

# **BROOKLYN TORAH GAZETTE**

## **FOR PARSHAS VAYEIRA 5781**

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## **The Importance of Dealing With Difficult Questions**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Rabbi Daniel Mechanic**

Interestingly, Judaism has always been a religion of questioning. If you study the Babylonian Talmud, you will agree that this section of the Oral Torah is replete with give and take arguments between Chazal, with our great sages arguing with each other ferociously at times over seemingly minute aspects of both halacha (Jewish law) and hashkafic (philosophical) aspects of Yahadut (Judaism.)

Any good yeshiva catering to baalei teshuvah (secular Jews accepting a Torah way-of-life) or kiruv speakers addressing assimilated Jewish audiences are eagerly challenging their students to ask them any question that they have. But occasionally a question may arise that stumps the lecturer and his response is: "That is a good question. Let me look into it and I will get back to you with an answer."

That open attitude is unfortunately not always the situation in our own frum (religious) community where many teachers and rebbis are not open to “uncomfortable” questions.

### **Delivering Seminars to Day School Students**

Rabbi Daniel Mechanic, the founder and director of Project Chazon has since 1996 been delivering seminars on Jewish philosophy to day school students. A dozen of his powerful lectures can be accessed from the Torahanytime.com website (click at the top speakers and scroll down in alphabetical order to Rabbi Daniel Mechanic.)

Among the lectures he has delivered are “How Do We Know that G-d Exists?,” “The Secret to Keeping Our Children on the Derech,” “Making Yiddishkeit Meaningful and Relevant,” “The Truth of the Torah,” “The Beauty of Judaism,” and “They [Your Children] Have Questions – You Need Answers.”

If teachers and parents are not able to answer a student or child’s question and are not honest to admit their ignorance and promise to ask their rabbi to get that answer; and instead try to blow the questionnaire away by attacking them by shouting, “How dare you ask such a question! Are you an apikorsos (heretic?) Shut up and don’t ask such terrible questions!”



**Rabbi Yisroel Mizrachi**

One such question that an innocent Jewish child might ask is, “If there are less than one percent of the world’s population that is Jewish, how do we know that our religion is the correct one. Perhaps since there are a billion or more Christians or a billion or more Moslems, how do we know whether G-d cares about out minority religion?”

Rabbi Mechanic said that a teacher or parent's refusal to answer or turn to his rabbi or someone else who can answer that question (and there are many many rabbis who can easily answer such questions, including Rabbi Mechanic) and instead lashes angrily at the child for asking the question; simply makes the child erroneously come to the conclusion that obviously there is no answer to my question and Judaism doesn't have any legitimacy in the eyes of G-d or logic.

### **The Danger of Not Answering Hashkafah Questions**

Rabbi Yosef Mizrachi, a world-renowned Israeli-born kiruv speaker also has declared that many FFBs (children born in frum religious homes) have gone frei (non-religious) and told him that one of the main reasons was the inability of their parents and teachers to answer their hashkafah questions of Yahadut.

In the V'ahavta paragraph of the Shemonah Esrai, we recite at least twice a day the words: "And these words which I command you today, shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children..." That is perhaps our most important obligation to the future of Klal Yisroel (the Jewish nation).

In the special Rosh Hashanah 5781 issue of Ami Living Magazine, Ms. Shterna Karp wrote a feature titled "Our Days, the Rhythm of Our Lives: Small Encounters of the Jewish Kind" about the people who returned to Yiddishkeit and the stories of hashgachah pratis (Divine Providence) that brought them back.

### **The Question About the Livyasan (Giant Fish)**

The fourth of five selected stories in that section was titled "On the Livyasan and Faith." The protagonist was Aiden who told Rabbi Abramowitz that he was a baal teshuvah. Yet, the rabbi noticed that Aiden was able to share divrei Torah with an innate ease with the same nuance of someone who grew up with the Talmud's pages wide open.

When challenged by the rabbi as to his knowledge of the Gemara, Aiden admitted that grew up frum. He "struggled with the black-on-white text, but he knew better than to ask his rebbe questions. They were a sign of foolishness, of weakness, of chutzpah. It's what Aiden's rebbe told him each time he raised his hand."

He "had stopped asking long ago, instead letting the resentment build up, brimming closer, closer, and closer to the surface. It spilled over on the day he was learning about Hashem's daily routine (k'vayachol) in the Gemora (Avodah Zarah 3b)."

