



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

The great Sage and leader of the Jewish people, Rabbi Akiva was going on a long journey. In order to make his travels easier, he took with him a donkey, a rooster and a candle.

The donkey would carry his meager possessions and afford him a ride when he was too weary to walk. The rooster would wake him at dawn and the candle would allow him to study Torah at night when the sun had long set.

Early one morning, Rabbi Akiva rose, prayed, and went on his way. He traveled the whole day, stopping only to eat and say the afternoon prayers.

At nightfall, Rabbi Akiva was very close to a town and he decided he would spend the night there. But there was no hostel for wayfarers. When Rabbi Akiva inquired as to whether he could perhaps stay in someone's home, he was rudely told by the townspeople, "We have no room. Keep on traveling."

Rabbi Akiva remained outside, late into the night, hoping that someone would notice his quandary. But no one invited him in. Despite the lateness of the hour and the coldness in the air, Rabbi Akiva said, "Whatever G-d does is for the best."

The Sage did not want to remain in a city where the inhabitants were so evil that they could not even find a place for a weary traveler. Thus, Rabbi Akiva found a comfortable spot in a nearby field, lit his candle, fed his donkey and rooster, and then began to study Torah.

So absorbed was he in his studies, that Rabbi Akiva forgot that it was the middle of the night and he was in a field, vulnerable to the dangers of the outdoors. Suddenly, Rabbi Akiva heard a mighty roar and he saw a lion bound out of the nearby forest and attack his donkey. He did not even have time to recuperate from the shock of what had just taken place when a cat, appearing out of no where, pounced on his rooster and dragged it away. Moments later, a gust of wind blew out his candle.

Calmly, Rabbi Akiva said, "Whatever G-d does is for the best."

Much later that evening, Rabbi Akiva heard loud noises and great confusion coming from the town. When dawn broke, Rabbi Akiva learned that soldiers had attacked the city, wreaking havoc and leaving death and destruction in their wake. Survivors were taken captive. The soldiers had even passed through the very field in which he had been sleeping.

Rabbi Akiva realized what had happened and said, "Now truly everyone can see that whatever G-d does is for the best. Had the lion not devoured my donkey it would have brayed; had the cat not eaten the rooster it would have crowed; had the wind not extinguished my candle it would have lit up the darkness. Then the soldiers would have found me and taken me prisoner too."

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It happened once that the Jewish people in the Land of Israel decided to send a gift to the Roman Caesar in the hopes that he would treat them well.

They filled a box with precious stones and gems. They asked the wise and pious Nachum Ish Gamzu to bring the treasure to the Caesar. Nachum was known by the unusual epitaph "Gamzu," which means "this too," for no matter what happened he always said, "This too is for the best."

Nachum Ish Gamzu agreed to take the box and started on the long and dangerous journey. He traveled on a ship for many days. After the ship docked at its destination, Nachum found an inn to stay at overnight. He said the evening prayers and went to sleep, exhausted from his tiring journey.

The innkeeper, however, was not tired. In fact, he was quite alert and interested to see what his newest lodger had in the beautiful box he had brought with him. The innkeeper crept into Nachum's room and peaked into the box. The stones and precious gems dazzled the innkeeper. Within moments he had stealthily emptied the box and refilled it with common earth and stones.

Early the next morning, Nachum awoke, said his prayers and went to the Caesar's palace, eager to fulfill the mission the Jewish community in the Holy Land had placed upon him.

When it was Nachum's turn to go before the Caesar, he said, "Your Majesty, I have brought you a beautiful gift from the Jews of the Land of Israel."

The Caesar was eager to open the beautiful box. But when he opened the box his face burned with rage. "Have I not enough dirt and stones! The Jews wanted to insult me! I will punish all of them. But first I will put to death the one who had the audacity to bring this 'present' to me."

Nachum Ish Gamzu said simply and softly, "This too is for the best. Whatever G-d does is for the best."

At that moment, one of the princes spoke up. "Surely the Jews would not send the Caesar common dirt to anger him. Perhaps there is a secret in this dirt. Let us throw some into the air and perhaps it will turn into swords and arrows as it did in the time of their ancestor Abraham!"

The Caesar agreed to try. They threw the dirt into the air and it turned into swords and arrows.

The Caesar now told Nachum that he would refill the box with gold and precious gems to bring back to the honorable Jews in the Holy Land.

