understood that every creation has a spark within it, that every child has a reservoir of pure water within himself. The job of

inherit the ability to be joyous in the face of great challenge. From Isaac we learn to expect the unexpected, to believe in ourselves and in the people around us. From Isaac we inherit the power to create

laughter, to discover the deeper truth of reality that is not always noticeable to the naked eye. From Isaac we learn to dig beneath the surface and find the holiness in every person and the good in every experience.

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

"Sandwiches"

My father was raised in the Old Country, in a place called *Nujoisy*, in the town of Elizabeth. His parents had come there from Israel, where he had been born. They had come to Israel from Russia shortly before his birth. They had left Russia after my grandfather's father was murdered in a pogrom. My grandfather's family — grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins — had already been in America for a generation.

When my grandmother would get together with the extended family, she would pack a kosher lunch: they quickly nicknamed her "Sandwiches." In the streets of her Jewish neighborhood, older kids would snatch the yarmulkes off the heads of her young sons — my father and my Uncle Laibel. A sneer is not a lesser challenge than a pogrom.

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, 1880-1950) had just escaped the Bolsheviks' death penalty and was visiting America. My grandmother took her two little boys to see him. She walked into the room and burst into tears. "How am I supposed to raise Jewish kids in *aza shverre land*, such a hard land?"

"It is truly a hard country, *zayer a shverre land*," the Rebbe agreed, "a very hard land. But you will raise good, Jewish, and pious children in this country."

Several years later, my father and his brother, by then teenagers, were by the Rebbe. "Everything must be reckoned relative to the time and place where you are," he told them.

"Your parents came from a very different place than you are now. It would not be fair to compare yourselves to them. But you also can't become a product of your surroundings. You must produce your surroundings. You're not boys from the streets. Look up to your parents, 'live towards' your parents."

My father and his brother still "live towards" their father. The Rebbe spoke to them in the early forties. I first heard the story in the early seventies, and have heard it dozens of times since. When either of them tells the story, you could think it happened ten minutes ago.

"These are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham; Abraham gave birth to Isaac." The *parshah* seems repetitive, until the great commenter, Rashi, distinguishes the convergent energies vital to education: children "living towards" their parents, parents living for their children. Sandwiched in between is *Yiddishe* and *Chassidische nachas*.

By Rabbi Shimon Posner

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, November 20, 2022 --- 26 Cheshvan, 5783

Passing of R. Refael of Hamburg (1803)

R. Refael was the chief rabbi of the three sister cities of Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbek in Germany for twenty-three years. These three important Jewish centers were known as *AHU*, after their Hebrew abbreviations, and were the residence of many famous scholars and personalities, such as R. Jonathan Eibeschutz, R. Tzvi Ashkenazi, R. Jacob Emden, and Glueckel of Hameln.

Monday, November 21, 2022 --- 27 Cheshvan, 5783

Flood ends (2104 BCE)

On the 27th of Cheshvan of the year 1657 from creation (2104 BCE) "the earth dried" (Genesis 8:14) completing the 365-day duration of the great flood that wiped out all life on earth save for the eight human beings and the animals (two of each species) in Noah's ark; on this day G-d commanded Noah to "Come out of the ark" and repopulate, settle and civilize the earth.

Wednesday, November 23, 2022 --- 29 Cheshvan, 5783

Mumbai Terror Attacks (2008)

The city of Mumbai, India, was hit with a series of coordinated terror attacks, starting on Wednesday evening, the 29th of Cheshvan 5769, which left close to 200 dead and scores more injured.

One of the terrorists' chosen targets was the local Chabad House, known as the "Nariman House," operated by Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries Rabbi Gavriel Noach (Gabi) and Rivkah (Rivki) Holtzberg.

In the subsequent standoff, which continued until Friday afternoon, Gabi and Rivki and several other Jews in the Chabad House — Rabbis Bentzion Chroman and Leibish Teitelbaum, Norma Schwartzblatt-Rabinowitz and Yocheved Orpaz — were killed in cold blood. May G-d avenge their murders.

Miraculously, the Holtzbergs' two-year-old child, Moshe, was saved by his nanny.

Thursday, November 24, 2022 --- 30 Cheshvan, 5783

Passing of R. Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg (2006)

R. Eliezer Yehuda was a well-known contemporary halachic authority who resided in Jerusalem. His halachic decisions are held in high esteem, especially in the field of medical practice. Many of these decisions appear in his 22-volume set of responsa titled *Tzitz Eliezer*.

Friday, November 25, 2022 --- 1 Kislev, 5783

Winter

As per the Talmud, the month of Kislev marks the onset of the winter season in the Holy Land and is the third month of the "Season of the Rains."

Rebbe's Recovery (1977)

For the first time since suffering a major heart attack five weeks earlier, on the eve of Shemini Atzeret, the Rebbe left his office in 770 Eastern Parkway and returned to his home, signaling his recovery. Chassidim all over rejoiced at the good news.

From that day on, the Rebbe redoubled his efforts on behalf of the Jewish nation and all of humanity, and for the dissemination of Torah and chassidism. From then on, the first of Kislev is celebrated as a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing.