



## SHOWDOWN AT A BAR MITZVAH

A lifestyle of brute power vs. an educational path of faith and spirituality. A 13 year old boy takes on Og the giant.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT TOLDOT

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Shluchim Office International  
816 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn,

NY 11213

718.221.0500

5784 - 2023

Founded in 2008 in memory of Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg OB" M  
Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

# Contents

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## A. The Jewish Lifecycle.....5

What lies behind the repetition of the verse: “These are the descendants of Isaac the son of Abraham; Abraham fathered Isaac.” (Source 1)? Alluded to with this repetition is that Isaac’s achievements are to the credit of the education Abraham gave him.

Circumcision at eight days and a Bar Mitzvah at 13 began with Isaac, not Abraham. (There are three opinions on when Abraham recognized G-d [Sources 2-4] and none maintain he was 13.) To mark the occasion of Isaac’s Bar Mitzvah, Abraham invited the local kings (this is also the source for marking the circumcision with a celebration, Source 5).

## B. The Great Celebration.....9

At the party, other rulers challenged Og: “You told us that Abraham could never father a child, and look, here is Isaac.” Og retorted: “I can crush him with a single finger.” G-d said to Og: “You will yet see Isaac’s descendants grow and you will fall at their hand.” (Source 6)

During the Holocaust, the Rebbe spoke at a Bar Mitzvah in the U.S. and began with a question: “Bar Mitzvah is when a child enters the Jewish nation as a full fledged member and accepts the yoke of Torah and mitzvot, to the joy and celebration of his family and friends. From where does he draw the strength for this? This question is particularly strong during this time of crisis, when the Jewish people are downtrodden and oppressed.”

The Rebbe went on to explain what happened at Isaac’s Bar Mitzvah:

Og represented brute strength and conditioning of the body, and this is how he educated his followers. This is indicated in the verse describing Og’s bed, and Rashbam explains that due to his size they had to build him a bed of iron. This bed was preserved at a museum in Rabbah of the Children of Ammon, encouraging others to follow in his ways. (Source 7)

Og felt that Abraham’s spiritual path may have been suitable for him, but the younger generation would not follow it. During the party, Og claimed that the fact the Isaac was following Abraham’s ways proved nothing, for it didn’t have solid roots - with one finger, Og said, he could crush him.

## C. G-d’s Answer.....14

G-d responded to Og, telling him he would see thousands of Isaac’s descendants and would fall at their hands. Even physical strength is rooted in the spiritual. When life has

no meaning, even brute strength crumbles. That is why Og fell in a physical battle - Moses killed Og in physical combat, not miraculously - to show that physical prowess is dependant on the health of the soul, which comes from belief and faith in G-d.

## D. The Contemporary Message.....17

When a Jew looks at his surroundings and sees overwhelming evil, they may ask: "How can I deal with this?" The answer is, they are from Abraham, who did not fear the world, and they too shall not fear. They are connected to G-d, and Isaac's descendants will certainly be victorious over evil.

# Introduction

Jewish lifecycle events—circumcision and Bar Mitzvah—began with Isaac. At his Bar Mitzvah, a group of kings sat discussing whether Abraham's way of life was sustainable for generations. Would "little" Isaac be able to stand up to Og the giant?

A lesson on heritage, true strength and the source of Jewish continuity.

### השיעור לפרשת תולדות

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ורשימות כ"ק אדמו"ר חוברת י"ז

נדפס ברשות קה"ת, ובאדיבות וועד הנחות בלה"ק, ותודתנו נתונה להם.

# A. The Jewish Lifecycle

## Source 1 Genesis 25:19

**Student's** These are the descendants of Isaac the son of Abraham; Abraham fathered Isaac.  
pg. 3

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם,  
אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק

## >> The Rebbe

### Isaac's Achievements are to Abraham's Credit

**Student's** The commentators ask, why does the verse (quoted above) repeat itself, stating that Isaac was the son of Abraham, and then again that Abraham fathered Isaac?  
pg. 3

The simple answer is that the verse is explaining how it is possible to be a "descendant of Isaac the son of Abraham," both in the literal sense, as well as in the spiritual sense, as the main "offspring" of righteous people are their Torah study and mitzvot. This is possible because "Abraham fathered Isaac."

על<sup>1</sup> הפסוק "ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם אברהם הוליד את יצחק"<sup>2</sup> - שואלים המפרשים<sup>3</sup>: למה חוזר וכופל הדברים - "יצחק בן אברהם" ו"אברהם הוליד את יצחק"?

הפירוש הפשוט הוא, שזהו נתינת טעם ויסוד: כיצד אפשר להיות "תולדות יצחק בן אברהם" (תולדות כפשוטו, וכן על פי דרשת חכמינו זיכרונם לברכה<sup>4</sup> שעיקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים הם תורה ומצוות)? - על ידי זה ש"אברהם הוליד את יצחק".

### Isaac's Legacy: Brit Milah and Bar Mitzvah

**Student's** Isaac set a number of precedents, including circumcision at the age of eight days—the ultimate form of Brit Milah—and Bar Mitzvah at age 13.  
pg. 3

Abraham had circumcised himself at age 99, and he also didn't have a Bar Mitzvah or similar experience at age 13. There were a number of stages in Abraham's recognition of G-d—

ישנם כמה ענינים שהתחילו לראשונה אצל יצחק, וביניהם נמנה מה שנימול לשמונה ימים<sup>5</sup>, שזוהי השלימות בענין המילה, ומה שנעשה בר-מצוה בהיותו בן י"ג שנה.

- אברהם מל את עצמו בהיותו בן תשעים ותשע, וגם הענין של בר-מצוה בגיל שלוש עשרה שנה לא היה אצל אברהם. ישנן כמה דעות בדברי רז"ל מתי הכיר אברהם את בוראו:

three years old, 40, and 48—but nothing happened at age 13.

בן שלש שנים<sup>6</sup>, בן ארבעים שנה<sup>7</sup>, בן ארבעים ושמונה שנה<sup>8</sup>, אבל לא בן י"ג שנה.

## Source 2 Talmud, Nedarim 32a

Student's  
pg. 4

Rabbi Ami the son of Rabbi Abba said: Abraham was three years old when he recognized the Creator, as the verse says: "Because ("Ekev") Abraham hearkened to My voice." "Ekev" has the numerical value of 172, and Abraham lived to 175; for "Ekev" (i.e., 172) years he heeded G-d's commandments. This implies that at age three he recognized the Creator.

ואמר רבי אמי בר אבא: בן שלש שנים הכיר אברהם את בוראו, שנאמר: "עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקולי", "עקב" חשבונו בגימטריה הוא מאה שבעים ושתיים. וכל שנותיו של אברהם היו מאה שבעים וחמש, ו"עקב" שנים שמר את חקותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא. משמע שתחלת הכרתו את הבורא היתה בגיל שלוש

## Source 3 Maimonides, Laws of Idolatry 1:3

Student's  
pg. 4

Once Abraham was weaned, his mind began to ponder day and night how the universe could exist without One to lead it ... His heart contemplated this until he understood the true and just path on his own. He realized there is one G-d who runs the universe and created everything ... Abraham was 40 years old when he recognized G-d.

פיון שנגמל איתן זה התחיל לשוטט בדעתו והוא קטן, והתחיל לחשב ביום ובלילה, והיה תמה היאך אפשר שיהיה הגלגל הזה נוהג תמיד ולא יהיה לו מנהיג ומי יסבב אותו... ולבו משוטט ומבין עד שהשיג דרך האמת והבין קו הצדק מתבוננתו הנכונה. וידע שיש שם אלוה אחד והוא מנהיג הגלגל והוא ברא הכל... וכן ארבעים שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו

## Source 4 Midrash Rabbah 64:4

Student's  
pg. 4

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Chanina both say that Abraham was 48 when he recognized G-d.

רבי יוחנן ורבי חנינא, שניהם אומרים בן ארבעים ושמונה שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו

Etz Yosef commentary

During the Generation of Division, Abraham was 48, and he did not participate. This implies that he was 48 when he recognized G-d.

משום שבדור הפלגה היה אברהם בן מ"ח ולא נשתתף עמהם. הרי שכן מ"ח הכיר.

The classic resolution to these conflicting opinions is that they were a process of belief in G-d: The process began at age 3, and at 40 and 48 he further developed that faith. None of these opinions, however, gives thirteen as an age when Abraham had a significant development in his faith.

## >> The Rebbe

Student's  
pg. 5

Both of these events are alluded to in the verse “The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.” One opinion among the sages maintains that this feast was at the *brit milah*. This is alluded to by the Hebrew word for “weaned,” *HiGaMaL*: the first two Hebrew letters (HG **הג**) have the numerical value of eight, and the last two letters (ML **מל**) mean circumcision. A second opinion is that the feast was at age 13, and “weaned” here means weaned off the negative inclination and transferred to the positive inclination, a process that occurs at age 13.

שני הענינים הללו נרמזים בפסוק<sup>9</sup> “וַיִּגְדַּל וַיִּנְדֹּף וַיִּגְמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מְשֻׁתָּה גָדוֹל בְּיוֹם הַגְּמִל אֶת יִצְחָק” - כמובא בדברי רבותינו זיכרונם לברכה דעה אחת שסעודה זו היתה בעת הברית<sup>10</sup>, כמרומז בתיבת “הַגְּמִל”: הג (שמספרו שמונה) מל - שנימול לשמונה ימים, ודעה שנייה, ש“ויגמל” פירושו “שנגמל (נלקח והועבר) מיצר הרע ליצר טוב”<sup>11</sup>, שזהו כשנעשה בן י”ג שנה.

*Fascinatingly, we see that the events of a Jewish lifecycle were first experienced by Isaac. He was the first to undergo a circumcision at eight days old, and also the first to have a Bar Mitzvah at age 13. Abraham did not have either of these events. It should also be noted that the first wedding described in the Torah is that of Isaac.*

## Royal Feast

Student's  
pg. 5

The Midrash comments on the words “great feast” that this was a “feast of the greats, attended by Og the giant and all the other mighty people of the time.” All the nations of the world had appointed Abraham as a ruler over them, so when he held a feast he invited all the kings, including Og.

על פירוש המילה “משתה גדול”, נאמר במדרש<sup>12</sup>: “משתה גדולים, עוג וכל גדולים עמו היו שם”. והיינו, מכיוון שכל אומות העולם המליכו את אברהם למלך עליהם<sup>13</sup>, לכן, בשעה שאברהם עשה סעודה, הזמין את כל המלכים, וביניהם גם את עוג.

*During the time of Abraham a major regional war broke out in the Middle East. During this war Abraham’s nephew Lot fell captive, and Abraham intervened in the war. He defeated Lot’s captors and set everyone free. As a result of his military victory, all of the kings of the region recognized Abraham as their leader. So when Abraham threw a party—in honor of a brit or Bar Mitzvah—he invited all the kings to attend.*

*It is interesting to note that this party serves as the source for the obligation to make a festive meal in honor of a brit milah and Bar Mitzvah.*

## Source 5 Rabbenu Bechaye, Genesis 21:8

**Student's** This supports our custom of celebrating the  
pg. 5 circumcision with a festive meal, because according to this Midrash, Abraham made a celebration on the eighth day after Isaac's circumcision. This is a fitting custom, as King David said "Gather to Me My devoted ones, who made a covenant with Me over a sacrifice" (Psalms 50:5).

וּמִכָּאֵן יֵשׁ סִמְךָ לְמִנְהַגְנוּ שְׂאֵנוּ עוֹשִׂים  
סְעוּדָה בְּיוֹם הַמִּלָּה, שְׂהָרִי לְפִי  
הַמְדַרְשׁ הַזֶּה עָשָׂה אֲבְרָהָם מִשְׂתָּה  
גְּדוֹל בְּיוֹם ח' לְמִלַּת יִצְחָק, וּמִנְהַג כְּשֶׁר  
הוּא, וְעָלְיוֹ אָמַר דָּוִד אֶסְפוּ לִי חֲסִידַי  
כִּרְתִּי בְרִיתִי עָלַי זָבַח



# B. The Great Celebration

## The Debate at the Party

The Midrash continues to describe what happened at the celebration:

### Source 6 Bereishit Rabbah 53:10

Student's  
pg. 6

“They said to Og, ‘Did you not say that Abraham is a barren mule who cannot father children?’ He said to them, “and now, what is his gift? [Isaac] is inferior and lowly, and I can crush him with my finger.” The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “Why are you mocking his gift? By your life, you will see tens of thousands of coming from his descendants, and in the end you will fall in their hands, as it states, ‘G-d said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for I have placed him and his entire nation in your hands’.”

