



Shabbat Announcements

Parshat Vayera

October 31, 2015 18 Cheshvan, 5776

TORAH
ARTSCROLL 78
HERTZ 63

HAFTORAH
ARTSCROLL 1134
HERTZ 76

BAT MITZVAH
HEMDA NIKNAM

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on Parshat Vayera

"Take your son, your only son, the one you love— Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." Thus begins one of the most famous episodes in the Torah, but also one of the most morally problematic. The conventional reading of this passage is that Abraham was being asked to show that his love for God was supreme. He would show this by being willing to sacrifice the son for whom he had spent a lifetime waiting. Why did God need to "test" Abraham, given that He knows the human heart better than we know it ourselves? Maimonides answers that God did not need Abraham to prove his love for Him. Rather the test was meant to establish for all time how far the fear and love of God must go. On this principle there was little argument. The story is about the awe and love of God. Kierkegaard wrote a book about it, *Fear and Trembling*, and made the point that ethics is universal. It consists of general rules. But the love of God is particular. It is an I-Thou personal relationship. What Abraham underwent during the trial was, says Kierkegaard, a "teleological suspension of the ethical," that is, a willingness to let the I-Thou love of God overrule the universal principles that bind humans to one

another. Rav Soloveitchik explained the episode in terms of his own well-known characterization of the religious life as a dialectic between victory and defeat, majesty and humility, man-the-creative-master and man-the-obedient-servant. There are times when "God tells man to withdraw from whatever man desires the most." We must experience defeat as well as victory. Thus the binding of Isaac was not a once-only episode but rather a paradigm for the religious life as a whole. Wherever we have passionate desire – eating, drinking, physical relationship – there the Torah places limits on the satisfaction of desire. Precisely because we pride ourselves on the power of reason, the Torah includes *chukkim* - statutes, that are impenetrable to reason. These are the conventional readings and they represent the mainstream of tradition. However, since there are "seventy faces to the Torah," I want to argue for a different interpretation. The reason I do so is that one test of the validity of an interpretation is whether it coheres with the rest of the Torah, Tanakh and Judaism as a whole. There are four problems with the conventional reading:

1. We know from Tanakh and independent evidence that the willingness to offer up your child as a sacrifice was not rare in the ancient world. It was commonplace. Tanakh mentions that Mesha king of Moab did so. So did Jephthah, the least admirable leader in the book of Judges. Two of Tanakh's most wicked kings, Ahaz and Manasseh, introduced the practice into Judah, for which they were condemned. There is archeological evidence – the bones

of thousands of young children – that child sacrifice was widespread in Carthage and other Phoenician sites. It was a pagan practice.

2. Child sacrifice is regarded with horror throughout Tanakh. Micah asks rhetorically, "Shall I give my firstborn for my sin, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" and replies, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." How could Abraham serve as a role model if what he was prepared to do is what his descendants were commanded not to do?

3. Specifically, Abraham was chosen to be a role model as a father. God says of him, "For I have chosen him so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just." How could he serve as a model father if he was willing to sacrifice his child? To the contrary, he should have said to God: "If you want me to prove to You how much I love You, then take me as a sacrifice, not my child."

4. As Jews – indeed as humans – we must reject Kierkegaard's principle of the "teleological suspension of the ethical." This is an idea that gives *carte blanche* to a religious fanatic to commit crimes in the name of God. It is the logic of the Inquisition and the suicide bomber. It is not the logic of Judaism rightly understood. God does not ask us to be unethical.

Times

Candle Lighting	5:35 pm
Friday Mincha	5:35 pm
Hashkama	8:00 am
Youth Minyan	8:30 am
Parsha Shiur	8:30 am
Main	9:00 am
Beit Midrash	9:15 am
Gemara Shiur	4:30 pm
Mincha	5:30 pm
Shabbat ends	6:42 pm
Rabbi Reisman Video Shiur	9:00 pm
Sunday, Oct. 25	7:30/8:30am
Mon., Thur.	6:35/7:45 am
Tues., Wed., Fri.	6:45/7:45 pm
Mincha	4:30 pm
Latest Times for Shema/Shemoneh Esrei	
October 31	9:58/10:52 am
November 7	9:06/10:57 am
Next Shabbat Parshat Chayei Sarah	
Candle Lighting	4:27 pm
Mincha	4:30 pm

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OF THEIR DAUGHTER
HEMDA.

