



Yitschak and the Ambiguities of Laughter

By Rabbi Melvin Granatstein



In Parshat Lech L'cha, Avraham is promised that a child will be born to his aged wife Sarah. The Torah tells us that "Avraham falls down in laughter saying to himself "Will a hundred year old man and Sarah, a ninety year old woman give birth?"

But such a child was indeed to be born and the aged couple are instructed to call him Yitschak which means laughter. The Targum Onkeles renders this laughter as חדי - "Chadi" which is the Aramaic term for rejoicing.

Later, angels in the guise of men will visit Avraham and the promise of this miracle child is repeated. Sarah who has no reason to assume that the visitors are anything other than human beings, overhears the promise – and she hears it from what appears to be ordinary men. So she also laughs.

This time, however, the Targum translates the Hebrew verb form ותצחק - "she laughed" as וְחִיכַת "V'chaychat" which also means to laugh – but here the laughter is translated as "she mocked."

Then the miracle child is born, he is called Yitschak and the name means laughter. Sarah responds to this miraculous gift saying "צחק עשה לי א-לקים וכל השמיע יצחק לי" - "God gave me laughter and whoever hears will laugh".

In both instances, the Targum translates the term as יְחִידִי and חֲדוּה. This laughter is the laughter of joy – joy uncompromised by mockery.

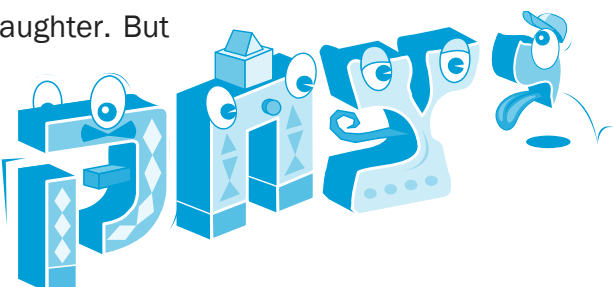
But one cruel fact remains to mar the new mother's joy. Avraham's first child is not Yitschak but Yishmael, the son of Hagar, and the claimant to status as first born. So the Torah says "וַתֵּרֶא שָׂרָה אֶת בֶּן הָגָר ... מִצְחָק" Sarah sees Hagar's son and he too is מִצְחָק laughing"

But here the Targum translates Yishmael's laughter as מַחֲיִיד - which means the laughter of mockery.

Yitzhak is born to the pure joy of his parents. But the fact of Yishmael's existence threatens to turn חֲדוּה - Chedva, or joy into חֲדוּה or mockery.

The Yitschak story is a profound comment on the ambiguities inherent in the Jewish claim to religious-national legitimacy – something that has plagued us from the beginning.

The second father of Am Yisrael is called Yitschak – laughter. But sometimes laughter implies pure joy and at other times laughter is mocking. There is an ambiguity about our second father. He can either represent the laughter of celebration or the derisive laughter of mockery. What we do as Jews can finally determine the meaning of the laughter of Yitschak.





MONTHLY CALENDAR - KISLEV

Friday, November 28 - **Rosh Chodesh Kislev**

Morning Services 6:30 a.m.
Candle Lighting 4:40 p.m.
Kabbalat Shabbat 4:45 p.m.

Parshat Toldot

Saturday, November 29

Morning Service 9:00 a.m.
Rabbi's Talmud Class 3:25 p.m.
Mincha 4:25 p.m.
Motsai Shabbat 5:38 p.m.
Sunday Morning Services 8:00 a.m.
Weekday Morning Services 6:40 a.m.
Weekday Evening Services 4:45 p.m.

Sunday, November 30

Rabbi Granatstein's class in Jewish Philosophical Text
At Torat Zion Kollel 9:15 a.m.

Friday, December 5

Candle Lighting 4:39 p.m.
Kabbalat Shabbat 4:45 p.m.

Parshat VaYetze

Saturday, December 6

Morning Service 9:00 a.m.
Rabbi's Talmud Class 3:25 p.m.
Mincha 4:25 p.m.
Motsai Shabbat 5:37 p.m.
Sunday Morning Services 8:00 a.m.
Weekday Morning Services 6:40 a.m.
Weekday Evening Services 4:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 7

Rabbi Granatstein's class in Jewish Philosophical Text
At Torat Zion Kollel 9:15 a.m.

**** Rabbi Granatstein's Monthly Chumash Class**

At his home 8:00 p.m.

Friday, December 12

Candle Lighting 4:39 p.m.
Kabbalat Shabbat 4:45 p.m.