Nachum took the box and returned to the Holy Land. "Truly everything that happens is for the best," Nachum said as he retold the story to his brethren.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

**And you shall keep and do them [plural]...and He will love you and bless you [singular] (Deut. 7:12-13)**

"And you shall keep and do them" is in the plural, as it refers to keeping the Torah's commandments, which all Jews must do equally. "And He will love you and bless you" is in the singular, as it refers to the reward a Jew receives for his observance, which is entirely individual. Although all Jews keep the same mitzvot, they do so with different levels of enthusiasm, devotion and motivation; thus they are given varying degrees of reward. (*Kli Chemda*)

**And fed you with manna, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone (Deut. 8:3)**

When the Jewish people ate the manna in the desert, the "bread from heaven," they understood that it was a supernatural phenomenon, i.e., that their sustenance came from the G-dly spark the manna contained. Likewise, even when eating "bread from the earth," we should be aware that it is not the physical components of the bread that sustain us but the G-dliness therein. (*Keser Shem Tov*)

**Now Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you except to fear G-d (Deut. 10:12)**

"People are strange," Rabbi Chanoch of Alexander used to say. "They beg and plead that G-d should give them 'fear of heaven,' when this is something that is entirely in the individual's control. Yet when it comes to livelihood, they imagine that they are in charge." There are many mitzvot that require physical "objects" in order to observe them. For example, a person cannot fulfill the mitzva of tzitzit without a garment to put them on, nor can one affix a mezuzah without a house and door post. An incarcerated person is also severely limited as to what he can do. "Fear of G-d," however, is dependent on nothing. A Jew can fulfill this mitzva anywhere, and at any time. (*Ginzano HeAtik*)



### 7:45 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
17 Av / August 7  
Torah Portion Eikev  
Ethics Ch. 4  
Shabbat ends 8:47 PM

# L'Chaim

1634

Aug 7, 5780  
17 Av, 2020

The Weekly Publication  
for Every Jewish Person

ניסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Unveil my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah." (Psalm 119:18)



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion *Eikev*, the word "eikev" is used atypically to mean "because." Foremost Torah commentator Rashi explains that the choice of this word is to emphasize the seemingly less important *mitzvot* (commandments) that would get trampled under the eikev – heel.

Thus, "because" we will listen and do those mitzvot that might be considered unimportant, we will be blessed with multifold blessings, including miraculous victories over those whom we fear.

Regarding mitzvot, the ones we see as important we typically focus our energy on. Our *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, convinces us that it makes sense to focus on the "important" ones, while pushing off the others, thereby trampling them under our "heel."

*Eikev* encourages us to take a different approach to mitzvot. To defy our yetzer hara and simply do the mitzva because it is G-d's will. Then all mitzvot are seen as equal. We do the mitzvot in a manner that is beyond our mind's understanding.

When we take this approach toward G-d and His commandments, going beyond our understanding and doing His will, He in turn goes beyond the natural order and shows us miracles.

Our portion also contains the verse, "And now Israel, what is G-d your G-d asking of you? Only to revere Him, to walk in His ways, to love Him..."

What is G-d asking of us? How does one revere and love Him? When G-d created this world, He hid His presence. Had His presence not been hidden, it would have been so imposing, that we would only be able to do His will; we would not have a choice. So G-d's "hiddenness" enables freedom of choice.

Being that G-d can't be seen, it is possible to forget for moments, that He is here. But G-d wants us to make Him a real part of our lives. He wants us to develop such a close relationship with Him that His presence feels as if we could see Him.

Like in any close, meaningful relationship, it requires a strong commitment to get to know G-d. We do that through the study of His Torah and prayer. When we freely refer to G-d in our casual conversation: "thank G-d" "with G-d's help" "G-d willing," we develop our relationship with Him. If, when making an important decision, we ask, "What does G-d want?" we strengthen that relationship.

When we feel G-d in our homes and in our lives, we can't help but follow in His ways. Make G-d's presence important in our homes is true reverence. The more we develop our relationship with G-d, the more our lives becomes an expression of our love for Him.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

## Who is Wise?

In this age of political correctness, if someone asked you to define a wise person, would you have a ready reply or would it take you a few minutes to come up with an answer?

Do we define a wise person by his I.Q., the number of letters after his name, or how much he knows about the ancient Incas?

