The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
6701 Old Pimlico Road
Baltimore. MD 21209

www.chabadshul.org

November 8, 2025 **VaYera** **17 Cheshvan, 5786**

Believing Again

Walking the paths of an Auschwitz sterilized by the time that has passed since the horrors perpetrated here, I begin to doubt humanity and its Creator. I stare at the lush green of a tree reflected in a puddle, battling the obvious fact that trees cannot be green here, and neither can water reflect. This is hell that came to earth. Yet, while conscious of this, I feel no blinding pain for the senseless murder of millions of my brethren. Just a void emptiness, the nothingness of a head that's not thinking. I feel suspended in a world I cannot comprehend.

I first arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where at least 1.1 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. A sprawling camp with naked red chimneys. Only remnants of the barracks remain, because the inmates had stripped them for firewood, desperate to stay warm in the winter after liberation. A visiting group walks by, indifferent to the sanctity of this hallowed ground, and I hear laughter and casual conversation as they pass. Another young couple stands in a passionate embrace, seemingly unaware of the millions of last goodbyes uttered only yards away.

I arrive in Auschwitz proper. The entrance to Auschwitz: I've seen it a thousand times, in a thousand pictures and videos. It casts a heavy shadow, looming across train tracks, tracks that head straight into the mouth of the beast. I walk the length of the train track, my head abuzz with Elie Wiesel's description of vicious salivating dogs snapping at a shivering child just disembarking from a hellish ride.

I enter a low-lying building, innocuous-looking, as most buildings in Auschwitz are. It almost looks inviting on this hot day. The floor is covered by a glass platform that prevents you from touching the bare ground. In here, the inmates were deloused and shaved. Their blue and white striped uniforms were placed in a huge hot air oven to kill the lice burrowed deep in the seams. A sign outside the building reads "Disinfection."

In front of the gas chamber, a grainy black and white video of my great-grandfather — Yaakov Shimon Lezerowitz — plays in my head. He is turning for a last peek at a sky that will never turn light again. Zyklon B openings in the ceilings of the gas chambers mock me, allowing sunlight to beam onto walls that have been scraped and scratched at by hands straining to stay alive.

Even after leaving Auschwitz, the destruction remains in my mind, casting a shadow of doubt that leaves me frozen. Months later, I am studying chapter 18 of Genesis and a thought occurs to me.

We find Abraham sitting outside his tent, in recovery from his recent circumcision. Through the blazing sun, three figures approach his tent. In pain from his surgery, but indomitable as ever, Abraham runs to welcome them to his tent. A feast of amazing proportions begins — a bull per guest is slaughtered. Unmasking themselves as angels on a mission, one stands to bless Abraham's wife Sarah. The angel says, "At this time next year you will give birth to a child." Sarah, in understandable disbelief, laughs at the prospect of ever giving birth, doubtful that a body wracked by time and age could conceive.

Yet, despite her unwillingness to believe the unbelievable, Sarah ultimately gives birth to a beautiful child, Isaac.

Now, looking back, I remember a moment, one moment, of pristine clarity in Auschwitz that left me, once again, believing. It was as I stood at an oversized guest book, its vanilla pages beckoning me to pen a thought.

I wrote: *"You are remembered. You are survived. Your deaths were in vain, but your lives were not. I have come back to this place to declare that we, the Family Lezerowitz, lives."*

It was at that moment I finally shed a tear, no longer doubtful or indifferent. The miracle of Isaac's birth, the miracle of my existence. In plain-sighted reality, nothing is as impossible as it seems.

(by Yosef Lewis from www.chabad.org)

This Day – 20 Cheshvan – in Jewish History:

The fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneersohn (known by the acronym "Rashab"), was born on the 20th of Cheshvan of the year 5621.

On this day in 2024, Rabbi Zvi Kogan, a Chabad emissary to the United Arab Emirates, was abducted and killed by Islamic terrorists.

(from www.chabad.org)

'The Rav's First Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men'

will take place **Friday night – November 21st**
at 8:00 p.m. and wil be held at
the home of **Mr. Chaim and Mrs. Shaina Greenspan**,
at 2434 Forest Green Road.
Questions can be submitted in advance to rabbikaplan@chabadmd.com.

Kiddush after davening this Shabbat is being sponsored by

Cantor Allan and Mrs. Nancy Berman

in memory of Allan's father, **Henry Berman – Hillel Ben Shmuel z'l**,

whose yahrzeit is this Shabbat, 17 Cheshvan

Kol Hanaarim – every Friday evening during the winter at **7:30 p.m. in The Shul**. Cholent, expertly seasoned by Eliyahu Schwartz, and pastries, supplied by the amazing Nehemiah Gertner, are served. Each session is 'topped off' at the end with a fascinating story by the fantastic Rabbi Eli Itzkowitz. For any questions, please see Rabbi Itzkowitz.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Allan Berman	17 Cheshvan - Friday night / Shabbat	for father	Hillel ben Shmuel
Sara Itzkowitz	20 Cheshvan - Monday night / Tuesday	for mother	Toba bas R' Dov Rimler
Rabbi Fred Lewin	20 Cheshvan - Monday night / Tuesday	for sister	Rita Miriam bas Shmuel

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 11/7 — 16 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 4:40 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Shabbat, 11/8 — 17 Cheshvan
Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:14 a.m.
Minchah — 4:30 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 4:58 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 5:40 p.m.

Sunday, 11/9 — 18 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Monday, 11/10 — 19 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Tuesday, 11/11 — 20 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Wednesday, 11/12 — 21 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.
Tanya Shiur: 2nd part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation and the unity of Hashem — 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, 11/13 — 22 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Friday, 11/14 — 23 Cheshvan
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 4:34 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:35 p.m.