We may not always understand ethics from God’s perspective but we believe that “He is the Rock, His works are perfect; all His ways are just” (Deut. 32:4).

To understand the binding of Isaac we have to realize that much of the Torah, Genesis in particular, is a polemic against worldviews the Torah considers pagan, inhuman and wrong. One institution to which Genesis is opposed is the ancient family as described by Fustel de Coulanges in *The Ancient City* (1864) and recently restated by Larry Siedentop in *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*. Before the emergence of the first cities and civilizations, the fundamental social and religious unit was the family. As Coulanges puts it, in ancient times there was an intrinsic connection between three things: the domestic religion, the family and the right of property. Each family had its own gods, among them the spirits of dead ancestors, from whom it sought protection and to whom it offered sacrifices. The authority of the head of the family, the paterfamilias, was absolute. He had power of life and death over his wife and children. Authority invariably passed, on the death of the father, to his firstborn son. Meanwhile, as long as the father lived, children had the status of property rather than persons in their own right. This idea persisted even beyond the biblical era in the Roman law principle of *patria potestas*. The Torah is opposed to every element of this worldview. As anthropologist Mary Douglas notes, one of the most striking features of the Torah is that it includes no sacrifices to dead ancestors. Seeking the spirits of the dead is explicitly forbidden. Equally noteworthy is the fact that in the early narratives succession does not pass to the firstborn: not to Ishmael but Isaac, not to Esau but Jacob, not to the tribe of Reuben but to Levi (priesthood) and Judah (kingship), not to Aaron but to Moses. The principle to which the entire story of Isaac, from birth to binding, is opposed is the idea that a child is the property of the father. First, Isaac’s birth is miraculous. Sarah is already post-menopausal when she conceives. In this respect the Isaac story is parallel to that of the birth of Samuel to Hannah, like Sarah also unable naturally to conceive. That is why, when he is born Hannah says, “I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.” This passage is the key to understanding the message from heaven telling Abraham to stop: “Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son” (the statement appears twice, in Gen.

22:12 and 16). The test was not whether Abraham would sacrifice his son but whether he would give him over to God. The same principle recurs in the book of Exodus. First, Moses’ survival is semi-miraculous since he was born at a time when Pharaoh had decreed that every male Israelite child should be killed. Secondly, during the tenth plague, when every firstborn Egyptian child died, the Israelite firstborn were miraculously saved. “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to Me, whether human or animal.” The firstborn were originally designated to serve God as priests, but lost this role after the sin of the golden calf. Nonetheless, a memory of this original role still persists in the ceremony of *pidyon ha-ben*, redemption of a firstborn son.

What God was doing when he asked Abraham to offer up his son was not requesting a child sacrifice but something quite different. He wanted Abraham to renounce ownership of his son. He wanted to establish as a non-negotiable principle of Jewish law that children are not the property of their parents. That is why three of the four matriarchs found themselves unable to conceive other than by a miracle. The Torah wants us to know that the children they bore were the children of God rather than the natural outcome of a biological process. Eventually, the entire nation of Israel would be called the children of God. A related idea is conveyed by the fact that God chose as his spokesperson Moses who was “not a man of words.” He was a stammerer. Moses became God’s spokesman because people knew that the words he spoke were not his own but those placed in his mouth by God. The clearest evidence for this interpretation is given at the birth of the very first human child. When she first gives birth, Eve says: “With the help of the Lord I have acquired [kaniti] a man.” That child, whose name comes from the verb “to acquire,” was Cain who became the first murderer. If you seek to own your children, your children may rebel into violence. If the analysis of Fustel de Coulanges and Larry Siedentop is correct, it follows that something fundamental was at stake. As long as parents believed they owned their children, the concept of the individual could not yet be born. The fundamental unit was the family. The Torah represents the birth of the individual as the central figure in the moral life. Because children – all children – belong to God, parenthood is not ownership but guardianship. As soon as they reach the age of maturity (traditionally, twelve for girls, thirteen for boys) children become independent moral agents with their own dignity and freedom. Sigmund Freud famously had something to say about this too. He held that a fundamental driver of human identity is the Oedipus Complex, the conflict between fathers and sons as exemplified in Aeschylus’ tragedy. By creating moral space between fathers and sons, Judaism offers a non-tragic resolution to this tension. If Freud had taken his psychology from the Torah rather than from Greek myth, he might have arrived at a more hopeful view of the human condition.