Parshat VaYishlach

Saturday, December 13

Morning Service 9:00 a.m.
Rabbi's Talmud Class 3:25 p.m.
Mincha 4:25 p.m.
Motsai Shabbat 5:38 p.m.
Sunday Morning Services 8:00 a.m.
Weekday Morning Services 6:40 a.m.
Weekday Evening Services 4:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 14

Rabbi Granatstein's class in Jewish Philosophical Text
At Torat Zion Kollel 9:15 a.m.

Friday, December 19

Candle Lighting 4:41 p.m.
Kabbalat Shabbat 4:45 p.m.

Parshat VaYeshev - Mevarchim

Saturday, December 20

Morning Service 9:00 a.m.
Rabbi's Talmud Class 3:25 p.m.
Mincha 4:25 p.m.
Motsai Shabbat 5:40 p.m.
Sunday Morning Services 8:00 a.m.
Weekday Morning Services * **Chanukah** * **6:35 a.m.**
Weekday Evening Services 4:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 21 - **EREV CHANUKAH**

Rabbi Granatstein's class in Jewish Philosophical Text
At Torat Zion Kollel 9:15 a.m.

**** Chanukah Begins Sunday Night Dec. 21 ****

Friday, December 26

Candle Lighting 4:44 p.m.
Kabbalat Shabbat 4:45 p.m.

Parshat Miketz - Rosh Chodesh - Chanukah

Saturday, December 27

Morning Service 9:00 a.m.
Rabbi's Talmud Class 3:30 p.m.
Mincha 4:30 p.m.
Motsai Shabbat 5:43 p.m.
Sunday Morning Services - Rosh Chodesh... 8:00 a.m.
Weekday Morning Services 6:40 a.m.
Weekday Evening Services 4:50 p.m.

Sunday, December 28

Rabbi Granatstein's class in Jewish Philosophical Text
At Torat Zion Kollel 9:15 a.m.

Monday, December 29 - **Last Day of Chanukah**

Morning Services 6:30 a.m.

MAZEL TOV

To Jessica Angel on her Bat Mitzvah and to her parents Renay Mendlovic and Mark Angel, and to grandparents Samuel & Alice Mendlovic, Aubrey & Anette Angel, and Bea & Mitch Remer.

To Sam & Sheri Hoenig on the engagement of their son Michael to Danielle Movsky of Rochester, NY.

To Rabbi Arie & Elissa Friedner (our NCSY leaders) on the birth of a boy.

IN SYMPATHY

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

THE CONGREGATION WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND ITS HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES

TO JEFFREY & LESLEY SCHWERSENSKI & FAMILY ON THE PASSING OF LESLEY'S MOTHER, GWEN LEVINSON.

TO MRS. GISELE LOVINGER, DR. MOISHE & ROBYN LOVINGER, AND CHAYA LEWIS ON THE LOSS OF THEIR HUSBAND AND FATHER, HENRY LOVINGER, A MEMBER, BA'AL KORAY, AND MASHGIACH FOR OUR SHUL FOR MANY YEARS.

TO MARK & RISA UVLIN & FAMILY ON THE PASSING OF RISA'S FATHER, LARRY SUGARMAN.

Sponsor a Kiddush for the entire congregation starting at \$500, or with Cholent at \$1000! To schedule a Kiddush, call the office at 216-381-4757.

2009 Saltzman Youth Panel

Mazel Tov to our members **Rachel Gross, Eytan Rosenblum, Rachel Soclof and Dara Weiss** on being chosen to serve on the 2009 Saltzman Youth Panel.

The 2009 Saltzman Youth Panel consists of 40 area high school juniors and seniors who will work together to make important decisions as to how to spend \$50,000 to improve the Jewish and general communities. The panel brings together Jewish students of different backgrounds to learn about the philanthropic process, responding to community needs, and most importantly, Tzedakah.



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Beachwood, Ohio 44122
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Office@GreenRoadSynagogue.org
Website:
www.GreenRoadSynagogue.org

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday
9:30 am – 5:00 pm
Friday
9:30 am – 3:00 pm



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with us!**

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We would like to thank the following for their generous contributions to our Synagogue.