The Gemora reveals that during the first three hours, G-d learns Torah. For the next three hours He judges the world. During the third quarter of the day Hashem sits and sustains the entire world. And in the last three hours He sits with the livyasan as it says in Tehillim ("Hashem created this livyasan to play with.")

Aiden couldn't control himself and asked the rebbe – “Does Hashem really sit and play with a giant fish – for the same amount of time that he learns Torah, judges and sustains the rest of the world?”

“Don't ask questions,” the rebbe said, his eyes lit with anger. After that, Aiden was done trying to make sense of it all. He left the classroom... and never went back.” (beginning his rejection of Yiddishkeit that lasted for a quarter of a century.)

Miraculously Aiden returned to Judaism through an act of hashgacha pratis even though he never got the answer to his question about the livyasan. Rabbi Abromowitz who admitted that he didn't know the answer bumped into someone who amazingly heard of someone else who actually asked the same question to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l, - “Isn't it a waste of His (Hashem's) time [to play with the giant fish for three hours]?”

The Rebbe answered by quoting Rashi in Bereishis who says that Hashem shechted (slaughtered) the second livyasan so they wouldn't multiply and take over the entire ocean. Hashem cares about each creature, the Rebbe explained so Hashem gives the livyasan extra attention so it won't be lonely. This reminds us that Hashem is Keil malei rachamim, He cares about each of us.”

When Rabbi Abramowitz immediately called Aiden and retold him the answer he had just heard, “Aiden struggled for the words. ‘That makes so much...sense.’ Hashem is kind and His Torah is a blueprint for our lives...Rabbi, if someone would have taken the time to explain this to me years ago – before I became so frustrated and hurt that I left Yiddishkeit – it would have saved me 25 years of wasting my life.”

*Reprinted from this week's edition of the Jewish Connection.*

## Thoughts that Count For Parshat Vayeira

*And Abraham called the name of his son...Isaac (Yitzchak) (Gen. 21:3)*

In the Messianic age, it is specifically of Isaac that we will say "for you are our father" (a verse from the book of Isaiah).

According to Chasidut, the name Yitzchak is an expression of laughter and delight; when Moshiach comes, the supernal joy and delight of our present service of G-d will be fully revealed. (*Likutei Sichot, Vol. I*)

# Rabbi Berel Wein on Parshat Vayera 5781



One of the main issues in this week's Torah reading is the relationship between Yishmael and Yitzchak. Yishmael is the son of Abraham and Hagar, while Yitzchak is the son of Abraham and Sarah. It is common knowledge that, as the half-brothers grow up together, the differences between them in character, spirituality, ambition, and behavior become increasingly apparent.

Sarah notices that Yishmael is somehow more the son of Hagar than of Abraham. In a bold decision made to preserve the legacy of Abraham and the life and well-being of Yitzchak, Sarah asks Abraham to send Hagar and Yishmael away, and out of the house of Abraham and Sarah.

True to Sarah's intuition Yishmael, left to his own devices, becomes a famous archer and warrior. He is a person to be feared, and his influence and power, not limited to the land of Israel, will spread over the entire geographical area.

Sarah senses that no amount of education, training or parental influence would change Yishmael's basic nature of being wild, unpredictable, dangerous and a threat to the lives and ideals that Abraham represents. Yishmael will profit from being the son of Abraham and his descendants have continued to do so, even until today. But descendants are not necessarily heirs—either in the physical sense or even more so in an eternal, spiritual legacy.

The Torah describes Yishmael as being wild and uncontrollable. That is his nature and personality; everything else that occurs throughout human history regarding him and his descendants is colored by this stark description. Sarah senses this almost from the beginning.

The Torah records that she saw Yishmael “jesting”. Rashi points out that the Hebrew verb which it uses means something far more sinister than merely exhibiting a sense of humor. It indicates a capacity for murder and immorality, for danger and irresponsibility. It is the same verb that the Torah itself will use when describing the mood and the behavior of the Jewish people when they worshipped the Golden Calf in the desert. Rabbis also point out that the same word can mean mockery through humor and sarcasm, as well as sexual immorality.

Humor, like all human traits, can have both a negative aspect as well as a positive one. We live in a generation when what is sacred is mocked at, and what is holy is easily trampled upon. The beginning of murder is to take many things lightly. Those things include human life and any moral restraint.

An enemy that we can demonize, mock, laugh at, and constantly insult soon becomes an object not only of derision, but of violence and subjugation too. When Yishmael mocked Yitzchak for his piety, diligence, and an apparent lack of practicality in the world, Sarah sensed that Yishmael was capable of physically harming Yitzchak, even if not murdering him.