In the Mishna, Rabbi ben Zoma asked the question, "Who is wise?" And he gave an answer that, had he lived in today's day and age, he might even have been able to expound upon in a politically correct address: "One who learns from every person."

From Rabbi ben Zoma's concise definition of a wise person we gain much. A wise person learns – present tense. He is not satisfied with the knowledge he has under his belt, but is constantly seeking to acquire new wisdom. And he learns from every person, not only from other smart people – his equals or contemporaries – but from every single encounter he gathers new understanding, he is enriched.

Another Sage defined a wise person with a slightly different twist: "Who is wise? One who sees the result of his action." He considers the consequence of his deed beforehand and contemplates the outcome. He learns from the past and the future. Thus, the wise person is one who learns from every person, every event, every thing.

Rabbi Sholom Ber of Lubavitch once said: "Everything can teach us something, and not merely everything that G-d has created. Man-made creations also teach us much."

"What can we learn from a train?" asked a chasid.

"That because of one second you can miss everything," said the Rebbe

"And from the telegraph?" the chasid queried.

"That every word is counted and charged for," the Rebbe answered.

"And the telephone?"

"That what we say here is heard There."

In Proverbs, written by King Solomon, it says: "Go to the ant, you lazy one: observe her ways and become wise (*Prov 6:6*).



What are an ant's "ways"? The *Midrash* explains that the ant has integrity, she flees from theft. Once an ant dropped a kernel of wheat. Her comrades came and examined it, but none would pick it up and take it, because it didn't belong to them.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai explains: It once happened that King Solomon came upon a pit containing a large measure of grain that an ant had filled in the course of one summer for the coming winter. Thereupon, King Solomon exclaimed. "Go to the ant, lazy one; observe her ways and become wise. You, too, should prepare for the World to Come by performing commandments and good deeds in this world."

In honor of the wedding of  
**Yecheil and Malky Fayershteyn**

י"ד מנחם אב, תש"פ - August 4, 2020  
ולזכות ולרפואה שלימה וקרובה  
למרת ועכיל ציפורה בת מלכה

# SLICE OF LIFE

**You're Traveling Also?**  
by Rabbi Yossi Levy



Eliezer and Rochel during their studies in London

It was August, 1991. Mrs. Etesh Greengaus in Rostov, Russia, wasn't feeling well and couldn't fall asleep. She asked her grandchildren to bring her something to read.

Her grandchildren had recently visited their local synagogue and had brought back the monthly *Lechaim* Magazine, which they gave to her. In the magazine, Etesh saw an article about the Lubavitcher Rebbe – someone totally unknown to her at the time – and his amazing involvement in helping Jews worldwide, both physically and spiritually.

Etesh was touched to the core. She wrote a tearful letter in Russian to the Rebbe in New York. She informed him that she has four grandchildren, all of whom are Jewish, but who live in a totally non-Jewish environment and know almost nothing about their Jewish heritage. She begged for a blessing that these children should be given an opportunity to realize their true Jewish potential in a real Jewish environment and she enclosed a photograph.

A week or so later, a young Lubavitcher yeshiva student from England was in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. It was Sunday and he was at "770" Eastern Parkway, World Lubavitch

Headquarters. He was waiting in line to receive a blessing and dollar for charity from the Rebbe. The yeshiva student was on his way to Russia to be a *chazan* (cantor) for the upcoming High Holidays. The student mentioned that he was as yet unsure of which city he was heading to, as details were not yet complete. The Rebbe encouraged the student to give the dollar to charity "wherever you will be."

I was immediately behind this young man who was traveling imminently to Russia. Looking at me, the Rebbe pointed to me and asked me and asked in Yiddish, "Du forst auchet?" ("You are also going?")

I stood in total confusion. I know that the Rebbe doesn't make mistakes. And yet, I had absolutely no intention of visiting Russia. I replied, "Nein" ("No"). The Rebbe gave me a dollar and wished me "Hatzlocho Rabbo" ("Great success").

Within the year, I did actually go to Russia! I was a counselor in two camps in two different locations that had been arranged by the growing army of the Rebbe's emissaries in the former Soviet Union. I got to know about 150 Jewish children in those two camps. After that first time, I returned to the FSU and participated in many other camps, including the inaugural camp in Vilna, Lithuania where I became acquainted with many Jews. Thanks to these camps, hundreds of Jewish boys who had never had the opportunity opted to join the covenant of Abraham with a *brit mila*.