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Henry Lovinger: Helen & Leon Shear; Gusta Feuer; Cynthia & Al Uvlin; Jonathan & Dahna Baskin; Larry & Sarah Warn; Sarah & Louis Radzeli; Sam & Susie Shvartz; Shlomo & Erna Laufer

David Gottesman: Boaz & Shanie Shevach; Shlomo & Erna Laufer

Leslie Weisz: Kathy & Art Feuer

IN HONOR OF:

A Speedy Recovery & Happy Birthday to Asher Weiss: Anonymous

Rabbi & Malka Granatstein's new Granddaughter: Cynthia & Al Uvlin; Jonathan & Dahna Baskin

Rabbi & Malka Granatstein's grandson's upcoming Bar Mitzvah: Marc & Pearl Pufes
Michael Hoenig's Engagement: Jonathan & Dahna Baskin

KIDDUSH:

November 15: By Marla and Joe Shafran, Paula Krulak, Rob Haimes and Joan Shafran in honor of Fannye Ratner Shafran's Yahrzeit.

November 22: By Birdie & Len Frank in honor of their parents Mr. & Mrs. Walter Farnk's 65th Wedding Anniversary, Vivian Stone's 90th birthday, and their son-in-law, Yehudah Lindenberg's 40th birthday.

SEUDAH SHLISHIT:

November 1: Jointly by Richard & Gilda Katz in memory of Richard's mother Gwen Katz, and by Sanford & Aliza Sherman in memory of Aliza's father Albert Czinn, on the occasion of their Yahrzeits.

November 8: By the Pearl-Pickholtz family in memory of Joe & Goldie Pearl on the occasion of their Yahrzeits.

November 15: Jointly by Igor & Tatyana Spira in memory of Tatyana's parents Yehoshua & Miriam Gelman and by Mike & Boris Gecovich in memory of their mother Roza Gecovich on the occasion of their Yahrzeits.

November 22: By Yitzhak Zemelman in memory of his father, Yakov Zemelman, on the occasion of his Yahrzeit.



CHANUKAH

The festival of Chanukah celebrates the rededication of the Temple after the victory of the Maccabees over the Greco-Syrians; indeed, the word “Chanukah” means “the dedication.” In lighting the Menorah, we perform the Mitzvah of Pirsumei Nisa – proclaiming the miracle in which the strong were subdued by the weak and the wicked by the righteous. The victory for the Maccabees guaranteed the survival of Israel and her religious civilization.

A Jewish kingdom was re-established for the first time since First Temple times and was ruled by the Hashmonean (Macabee) dynasty.

The Talmud records the account of how the victorious Jews entered the Temple to find it contaminated through the worship of the Greek god Zeus. The defiled altar had to be replaced and rededicated. A small cruse of oil was found with enough oil to burn one day and miraculously, it burned eight days until fresh oil could be produced.

The account of the oil that burned beyond its physical capacity has become a symbol of the ability of the Jewish spirit to burn brightly even when all physical resources seem to have been depleted.

THE LAWS OF CHANUKAH

It is incumbent upon every Jew to light the Chanukah Menorah. Ideally, this Mitzvah should be performed with olive oil, but more commonly we use wax candles. The candles are placed in the Menorah beginning from the right side with the additional candle of each day being placed to the left of the candles of the previous day. The candle farthest to the left is lit first, then the one next to it, and so forth until all are lit.

The candles should burn for at least one half hour after the appearance of the stars. For this reason, on Friday night when we must light the Menorah before sunset, we should use extra large candles to ensure they burn sufficiently into the night.

The Menorah must be lit at home. The lighting of a Menorah in a synagogue, or at a communal celebration, does not constitute the fulfillment of the Mitzvah.

The miracle of Chanukah could not have come about except through the heroism of Jewish women like Yehudit, who killed an enemy general and helped to save her people. For this reason, women do not do housework while the candles burn.

It is meritorious to rejoice with good food and gifts for the children.

**THE FIRST NIGHT OF CHANUKAH IS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST**





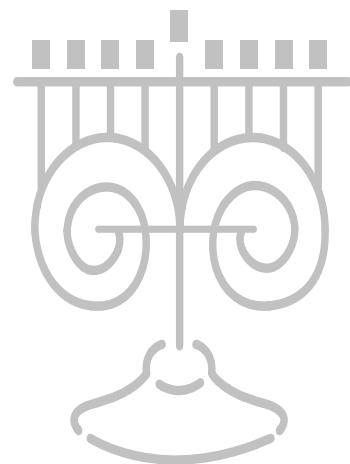
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Please send in this slip with your PRE-PAID reservation to the Synagogue office at 2437 S. Green Road, 44122 or call the office at 216-381-4757 by **Tuesday, December 23rd.**

Name: _____

Adults: _____ Children: _____

Seating Requests: _____