Why then did God say to Abraham about Isaac: “Offer him up as a burnt offering”? So as to make clear to all future generations that the reason Jews condemn child sacrifice is not because they lack the courage to do so. Abraham is the proof that they do not lack the courage. The reason they do not do so is because God is the God of life, not death. In Judaism, as the laws of purity and the rite of the Red Heifer show, death is not sacred. Death defiles. The Torah is revolutionary not only in relation to society but also in relation to the family. To be sure, the Torah’s revolution was not fully completed in the course of the biblical age. Slavery had not yet been abolished. The rights of women had not yet been fully actualized. But the birth of the individual – the integrity of each of us as a moral agent in our own right – was one of the great moral revolutions in history.



GNS Yoetzet Halacha Lisa Septimus
 Welcomes your questions about mikvah, observance of taharat mishpacha (halacha relating to married life) and women’s health, as it connects to Jewish law. Reach out to her at:
 Phone: 516.415.1111
 Email: gnsyoetzet@gmail.com.
 All conversations and emails are kept confidential.



Great Neck Synagogue
 26 Old Mill Road, Great Neck, NY 11023
 516-487-6100

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Rabbi Ian Lichter, Assistant Rabbi
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PERSPECTIVE ON ISRAEL & AMERICA

OCTOBER 31, 2015

AFTER SERVICES
IN THE MAIN SANCTUARY

GREAT NECK SYNAGOGUE
MEN'S CLUB & SISTERHOOD
DINNER & LIVE CONCERT
BILLY JOEL, ELTON JOHN AND
SIMON & GARFUNKEL



...ALMOST

HURRY LIMITED SEATING
FREE CO. FOR EACH ATTENDING COUPLE!



COLDEN SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7TH 7PM
\$120 MEMBER COUPLES, \$60 MEMBER SINGLES
\$130 NON-MEMBER COUPLES, \$65 NON-MEMBER SINGLES
RSVP HILLY MILLIN 504-0920 MARK FRIEDMAN 384-5491

TAG-TOURISM
TAG™ TOUR FRIENDS
AND INVITE THEM!

Great Neck Synagogue
Young Couples Event

LASER TAG
ROCK CLIMBING

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH 7:30-10 PM

ACTIVE KIDZ LONG ISLAND
3800 Bellows Lane
Jericho, NY (516-821-8880)

Dinner Included **\$60 PER COUPLE / \$30 PER PERSON**

**DON'T MISS THE
RABBI CHALLENGE!**



**BE A KID
WITHOUT YOUR KIDS!**

RSVP TO SHUL OFFICE

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT A YOUTH EVENT



GNS Men's Club
Blood Drive



Sunday Morning, November 1 - GNS Braun Youth Center

- Someone in this country needs a life-saving transfusion every 3 seconds
- Transfusion recipients include cancer patients, accident victims, newborn babies, transplant patients, and mothers delivering babies
- Quick and easy donation is handled by skilled technicians from the NY Blood Center
- Background information and eligibility requirements available at www.nybloodcenter.org
- Walk-ins welcome, but booking an appointment will get you expedited treatment
- Appointments available every 15 minutes between 8:00 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.
- Children's activity table so that kids can join you in this important mitzvah
- Complimentary breakfast for all participants
- Choice of special Great Neck Synagogue gift to thank all donors and volunteers:



To book your appointment:

- Go to www.nybloodcenter.org
- Click on "Schedule Donation"
- Under "Have a group code?" enter: 03872
- Click on "Great Neck Synagogue" and then select your appointment time

Alternatively: Email reind@shulcna.com or call (212) 558-3035

GNS Men's Club Blood Drive Co-Chairmen: Michael Kohler, David Rein
Honorary Chairman: Al Leiberman

Seeking Volunteers
To help with registration and other tasks on the morning, please contact us.
Adults and students 12 and over welcome. Happy to help with classes/loves qualification.