אָמְרוּ לְעוֹג: הָאֵם לֹא הָיְתָה אוֹמֵר,  
שְׂאֵבְרָהֶם דּוֹמָה לְפִרְדָּה עֶקְרָה שְׂאֵינָהּ  
מוֹלִידָה? אָמַר לָהֶם, מַה־יִּמְתְּנֶתוּ?  
עֲלוּבָה הִיא, הֲלֹא כֵן? אִם אָשִׁים אֶת  
אֶצְבְּעִי עַל יָצְחָק – אֲרַסֵּק אוֹתוֹ. אָמַר  
לוֹ הַקֹּב"ה מַדּוּעַ אַתָּה מְזַלְזֵל בְּמִתְנַתּוֹ?  
חַיִּיךָ שְׂאֵתָה רוּאָה אֶלֶף אֲלָפִים וְרִיבֵי  
רִבּוֹת יוֹצְאִים מִבְּנֵי בְּנָיו, וְאִין סוֹפֵךְ  
לְפַל אֶלָּא בְּיָדוֹ, שְׂנַאֲמַר וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל  
מֹשֶׁה אֶל תִּירָא אֹתוֹ כִּי בְּיָדְךָ נִתְתִּי  
וְגו'

The simple explanation of this Midrash is that this celebration became a strategic show of force. The kings taunted Og: You told us that Abraham would never father children, and look! Here is Isaac! Og responded derisively: “I’ll crush this tiny thing with one finger.” G-d said: You will see that his descendants will grow and eventually Moses will kill you.” Og later attacked the Jews and tried to stop them from entering the Land of Israel, and Moses jumped up and killed him.

However, there is obviously more at play here. The first question—especially according to the opinion that the “great feast” was Isaac’s Bar Mitzvah celebration—is: If this is now thirteen years after Isaac’s birth, why would Og and his buddies still be talking about the event of Isaac’s birth? It would be one thing if they were gathered at Isaac’s bris, and Og’s friends came up to him and said, “Look, you said Abraham never had children, and now you were proven wrong.” But if Isaac was already thirteen, wouldn’t this be old news? Why are they still talking about it now, 13 years later?

Second, why did Og come to the party and engage in saber-rattling? Abraham invited people to his simcha to come and celebrate. If Og wasn’t interested in celebrating, he could have just stayed home. Did he really have to come and start threatening the Bar Mitzvah boy?

Obviously, as we shall see, there is more to the story than initially meets the eye. As the Rebbe powerfully explains, this conversation between Og and his friends—and G-d’s interjection into the conversation—really offers a very profound glimpse into everything Abraham stood for, as well as a very important lesson about what we stand for as we follow in Abraham’s ways. This message from Isaac’s Bar Mitzvah is one the Rebbe emphasized frequently, including in the letter the Rebbe would send to boys on the occasion of their own Bar Mitzvahs. (See Igrot Kodesh vol. 4, p. 342; vol. 6, p. 112; vol. 12 p. 72).

The first place we find this insight of the Rebbe is in his Reshimot (Choveret 17), notes from the Rebbe's remarks at a Bar Mitzvah (of the Kazarnovsky family) in New York in the summer of 1942. These were dark and challenging days indeed for the Jewish people, as Hitler's trains in Europe brought millions of Jews to their terrible deaths in the gas chambers. We can well imagine the somber mood of world Jewry at the time, and what the Bar Mitzvah guests must have been feeling: how do you celebrate a Bar Mitzvah, becoming an adult among the Jewish people, at a time when simply being Jewish was a terrifying prospect; at a time when some surely wondered what was so good about being Jewish in the first place, and were tortured by the thought of what guarantee there was that we would even be here in another generation or two?

The Rebbe wrote down this remarkable speech in a personal notebook, and it was discovered in his drawer after his passing. The Rebbe's personal notebooks included the novel Torah insights that the Rebbe wrote during the twenty years before assuming the leadership of Chabad. The Rebbe wrote tersely, in small, crowded handwriting, and a team of scholars worked to decipher and explain these deep insights for publication.

Student's  
pg. 6

In today's class we will study the speech the Rebbe gave at this Bar Mitzvah.

As mentioned, the Rebbe wrote this down for his personal use, so it is written very tersely. The text will therefore be brief, and will require longer explanations than usual.

## >> The Rebbe Personal notes

The Rebbe began with a painful question:

The Bar Mitzvah is when a child enters the Jewish nation as a full fledged member and accepts the yoke of Torah and mitzvot, to the joy and celebration of his family and friends. From where does he draw the strength for this? This question is particularly strong during this time of crisis, when the Jewish people are downtrodden and oppressed.