All of history bears out the fact that persecutions and holocausts begin with insults and jokes, mockery, and degradation of others. This is why the Torah speaks out against such behavior—in all forms and under all conditions.

*Reprinted from this week's website of rabbiwein.com*

## **Additional Thoughts for Parshat Vayeira**

*And Abraham drew near (Gen. 18:3)*

Rashi notes that Abraham approached G-d "to speak [with Him] in a harsh manner," to plead that He change His mind and not destroy Sodom.

Abraham, the epitome of loving-kindness, nonetheless saw fit to go against his natural inclination and "speak harshly" with G-d!

We learn from this that when it comes to saving lives, either literally or in the spiritual sense, a Jew must pull out all the stops and do all in his power, even if it goes against his very nature. (*Likrat Shabbat*)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Lech Lecha 5756 edition of the L'Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*

# **The Superiority of Yitzchak's Circumcision**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt"l**



In the Torah portion of Vayeira we learn of Yitzchak's brit which took place when he was eight days old. The Midrash relates that Yitzchak and Yishmael argued about who was more cherished. Yishmael said he was more cherished as he was circumcised at age 13. Yitzchak said: "I am more cherished for I was circumcised when I was but eight days old."

One can easily understand why Yishmael felt more cherished: at age 13 he was old enough to protest. That he did not do so was surely reason enough for him to feel superior. But why did Yitzchak reason that he was the more cherished of the two?

The overall theme of circumcision is, as the verse says: "This shall be My covenant in your flesh, an eternal covenant." Circumcision effects an eternal bond between the individual and G-d.

Concerning a covenant formed between two dear friends there is no ironclad guarantee that the covenant will truly be everlasting, for mortals are subject to change. When, however, it is G-d who makes the covenant -- in this



case, His covenant with the Jewish people through circumcision -- then it is truly eternal.

The reason that circumcision is performed at the tender age of eight days -- at a time when the infant has absolutely no say in the matter -- may be understood accordingly.

Whatever a person does on his own initiative requires preparation; adequate time must therefore be allowed. However, the covenant that is set in motion through circumcision is effected entirely by G-d. In other words, circumcision is not an act through which a person binds himself to G-d. When a Jew is circumcised G-d binds Himself to the person with an "eternal covenant."

Thus, there is no reason to wait until the infant will come of age and consciously affirm and participate in this act, for in any event he does nothing at all -- the entire covenant comes from G-d. He is therefore circumcised at the earliest age possible.

Thus, the merit of Yitzchak's circumcision at eight days surpassed not only that of Yishmael, but also the circumcision of his father Abraham. For Abraham was commanded to circumcise himself after he had attained the highest degree of perfection possible for a created being to achieve on his own. Thus, Abraham's circumcision lacked the indisputable indication that the covenant, which came as a result of the circumcision, came entirely from G-d.

Only with the circumcision of Yitzchak, at the age of eight days, was it clear for all to see that his was a covenant that had nothing whatsoever to do with his created being, but was entirely dependent on G-d.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Lech Lecha 5756 edition of the L'Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. Adapted from "The Chassidic Dimension."*



# Rabbi Yosef ibn Aknin

R' Yosef ibn Aknin z"l born approx. 1160 – died 1226 . R' Yosef ben Yehuda ibn Aknin was the person for whom Rambam wrote his Moreh Nevochim/Guide to the Perplexed.

R' Yosef was born in Ceuta, Morocco, but fled from there due to Moslem oppression. He first settled in Alexandria, Egypt, where he began corresponding with Rambam, and later, the great sage invited R' Yosef to Cairo to study with him.

## **Troubled by Conflict Between Philosophy And the Teachings of the Prophets**

When Rambam saw that R' Yosef was troubled by the conflict between philosophy and the teachings of the Prophets, Rambam wrote Moreh Nevochim to resolve his student's doubts.

In 1186, R' Yosef moved to Aleppo, Syria, where he practiced medicine. He continued his correspondence with Rambam, and many of these letters are still extant. (Some of these letters refer to the attacks of other rabbis on Rambam. In them, Rambam explains that he is above caring about his personal reputation, especially when his attackers are unworthy of a response.)

In response to the attacks of R' Shmuel ben Eli of Baghdad on Rambam's Mishneh Torah, R' Yosef wanted to move to Baghdad and open a yeshiva where he would defend his teacher's views. However, Rambam dissuaded R' Yosef from giving up his medical practice and trying to earn a living as a rosh yeshiva.