I also subsequently was chosen together with a number of other young men, as emissaries of the Rebbe to go to Rostov. We were to be the first students of a yeshiva that was being established there and to help out the local Jewish community. Any time that was not spent in yeshiva studying, was used for community outreach including giving classes, helping men and boys put on Tefillin, encouraging women and girls to light Shabbat candles, and in general heightening an awareness of Judaism.

It was through these activities in Rostov that I came to meet a young boy and girl – first cousins – who were seriously interested in learning more about their Jewish heritage. This interest initially arose by going to the Chabad-Lubavitch summer camps in Russia. It was now several months later, and these two cousins, Rochel and

Eliezer, had been progressing in their studies.

Our time in Russia was coming to an end, and we were concerned about Rochel's and Eliezer's futures, especially as we would not be there to guide them. We considered the possibility of sending them abroad to further their studies.

We initially thought sending them to study in Crown Heights would be the best option. But after a number of challenges came up we decided to change direction. When we enquired whether Rochel and Eliezer would like to come to England, they were overjoyed at the possibility of what had until then only been a dream.

Shortly thereafter, in October 1994, I was fortunate to be able to return to Rostov, armed with relevant documents, invitations, tickets and visas, to enable Rochel and Eliezer to travel abroad and return with me to England. We embarked on a 26-hour train journey from Rostov to Moscow. Then we boarded a flight to Britain.

Eliezer and Rochel initially stayed with my family in London and they began studying at Lubavitch House Schools. They excitedly adapted to the traditional Jewish lifestyle.

Before traveling to England, Eliezer and Rochel had visited their grandmother to say "goodbye." Etesh told the children that she was upset that she had never received a response from the Rebbe to her letter. Eliezer replied "We are going to England with a Lubavitcher Chassid, surely this is your answer!"

It was only after hearing this from Eliezer that I, too, realized what the Rebbe had meant when he had asked (or more accurately informed) me a few years earlier I was also going to Russia.

But here is the best part yet, and now this brings the story that started nearly three decades ago up to date. Rochel did eventually come to Crown Heights to study and met Chana (Liderman) Fayershteyn with whom she became friendly. Recently, at a Bar Mitzva, Rochel and Chana reconnected and updated each other on their lives. When Rochel heard that Chana's son was of marriageable age, she suggested that he meet our daughter Malky. Mazel Tov! Malky and Yechiel Fayershteyn's wedding is this week on Tuesday! May we always have good news to share.

## The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Elul 5th, 5712 [1952]

I have received your letter of August 7th, in which you express your very deep appreciation for the education and upbringing which your youngest son has received at the Yeshivah in the last four years, which you recognize to be the finest thing that could have happened to him, for which you feel thankful to me. Thanks are not due to me, of course, but to the Almighty who has given you such a fine son, whose desire it is to be a "vessel" to receive the right upbringing in Torah with *Yiras Shamaim* [fear of heaven], rooted in Chasidus. To him also gratitude is due for the recognition stemming from this *Chinuch* [education], that one is steadily to advance along this road like all things connected with *Kedushah* [holiness] which must rise higher and higher toward G-d the infinite. This is particularly true in the age of youth and adolescence, the impressionable age, when the right education and upbringing is bound to bring ever-growing fruit for the whole life.

Pursuant to the above, and to the spirit of your letter, I must say that I was greatly surprised and chagrined to read the conclusion of your letter which is so contradictory to its introduction, that you wish him to remain in -. This is all the more disappointing in view of the fact that only this summer he has become Bar-Mitzvah, when the Jew just enters into his obligatory life of Torah and *Mitzvos* [commandments]. At this critical stage you consider uprooting him from the environment and upbringing which has been so beneficial to him, because you and your wife cannot be separated from him any more.

I fully appreciate, of course, the feelings of parents, especially towards such a son as -, and separation undeniably is a great hardship. On the other hand, it is also self evident that when it concerns the molding of one's son's character and upbringing which is to last him for the rest of his life and thereafter, the temporary separation of a few years is comparatively negligible considering the reward and what is at stake.