"בר מצווה - היינו שנכנס בתוך מחנה ישראל, ומקבל עול תורה ומצוות, ושמחים כל קרוביו ומכיריו. ממה ישאב כוח ועוז על זה? ובפרט בעת צרה הזאת, שבני ישראל דויים וסחופים?"

## Abraham's Path is a Dead End

The Rebbe explains that the discussion between Og and his colleagues wasn't just about physical superiority, it was much deeper than that. This was a broader, existential debate about how nations and ideologies can best develop and endure. Remember, gathered there that day were the rulers and thinkers and policy makers of their time, and like all leaders, they grappled with the following question: how do you get a people to survive? What must we give our youth for them to feel proud of their identity, secure in their beliefs, and remain true to the path they are shown by their parents?

All present at the feast knew what Abraham's path was. He taught belief in G-d and kindness to others. He taught about searching for purpose and meaning in life.

Og had always insisted that "Abraham is a barren mule who cannot bear children." He argued that Abraham's path is too spiritual, too demanding, and no one will follow him down this path. It's a dead end.

Let's now read this in the Rebbe's words:

**Student's**  
pg. 6

Og argued that Abraham's path of faith may be good for him, but it isn't relevant to the youth, they won't follow his way. This is what Og meant with "he cannot father children" - there won't be any future for this path.

כי עוג טען שלו יהי אברהם אבינו  
באמונתו, אבל אין זה ענין לצעירים, שלא  
ימשכו אחרי זה. וזהו פירוש המילים "אינו  
מוליד" שאין לזה המשך.

What was Og's alternative path? In the mind of Og, a giant of a king and a king of giants, the answer was simple: survival is the product of sheer physical might. Og was a giant and warrior, with a lifetime of physical adventure— a kind of Gulliver and Superman combined. The Midrash states that Og was around even before the Great Flood, and he survived by clinging tightly to the side of Noach's Ark while torrential rain poured down for a half a year. Og was all about might, power, and survival of the fittest, and that's precisely the worldview he espoused. To Og it was obvious that what young people need to make it in life is bodily might and physical strength. We should inculcate our children with the spirit of sports, athletics, and military discipline. These values of courage, valor, and physical achievement will fill them with confidence to last for a lifetime.

Og preached survival of the fittest, and his belief that the only way a nation can survive in an ever-changing and modernizing world was to become more fit, to develop the mightiest army that would overcome any external force.

This approach is expressed in the verses in the book of Deuteronomy that describe Og:

## Og's Approach: Physical Might

### Source 7 Deuteronomy 3:11

**Student's**  
pg. 7

Only Og, king of Bashan, was left from the remnant of the Rephaim. His bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was its length, and four cubits its breadth, according to the cubit of the man.

כי רק-עוג מלך הכּשן נשאר מיתר  
הרפאים, הגה ערשו ערש ברזל, הלה  
הוא ברבת בני עמון, תשע אמות ארקה  
וארבע אמות רחבה באמת-איש

Rashbam

**Bedstead of iron:** As a child, he was very strong and when he lay down he would break a wooden cradle, thus they made him one of iron.

**Rabbah of the children of Ammon:** It is still there, in his hometown, attesting to the wonder of a child so large.

עָרַשׁ בְּרִזָּל: לְפִי שְׂכַשְׁהָהּ קָטָן הָיָה הַזֶּקֶן  
מְאֹד וּבְהַשְׁתַּטְּחוֹ הָיָה מְשַׁבֵּר עָרַשׁ שֶׁל  
עֶזְרָא, לְכֹךָ עָשְׂאוּהוּ שֶׁל בְּרִזָּל

הָלָה הִיא בְּרַבַּת בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: עֲדִין מִנְחַת שָׁם  
בְּמִקּוֹם שְׁנַת־גְּדֹל בְּקִטְנוֹתוֹ לְתַמְהוֹן שְׁהָיָה  
גְּדוֹל בְּקִטְנוֹתוֹ כָּל כָּךְ

Rashbam explains that Og was such a large child that getting into bed he would crack the wooden frame, so they made an iron bed for him.

This bed was kept in a museum in Rabbah of the Children of Ammon, showing the world their great giant with pride, and encouraging others to follow in his footsteps.

## >> The Rebbe Personal notes

Student's  
pg. 7

Og's approach was: "his bedstead" - which Rashbam explains refers to his childhood cradle - "was a bedstead of iron," meaning that physical strength is the main thing.

שיטת עוג: "הנה ערשו" - ופירש הרשב"ם  
עריסת ילד קטן - "ערש ברזל", שהעיקר  
- בריאות הגוף.