After Rambam's death, R' Yosef asked Rambam's son, R' Avraham, to excommunicate R' Daniel Ha'Bavli (the leading student of R' Shmuel be Eli) for his slights to the Rambam's honor, but R' Avraham declined.

R' Yosef wrote a number of works, including a halachic work (in Arabic) and commentaries on Pirkei Avot and Shir Ha'shirim. (Sources: The Artscroll Rishonim, p. 88; Iggeret Ha'Rambam Le'Rav Yosef,)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Bereishis 5781 email of whY I Matter, the parshasheet of the Young Israel of Midwood (Brooklyn), edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld.*

**Parshas Vayeira**

# **An Act that Echoes Through Time**

*By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier  
Founder of TheSmuz.com*



*“And Abraham awoke in the morning, hitched up his donkey, and took his two lads and Isaac with him. He split wood for the sacrifice and went to the place that HASHEM had commanded him.” – Genesis 22:3*

Abraham was commanded with a supreme test, one of the greatest challenges ever presented to man: “Take your son, your only son, the son whom you love...”

One has the right to ask, “What was so great about this act?” Even today we witness people who are willing to slaughter themselves – or their children – in the name of their beliefs, and we certainly don’t consider them great! Why is this act considered one of the ultimate accomplishments of man?

The answer to this question lies in understanding not so much what Abraham did, but how he did it.

## **The Father of the Jewish People**

Abraham lived to serve G-d. His every waking moment was devoted to spreading G-d’s name and bringing others to recognize their Creator. However, he

knew that only through a distinct and separate people could the name of G-d be brought to its glory. Therefore, his ultimate aspiration was to be the father of the Jewish nation.

Yet for many, many years that dream didn't come true.

Abraham was 100 years old when he had Isaac. He waited month after month, year after year, begging, beseeching, and imploring HASHEM for this son – but to no avail. Finally, in a completely miraculous manner, at an age when both he and his wife couldn't possibly parent a child, he was visited by angels who told him the news: “Your single greatest ambition, to be the father of the Jewish people, will come true through this child Isaac.”

### **Abraham's Relationship with His Son**

From the moment that Isaac was born, he was the perfect child. Not only was he nearly identical to Abraham in look and in nature, but also from the moment that he came to understanding, he went in the ways of his father. Abraham had many students, but there was only one who was truly devoted to knowing and understanding the ways of his teacher. That was Isaac.

The bond of love and devotion that Abraham felt towards his “only” son is hard to imagine. The nature of a righteous person is to be kindly, compassionate, and giving. When such a person connects to an almost equally perfect person, the bond of love and devotion between them is extremely powerful. For years, this relationship grew. It wasn't until Isaac was 37 years old and in the prime of his life that G-d tested Abraham.

This refined, caring, loving father was asked to slaughter and then prepare his most beloved child and disciple as a sacrifice – not to sit by and allow it, not to witness it, but to do it with his own hands.

You would imagine that if such a person could actually muster the self-mastery to do this, it would be with a bitter and heavy heart.

Yet that isn't how the Torah describes the events.

“And Abraham got up early in the morning, hitched up his donkey,” and set off on his journey

The medieval commentator Rashi explains that Abraham acted out of character here. Abraham was an extremely wealthy and honored individual. He had hundreds of loyal students, and many, many servants. Hitching up his donkey was not something he normally did. Others did it for him. Yet this time was different because “love blinds.” Abraham was so enraptured with G-d's command, so caught up in the moment, that he got carried away and did something that he never would have done himself. He hitched up his own donkey.

### **The Crescendo**

With a calm demeanor and joy in his heart, Abraham set out on a three-day expedition to accomplish this great deed. Along the way, Isaac discovered that he was to be the sacrifice. And so, he requested of his father: “Please bind me so that I don’t twitch and spoil the sacrifice.” Isaac was afraid that he might inadvertently move and spoil the process. Therefore, he said, “Please bind me.” Hence, this episode is known as “the binding of Isaac.”

Abraham did just that. He tied Isaac’s arms and legs behind him, put him on the altar, and raised the knife to kill his son.

The commentaries tell us that Abraham stood over Isaac “with tears in his eyes and great joy in his heart.” The tears in his eyes were the tears of a father parting with his most beloved son, but the joy in his heart was for the fantastic opportunity to show G-d that nothing, not even his most beloved son, was more precious to him than serving his Creator.