Please join us on
Wednesday November 11
from 11:30-2:30PM
for the Grand opening of
the Chaverim Center

Please reserve the date for a special afternoon!
Come schmooze, enjoy a Chinese luncheon banquet.
Join in making our Shul a vibrant community center.
Introduce yourselves to us and let us know the programming
you would like to see.
We plan to offer lunch and programming on a regular basis.

Here are some of the other things we are hoping to provide:
Cards and games, i.e., ...canasta, bridge, backgammon, scrabble, Mah Jong, bingo,
Monthly book club, Lessons in computer skills
Lectures and so much more!
If you cannot attend because you do not have transportation,
we don't want you to miss out! please contact us, and we will arrange a ride for you.



Chair of Chaverim Gerty Kaplan 516 317 7630 or 516 460 2771
Co-chair of Chaverim Michelle Benveniste 516 495 0601
Co-chair of Chaverim Rita Zucker Rubin 517 486 1938

We are accepting donations of games for the center: Cards, Scrabble, Backgammon, Chess, Checkers, Boggle or your favorite game you would like to play on game day at the Chaverim Center. Sponsorships of events are welcome.

DON'T FORGET TO TURN YOUR CLOCKS BACK ON SATURDAY NIGHT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RABBI POLAKOFF'S SHABBOS DRASHA THROUGH 5776, IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF PINCHAS BEN YOSEPH FOR OTHER SUCH OPPORTUNITIES PLEASE CONTACT HOWARD WOLF [212-686-9800](tel:212-686-9800) EXT 220

IF YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO IS MOVING INTO THE GREAT NECK AREA PLEASE LET THE OFFICE KNOW.

THANK YOU

Thank you to **David & Liliane Benrimon** on sponsoring the dessert reception for Ido Aharoni in memory of his father Jacob Benrimon.

GNS Men's Club Blood Drive: Sunday, Nov. 1st

To register, go to www.nybloodcenter.org click on "Schedule Donation" under "Have a group code?" enter: 03872. Click on "Great Neck Synagogue" and then select your appointment time or email reind@sullcrom.com to request an appointment time.

ALAN DERSHOWITZ'S NEW BOOK

In anticipation of GNS hosting Alan Dershowitz for Yom Ha'atzmaut this year, we are offering a reduced rate on his new book, "Abraham" at \$18 a book, a better price than Amazon. Please stop by the GNS office for your copy.

GNS CHESED

Please drop off all gently used winter clothing and winter coats in separate bags from Sunday, Oct. 25 - Friday, Nov. 13 at the home of Debbie & Hal Chadow, 50 Dickenson Place. Please leave all bags at the garage door.

GNS YOETZET HALACHA COMMITTEE PRESENTS

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T: FIND OUT WHAT IT MEANS TO TEENS" **November 18, 2015** at 8:30 pm at the home of Mindy Leventhal, 18 Brook Lane. A shiur & discussion for mothers of teens led by **Yoetzet Halacha Lisa Septimus**.

THANKSGIVING CHESED

This year for Thanksgiving, you can really give thanks and be giving! Buy a Thanksgiving Dinner for a resident at Arrandale Senior Housing and make your parents proud of you. \$18 can sponsor a dinner in honor of/in memory of your parents. Email lisslev@verizon.net or fill out form on gns.org to sign up. See flyer for more details.

MITZVAH OPPORTUNITY

If you like to bake, please VOLUNTEER to bake pies for Thanksgiving for us to sell to raise money for sharsheret, an organization to help young Jewish women facing ovarian and breast cancer. Contact marla.lemonik@gmail.com.