How can we state that Og only cared for physical strength? We see that he did mitzvot as well - he ran to inform Abraham that Lot had been taken captive, helping to free him!

The Rebbe explains that this act of Og's is an example of the type of mitzvot that Og believed were necessary: good deeds that make logical sense, such as helping a captured relative. What Og was against was super-rational mitzvot that are observed out of faith.

## Logical Ethics

Student's  
pg. 7

Of the mitzvot, Og argued, only those that are logically necessary should be observed, and only because they are logical. This is why he advised Abraham to go and save his nephew Lot, as this was a logical mitzvah.

ומהמצות יש לקיים רק ענינים שהשכל  
מחייבם, ומפני שהשכל מחייבם<sup>11</sup>, שלכן  
אמר לאברהם אבינו שילך להציל את לוט  
בן אחיו<sup>12</sup> - שזוהי מצווה מובנת על פי  
השכל..

Og's approach is evident in a verse that we learned earlier:

The verse states, "his bedstead was . . . in Rabbah of the children of Ammon." Rabbah was the capital city, and his bedstead was displayed there in order to educate the residents of the country, teaching them his approach that physical strength is paramount.

וממשיך בפסוק הנה ערשו ערש ברזל  
הלא היא ברבת בני עמון" - עיר הבירה -  
שהראוה למופת לצורך חנוך בני כרכים,  
שילמדו שיטתו שהעיקר הוא בריאות  
הגוף (ולא ענינים רוחניים).

*(Og's approach bears similarity to the Hellenist culture that the Greeks attempted to force on the Jewish people at the time of the Chanukah miracle.*

- A. The Greeks glorified physical might and development of the body.
- B. Greek philosophy was ready to accept the elements of the Torah that make logical sense. What they opposed was those Torah laws that aren't based on logic. They forbade the Jewish people to observe those mitzvot that aren't logically understood.

*Now at the Bar Mitzvah, Isaac was sitting with the proverbial shtreimel on his head and giving a Torah-themed speech. The other kings turned to Og and said, "here, you see that Abraham's path has a future. You said that no one would follow him, but he's succeeded in raising his son in his path and his son is proudly following him!"*

## Isaac's Education Won't Last

Og countered that this offspring is merely a gift, not an organic outgrowth that can take root and flourish. This wouldn't last, he said, he could crush it with his little finger.

ועל זה ענה עוג: שזהו רק מתנה שאין לו  
אחיזה בחיים, להיות באופן של זריעה  
בארץ וצמיחה מזה, ובמילא, לא יהי לו  
קיום, ובאצבע קטנה ימיתנו.

*Og countered that although Isaac is following Abraham's path, it isn't independent and sustainable. Isaac's loyalty to Abraham is a gift Abraham received from G-d, it's not inherent to Isaac's personality, so it won't last in the long term. With a little effort on Og's end, using his little finger, he can vanquish Isaac and cut off the spiritual and physical future of Abraham.*

*Isaac's lavish Bar Mitzvah feast brought the two movements to a head-on collision. Og's friends argued that Og's claim that Abraham would have no children, that he would not be able to perpetuate his spiritual path, had been disproven by Isaac's conduct. Og countered that Isaac is only following Abraham's path as a child who is still subject to his parents' influence. Once Isaac grows up after his Bar Mitzvah and his body develops he will pursue a very different path of self-realization.*

# C. G-d's Answer

## >> The Rebbe

### Spirituality is the Basis For Physicality

**Student's**  
pg. 9  
G-d's message to Og was, "why are you mocking my gift? You will live a long life and eventually fall into the hands of thousands of his descendants."

ואמר לו הקב"ה, מה אתה מבזה על מתנתו,  
תאריך ימים ותפול בידי אלף אלפים כו'  
של בני בניו:

*In addition to the fact that Isaac's descendants will exist forever, long after Og is forgotten, there is also a deeper message here.*

*As the "manufacturer" of the world and its inhabitants, G-d knows the "factory settings" of this world, and he intervened in this conversation to proclaim that Abraham is correct.*

**Student's**  
pg. 9  
Even physical strength and might must be based on the foundation of spirituality and faith. Without this foundation, children will simply indulge in luxuries which will ultimately harm their physical health and strength too.