### **The Act in Perspective**

And now the question becomes: how is it possible for a man to make the ultimate sacrifice in a manner that seems to transcend every emotional limitation?

The binding of Isaac was a singular event that actualized the years of extraordinary self-perfection of Abraham’s life. Because he lived in this world, he felt real love for his child, but even that love was something he could harness to show his greater love of HASHEM. He achieved the perfect balance of a man in complete control.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the Shmuz on the Parsha book.*

## **More Thoughts for Parshat Vayera**

*He took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed (Gen. 18:8)*

How could Abraham have served his guests both dairy and meat at the same time? Rather, Abraham offered his guests both types of food; it was then up to the individual to decide which kind he preferred. Those who chose meat dishes did not partake of the dairy.

Alternatively, they first ate the dairy, and only later did they eat the meat (as in the order it is written in the Torah). (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l*)

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# Australia Coal Capital's Century-Old Congregation Gets a Rabbi

By Mendel Super

The first permanent rabbi in six decades moves with his wife and three children to Newcastle



When Rabbi Yossi and Malki Rodal became co-directors of Chabad-Lubavitch of Newcastle, Australia, in June, he became the first resident rabbi since 1958 in one of Australia's oldest Jewish communities—one that they had been visiting for years.

On Yom Kippur, 1803, 22-year-old Joseph Samuel was sentenced to death by hanging in the penal colony that was Australia. After fellow convict Joseph Marcus, one of the earliest Jewish convicts with a decent Jewish education, recited the final prayers with Samuel in Australia's first recorded instance of public Jewish prayer, Samuel slipped into unconsciousness as the execution cart was rolled away.



To the great shock of the crowds gathered to watch the gory proceedings, the rope snapped, landing Samuel face down on the ground.

Another rope was tied, the noose placed over his head, yet it unraveled. Some of the crowd now began to protest his innocence. Hurrying to tie the rope again, the hangman did the deed, and the rope snapped yet again. The crowd was in an uproar. The marshal galloped away to seek a pardon from the governor, who granted it, declaring it to be “divine intervention.”



**Founded in 1905, the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation is one of Australia’s oldest, as well the longest in continuous use outside of the nation's major capital cities.**

Like many dangerous convicts, the half-strangled Samuel was sent off to Newcastle, then known as Kings Town, some 100 miles north of Sydney on Australia’s east coast. There he languished for another three years working in the coal mines before mounting a wild escape attempt from the settlement by boat. The boat was found later on and Samuel declared drowned, his body never recovered.

More than two centuries later, another Newcastle resident—Claire Tipper, a native of Birmingham in the United Kingdom—experienced divine intervention of her own this past Yom Kippur when Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbi Yossi Rodal became the city's first permanent rabbi since 1958, leading High Holiday services at a rejuvenated synagogue and congregation. It was a far cry from the improvised final Yom Kippur prayers of Marcus and Samuel so many years before.

When Rodal and his wife, Malki, became co-directors of Chabad-Lubavitch of Newcastle in June, they were joining one of Australia's oldest Jewish communities—one that they had been visiting for years. Founded in 1905, the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation is one of Australia's oldest, as well the longest in continuous use outside of the major capital cities.

### **‘I Always Wanted to Keep a More Kosher Home’**

An unexpected city for so historic a synagogue, Newcastle's Jewish community has an equally fascinating history, harking back to the earliest days of European settlement in Australia.

The first Jews to settle in Newcastle—today Australia's seventh largest city with a population of 440,000, and the world's largest exporter of coal, producing a staggering 159.9 million tons in 2017—were of backgrounds like that of Samuel, albeit less dramatic.

In 1927, the community consecrated its first synagogue, with its rabbi, Latvian-born Rev. Isack Morris, leading the service, accompanied by Rabbi Francis Cohen of Sydney's Great Synagogue.

In its heyday in the mid-20th century, the 300-seat synagogue was filled to capacity on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, with standing room only for latecomers. As the community slowly began to decline, with many younger members moving to more extensive Jewish life and opportunities in Sydney, the community held on, with the South African migration boom in the 1980s attracting new members.

But by the time that Tipper moved to Newcastle in 2009, she couldn't obtain kosher meat locally. “I always wanted to keep a more kosher home,” she tells Chabad.org, “but it was challenging.” Taking the stress out of practicing Judaism for her and so many others, Rodal personally travels to Sydney, more than two hours to the south, to pick up Tipper's kosher meat.