PARLOR MEETING IN MEMORY OF JOSHUA MILLER Z"l

Please join us at the home of Sue & Arthur Talansky on Tuesday Nov. 10 at 8 pm where we will hear from the executive director of Nahal Haredi, Rabbi Tzvi Klebanow, from CEO Col Yonatan Branski and from an actual veteran of the Nahal Haredi unit. Please see the circulated flyer for more details.

STUDENT CLASSES

Parsha'n Pizza starts this **Wed. 10/28** from **7:00-7:30 pm** for **grades 1-5; Jr. High Class** on **Tuesdays (7:00-7:45 pm); High School Class** on **Thursdays (6:45-7:30 pm)**

UPCOMING EVENTS AT GREAT NECK SYNAGOGUE

October 31: Col. Allen West
November 1: Men's Club Blood Drive
November 7: Men's Club & Sisterhood Dinner and Live Concert
November 8: New Members Event
November 14: U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham
November 17: Sisterhood Dinner at Colbeh
November 22: Sunday Conversations: Dan Ephron

MAZAL TOVS & COMMUNITY NEWS

Mazal Tov to **Elda & Bijan Niknam** in honor of the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter **Hemda**.

Mazal Tov to **Robyn & Mark Gelberg** on the birth of a daughter.

Mazal Tov to **Yaffa & Ebrahim Gabbazadeh** and **Gila & George Sameyah** on the birth of twin granddaughters **Bryce Rina** and **Hunter Eden** born to their children **Ariel & Fabianne Gabbazadeh**.

Mazal Tov to **Thelma & Emil Kattan** on the marriage of their children **Shoshana & Elan Kattan**.

Mazal Tov to **Babak Davoudian & Jessica Brazandeh** on their upcoming marriage. **Mazal Tov** to the uncles, **Abe & Moussa Soleimani**.

Mazal Tov to **Janet & Iraj Kashani** on the birth of a granddaughter, born to their children **Yosef & Esther Kashani**.

NSHA OPEN HOUSE

Please join us at the North Shore Hebrew Academy Open House on Wed. Nov. 4th at 7:00pm at the Cherry Lane Campus. Learn more about what makes NSHA the warm and wonderful educational experience for so many of our children. Meet with parents, teachers and administrators at a fun and informative event.

HAR TORAH OPEN HOUSE

Please join us at Yeshiva Har Torah's Open House on Tues. Nov. 10th at 7:00pm. Experience first-hand what makes our school, award-winning faculty, and administration so unique. Nursery transportation options are available. To find out more information about the admissions process, please call us at (718) 343-2533.

CAMP LAVI PARLOR MEETING

COME SEE WHY CAMP LAVI IS THE PLACE TO BE. Monday night Nov. 2nd at the Oshry Home, 110 Maple Drive @ 8:00pm. Meet Owner/Director Joey Hoenig. For new families - register at the Open House and receive an additional \$100 off the early bird registration (for a total savings of \$400).

Y A H R Z E I T

Saturday, 18 Cheshvan

Osnass Shein for Simchat Charchat
Joyce Swartz for Geraldine Zeff

Sunday, 19 Cheshvan

Anne Lupkin for Mary Fischler
Jack Lemonik for Irving Lemonik
Hillel Milun for Nancy Milun
Irene Marcus for David Wineman

Monday, 20 Cheshvan

Stanley Dacher for Samuel Dacher
Victor Ancelson for Lviu Galateanu
Yaacov Mizrahi for Dalia Mizrahi
Morris Seidmen for Kalma Seidman
Jerrald Weinstein for George Weinstein

Tuesday, 21 Cheshvan

Paul Brody for Ruth Schaeffer
Wednesday, 22 Cheshvan
Lisa Kaufman for Erica Josephs
Mary Flax for Max Pasvolsky

Thursday, 23 Cheshvan

Joseph Sokol for Ida Warren
Deborah Hollander for Ida Warren Cohen

Friday, 24 Cheshvan

Moosa Ebrahimian for Rahel Ebrahimian
Mahin Mardkha for Rahel Ebrahimian
Jeffrey Kaufman for Belle Kaufman
Ron Malen for Akivah ben Moshe Malensky
Andrew Allen for Harriet Allen
Murray Honig for Sylvia Honig