כי, גם חוזק ובריאות בגשמיות, הוא, רק  
כשיש בסיס ויסוד של רוחניות ואמונה,  
כי, בלאו הכי, למה לא יחטא הבן וירדוף  
אחרי מותרות וכו' - דבר שיפגע סוף סוף  
גם בחוזק ובריאות בגשמיות.

*It is of course true that people need physical strength in order to survive. But physical strength is only an external casing for what is really important, for a number of reasons: Firstly, because physical strength cannot raise a sustainable culture. An emphasis on strength doesn't teach self-control and respect for others. Strength can bring success, but also violent conflict that eventually destroys the powerful bullies.*

*Moreover, human beings naturally search for meaning. We aren't just animals that suffice with eating and providing for our physical needs. We are creatures that ask "why?" "What is the purpose of all of this?" We lift our eyes upward and search for that which lies beyond us. We want to believe in something and give to someone. When people don't find the answer to our question of meaning and purpose they feel empty, and fall into depression.*

*This is true on the individual level, and all the more true on the national level. Nations that are based only on brute strength don't survive. Eventually they meet a stronger enemy that is more advanced militarily and are defeated. G-d promised that Abraham's descendants would have physical strength, but also spiritual blessing that would make their strength unstoppable and eternal.*



## Og Was Defeated by the Sword

Student's  
pg. 9

This is why the war in which Og fell into the hands of Isaac's descendants was a natural war, fought with a sword "and the Israelites struck him by sword," not like the war with the city of Jericho which was fought with the miraculous means of the shofar, or the miraculous war with Sancherib.

ולכן מלחמת עוג שבה נפל ביד בני בניו של יצחק היתה מלחמה ממש - בחרב, כמו שנאמר בכתוב "ויכהו ישראל לפי חרב", ולא כמלחמת יריחו שהיתה באופן נסי, ע"י שופרות כו', וכמלחמת סנחריב, וכה"ג.

*In the end the Jewish people defeated Og specifically with physical strength. They didn't just employ miraculous means, like the way the walls of Jericho fell before Joshua and the army of Sancherib was vanquished by a plague from Heaven. The verse says that "the Israelites struck him by sword." The Talmud relates that Moses leapt up and struck Og on the ankle, knocking him to the ground. It was specifically Moses's physical power that overcame Og's might.*

Student's  
pg. 9

This was in order to show that physical strength and victory depends on the health of the soul, which comes from complete faith in G-d, to the point of self-sacrifice.

וטעם הדבר - כדי להראות שבריאות הגוף, ונצחון גם בגשמיות (אפילו בטבע), תלוי בבריאות הנשמה, הבא ע"י אמונה שלימה - עד כדי מסירות נפש - באלקי עולם.

מרשימות כ"ק אדמו"ר חוברת י"ז

*The Rebbe spoke these words in 1942, but he wrote them down as a fundamental lesson for us today. We are fortunate to live in a time when the Jewish people possess great physical strength. We thank Hashem that gone are the days when Jews were persecuted and forced to cower and hide. Today, with Hashem's help, we can proudly fight for our lives and our dignity. We can respond to threats from our enemies with force and with might and enjoy technological and military advantages—all gifts of G-d!*

*But even—and perhaps especially—when we fight, we must remember that we are different. Our fight is not like others, and our victory is not like others. Our victory, ultimately, is a product not only of force but of Divine fate. Despite being the smallest and most persecuted of the nations, we are the ones who survive—nay, thrive!—to tell the tale. Nations mightier and larger than us have tried to erase us, but it is they who are relegated to monuments and to the pages of Wikipedia, while we endure as a living people, still following the way of our forefather Abraham. Because we are not a normal people. There is no way to tell our story as though it were a normal one—nor is there any reason to do so.*

*We have reached our position today by G-d's kindness and blessing, and we must always remember that and continue to hold on to these two ropes—the rope of prudent security and military planning*

*on one hand, and the rope of faith in Hashem and adherence to His Torah and mitzvot on the other. In these times of war, with our soldiers putting their lives on the line for all of us, for the sake of the continued existence of the Jewish people in our land, more than ever we must hold onto that inherent faith within us all, we must nurture that Jewish gene seeking meaning and connection with Hashem. This is the secret weapon that will bolster our soldiers, for them to succeed fully in their mission, and very soon return home healthy and whole—even healthier and holier than when they left!*