When Tipper's eldest, Joshua, was due to celebrate his bar mitzvah in 2015, she knew who to call. Chabad of Rural and Regional Australia (RARA) had been undertaking biannual pastoral visits to Newcastle for a decade or so, strengthening the ailing congregation with its energetic young rabbinical students and young couples.



They assisted in leading the first night Passover Seder at the synagogue each year and hosted the second night Seder, and led High Holiday services, in addition to visiting Jews scattered through the region. Tipper asked Chabad of RARA's Rabbi Yossi Rodal to officiate at Joshua's celebration. When her daughter, Sophia, celebrated her bat mitzvah the next year, Rodal returned, and it was the first bat mitzvah Newcastle had seen for many years.

When the Rodals began directing Chabad of RARA—now celebrating its 20th year of service to rural Jews—in 2015, Newcastle served as a base of sorts for their treks throughout a large swath of Australia's east coast.



**Rodal and children help a local resident do the mitzvah of lulav and estrog.**

“We had a shul there,” says Rodal, “and a home always available for us to use, thanks to a generous community member,” which gave them a respite from Chabad’s colorful “Mitzvah Tank”—the custom-fitted synagogue-on-wheels that hosts the rabbis and their families as they tour the vast continent tending to their flock.

Newcastle is located on Australia's East Coast, a 100 mile drive north of Sydney.

### **‘They’ve Thrown Themselves Into the Community’**

With their frequent visits and the dozens of rabbinic students they sent there, the Rodals fell in love with the Newcastle community and resolved to settle there permanently to the delight of the community members, who hadn’t had a rabbi since the departure of Rev. Dr. B. Gottshall, an Auschwitz survivor, in 1958.

The Rodals made the move north from Melbourne during the Australian winter with their three children. After a few months settling in and becoming more acquainted with the wider community (in a coronavirus-safe environment), the busy High Holiday season arrived. Their state, New South Wales, home to Australia’s largest population, has seen 53 deaths due to the coronavirus and Newcastle has had few cases, allowing them to conduct services in a safe way in accordance with government regulations.

During Simchat Torah, as the community sang and danced, an older member shared emotionally with the rabbi that it was his first Simchat Torah celebration in Newcastle since he was 7, when he recalled waving a flag and dancing, more than 60 years ago.

They’ve given the congregation a new lease on life, with some community members previously fearing their beloved shul would eventually be forced to shut its doors. “Attendance kept dwindling,” says David Gubbay, a retired late-night radio talk-show host, and vice president and honorary treasurer of the congregation, who was born in Newcastle and has been part of the community since 1974. “Every *minyan* was a struggle. With Chabad’s establishment, we’re seeing new growth. Their frequent visits revitalized our congregation, and our relationship is blossoming.”

The Rodals have begun tapping into new demographics with programs catering to students at the University of Newcastle, as well as for children and teens. They have opened a Hebrew school and a CTeen chapter, and host regular get-togethers for the university students.

“This is a fast-growing community,” says Rodal, “and very soon we hope to have more regular services and establish Newcastle’s first-ever *mikvah*.”

More than just Newcastle, the Rodals’ flock stretches from Umina Beach to Forster to Muswellbrook, covering an area almost the size of New Jersey. Rodal regularly visits towns throughout the Central Coast, giving Torah classes and meeting individuals and families one-on-one, no matter how isolated or unaffiliated.

For Rodal though, it’s not such a vast region, considering that at his previous posting as national director of Chabad of RARA he oversaw—and personally visited—the entire vast continent, from visiting a lone Jew in Jindabyne to



establishing the first-ever Jewish cemetery in remote Darwin, on Australia's northern tip, closer to Papua New Guinea than to any Australian capital city.



**The Rodal family's arrival in Newcastle was front page news.**

"They've thrown themselves into the community," Tipper enthuses, "and they're having such an impact. They encouraged my son to put on *tefillin* daily, and it gives me such *nachas* to see Joshua (18) and Sophia (16) still actively involved in Jewish life, when many kids drop everything after their bar or bat mitzvah."

Tipper and her family spent much of the holiday season with the Rodals, and recently committed to koshering her kitchen—no easy feat in Newcastle. "They're family to us," she says of the Chabad couple. "It's a rebirth for the community." Gubbay adds to the effects his community is experiencing, saying "they're the most welcoming people I have ever known; they love visitors. Just joyous!" Bringing the holiday to local residents.

The city has welcomed the Rodal family with open arms.  
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