... the paramount factor is this:

At all times, and more so nowadays, everything should be done to spare one's child any crisis in his life, for there are enough crises in life beyond our control. Inasmuch as your son has become so attached to the Yeshivah environment and has benefited from it so much, has many friends among the students, etc., there can be no doubt that to take him away from it and placing him in another environment, even one of Torah with *Yiras Shamaim*, but surely not identical with this one, is bound to create a crisis, which will be both apparent and hidden, deep in his innermost being, which may have lasting effects, G-d forbid.

Being also acquainted with the general state of Torah education in -, I know that there is a basic difference in the approach to the whole problem between here and there, and the transition would by no means be a smooth one, involving either a cardinal change or a breach, G-d forbid, an experience which should be avoided even in the case of an adult, let alone a child, especially such a sensitive one as your son.

I must therefore emphasize again that you must weigh the physical and especially spiritual well-being of your son against the temporary separation from him. There is also the advice of our Sages, "Go into exile to a place of Torah" (Avoth 4:1-3).

Let me finally add that, based upon my observations and life experience, I am certain that when parents concede to the above saying of our Sages, despite their personal sacrifice, it is amply rewarded with the joy and happiness of their children. I trust you will bear with me for being so outspoken in this problem, since I consider it my duty, having personal knowledge of the factors and knowing your son intimately. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of return to New York before Rosh Hashanah, for that special atmosphere that prevails here at that time, where he longs to be together with his friends, during prayers and at meal time, and be inspired together with them by all that he sees, hears and feels here.

I pray that you make this decision without undue difficulty, and the Almighty will surely reward you with much joy from him and your other children.

Our Sages say that the words of the Torah "And ye shall teach them diligently unto thy children" refer also to one's disciples; and truly the students are treated here like one's own children. I shall therefore feel greatly relieved to hear that you have made the right decision with regard to -.

Wishing you and yours a *kesiva vechasima tovah* [inscribed and sealed for good],

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

On the 20th of Av (Aug. 10 this year) we mark the *yahrzeit* of the Rebbe's father; Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson. This week's Torah portion, *Eikev*, describes the uniqueness of the tribe of Levi.

Maimonides explains that this uniqueness is not reserved only for those whose lineage is from that tribe but includes, "each and every person... whose openness of his heart dictates to rise above the material concerns of this world and make 'G-d his portion and his inheritance,'" i.e., to dedicate himself to Torah and *mitzvot* (commandments).

The Rebbe described how his father's life exemplified the desire to make G-d his portion and his inheritance: "Although the Russian government at that time pressured rabbis to issue proclamations declaring their support of the government and their willingness to accept its authority, my father conducted himself as a rabbi did in previous generations [and did not succumb to the pressure]."

"Furthermore, he did this with *mesirut nefesh* – self-sacrifice. In particular, this is reflected in his journey to the Russian capital to receive permission to bake 100% kosher matzas for Passover. This journey was successful and they agreed to accept his rulings. Although this caused financial loss to the government – and that was considered a very serious matter – the matzas were baked under his supervision and were distributed throughout Russia.

"Although he knew of the possibility of severe punishment, he continued his efforts to spread Judaism, and furthermore, did so while in exile itself. Moreover, he was recognized for his wisdom by non-Jews, and when they asked him for advice, he also endeavored to influence them to fulfill their seven *mitzvot*, and to the extent possible at that time, he achieved this... My father's desire was to spread Judaism in his own community and throughout the entire Jewish people and to do so with self-sacrifice."

May we truly learn from Reb Levi Yitzchak's *mesirut nefesh* and incorporate it into our daily lives until the revelation of our true and righteous *Moshiach*.

Shmuel Butman

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.

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Chairman	Rabbi Dovid Raskin ז"ל
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## WHO'S WHO?

Levi was the son of Jacob and Leah. He was one of the Twelve Tribes and he lived the longest of all the brothers. Of all the Jews, only the tribe of Levi was not enslaved in Egypt. They were the teachers in the Torah academy which Jacob had established, were occupied with spiritual matters, and did not assimilate with the Egyptians. Levi's grandson, Amram was the father of Moses. The entire tribe of Levi refused to worship the Golden Calf. They were rewarded with the priesthood, which had originally been intended for all the firstborn.

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

And it shall come to pass – *eikev* – because you will listen to these ordinances, and keep, and do them (Deut. 7:12) "Eikev" literally means

"heel." The time immediately preceding the Final Redemption is often referred to as "the heel of Moshiach." That is to say, at the end of time, "you will listen" – in the end we will have no choice but to obey G-d. (Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)