*In every generation, the Jews always understood that periods of trial and tribulation are signs of the Redemption. The pain we have endured in this war, and the high price we have paid in Jewish blood, cannot and will not be in vain, G-d forbid. Rather, our commitment to G-d Al-mighty will surely ensure that they are the birth pangs of Moshiach, the pangs disappearing immediately as we birth and herald the era of eternal Shabbos, of the greatest light, with the true and complete Redemption, may it happen now!*



## D. The Contemporary Message

### >> The Rebbe

#### How Can We Handle External Threats?

**Student's** There is a directive here for every Jew.  
pg. 10

When we contemplate our situation, we realize that we find ourselves in a world with bad and evil actions, where the wicked people hold the upper hand. Our world is filled with concealment, as we see in our personal lives where we spend most of our time occupied with material matters that strongly oppose the matters of holiness, with the strength of Og against an eight-day-old-baby. The strongest concealment is from our external surroundings, and the Jewish people are the smallest nation.

While we are occupied with holy matters, and especially when we are holding a great feast where “all the nations of the world see that you are called by G-d’s name,” there are those that come along and think they can mock and dismiss us.

We can then wonder, where will we draw the strength to focus on Torah and mitzvot? We are expected to focus on holiness not only at the high point of the Yom Kippur prayers, but also all year round. How will we be able to handle all of this concealment?

ההוראה מזה לכל אחד ואחד מישראל:

כאשר יהודי מתבונן היכן הוא נמצא - בעולם שמעשיו קשים ורעים והרשעים גוברים בו<sup>22</sup> יש לו ריבוי העלמות והסתרים, ואפילו בעצמו, הרי בחלקו הגדול של היום עסוק הוא בענייני עולם הזה שעומדים בתוקף נגד ענייני קדושה, כמו התוקף של עוג נגד תינוק בן שמונה ימים, ועוד יותר, ובפרט ההעלמות וההסתרים שמבחוץ, ומה גם שבני ישראל בכלל הם “המעט מכל העמים”<sup>23</sup>,

ובשעה שהוא עוסק בענייני קדושה, ובפרט כאשר הוא עושה משתה גדול, באופן ש”ראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה’ נקרא עליך”<sup>24</sup> - באים אלו שאומרים שיכולים לשחקו ולעשות ממנו אין ואפס -

אזי יכול לחשוב: מניין ייקח כח על תורה ומצוות ומעשים טובים? ומה גם שדורשים זאת ממנו לא רק ביום כיפור בנעילה, אלא במשך כל השנה. כיצד יוכל להתמודד עם כל ההעלמות וההסתרים?

## Learning from Abraham

Student's  
pg. 11

Here we have a directive from Abraham, "the actions of the fathers are a sign for the children."

We are all descended from Abraham who paid no attention to the entire world around him and announced that G-d is the ruler of the world, the world is G-dliness, and "there is nothing other than G-d." This approach of Abraham is what "fathered Isaac."

In the same way, every Jew, wherever we find ourselves, should have no fear from those who pride themselves in their physical strength. We have a super-rational relationship with G-d and we express this in our lives both on Shabbat and weekdays. We transform the physical to serve as a vehicle for G-dliness, spiritual "descendants of Isaac." This will empower Isaac's physical descendants to be victorious over all those fighting G-d and his Torah, like in the war of Og. May this pave the way for the conquest of the Land of Israel, led by Mashiach speedily in our days.

מוצאו מאברהם אבינו - אביהם של כל בני ישראל - שלא התפעל מהעולם כולו, והכריז "א-ל עולם", שהעולם הוא אלקות, "אין עוד מלבדו", ועל ידי זה - "הוליד את יצחק".

וכך גם כל יהודי, בכל זמן ובכל מקום, אין לו להתירא כלל מאלו החושבים שכוחם ועוצם ידם כו'; הוא מתקשר עם הקב"ה בהתקשרות שלמעלה מטעם ודעת, וממשיך זאת גם בימי החול ומעשי חול, ועושה מהגשמיות כלים לאלוקות - "תולדות יצחק" ברוחניות, ועל ידי זה נמשך גם ב"תולדות יצחק" כפשוטו, שנכדיו של יצחק מנצחים את כל אלו הלוחמים נגד הקב"ה ותורתו, כבמלחמת עוג, וזוהי ההקדמה והכנה לכיבוש ארץ ישראל - ארץ הקדושה, על ידי משיח צדקנו במהרה בימינו אמן.

משיחת שבת פרשת חיי שרה, ה'תשי"ט  
תורת מנחם, כרך כ"ד עמוד 213 ואילך