

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Ki Tavo, contains the curses to be inflicted on the Jewish people if they do not obey G-d. The Torah teaches that "no evil comes from Above." Accordingly, we must conclude that even the most terrible curse contains only good, albeit in a hidden fashion.

Our Sages made two statements on the subject of hidden good: "Everything that G-d does is for the best" and "This is also for the best." The first statement is attributed to Rabbi Akiva, who once set out on a journey with a donkey, a rooster, and a candle. Weary from his travels he reached a town, only to be turned away from all of its inns. Rabbi Akiva had to spend the night out in the open field on the outskirts of town.

That night, a lion appeared and devoured the Rabbi's donkey, a wild cat came along and gobbled up the rooster, and the wind blew out the candle. Rabbi Akiva said, "Everything that G-d does is for the best." In the morning Rabbi Akiva found out that during the night murderous robbers attacked the town, slaughtering all its inhabitants. He then understood that what had befallen him had saved him from a similar fate.

This story illustrates one way of understanding ultimate good which seems to be hidden within its opposite. Although Rabbi Akiva's misfortunes caused him temporary anguish, he was spared further suffering by those very events. The wording itself of "everything G-d does is for the best" implies that whatever happens leads to ultimate good, even if it appears at first that the events themselves are not good.

A second story, about Nachum Ish Gamzu, illustrates another way of reconciling our problem. He was sent by the Sages to appease the Roman Emperor with a chest full of pearls. Along the way, unbeknownst to him, the pearls were stolen and replaced with earth. When the Emperor opened the tribute and saw the dirt he wanted to put the sage to death. Nachum Ish Gamzu said, "This is also for the best."

And indeed it was, for G-d sent Elijah the Prophet in the guise of a minister, who suggested that the dust might be similar to the dust with which Abraham was victorious in his wars. The Emperor sent some to his soldiers on the front who immediately won the battle. In gratitude, the Emperor awarded Nachum Ish Gamzu great riches and high honors.

In this instance, what seemed at first to be misfortune turned out to be advantageous. Not only did nothing bad happen to Nachum Ish Gamzu, but he ended up being given great wealth by the Emperor. Had he brought pearls to the Emperor there was no guarantee that he would have been well received. It was precisely the earth which delighted the Emperor. There was no evil; everything which transpired was good.

Nachum Ish Gamzu, Rabbi Akiva's teacher, was one generation closer to the era of the Holy Temple. Rabbi Akiva lived in a time more properly belonging to the exile. When the Holy Temple stood, the Jews could more easily discern the good contained in everything, even that which at first appears adverse. The exile makes it difficult to see this, and only the good resulting from seemingly bad events is discernable. As we approach the Final Redemption may we soon merit that G-d removes all concealments so that we will be able to truly understand the ultimate good hidden in all of our suffering throughout the ages.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## G-d on the Campaign Trail

By Yanki Tauber

A US president has four years between elections, a congressman needs to renew his mandate every two years, while dictators stay in office for as long as they can keep their generals happy (or terrified). But G-d is up for reelection every year.

Every Rosh Hashanah, we crown G-d king. According to the Kabbalists, without this annual coronation (effected by our resolve to submit to the divine sovereignty, our recitation of the "verses of kingship" included in the special prayers of the day, and our sounding of the shofar), G-d's "kingship" would not be renewed, and the whole of creation - which derives from the divine desire to be king - would cease to exist.

(We don't usually think of kings requiring election to their office, but that's because the word "king" is a rather imprecise translation of the Hebrew word melech. A melech, by definition, is a sovereign whose kingship derives from a people's freely chosen desire to submit to his rule. A king who reigns by force or exploitation is not a melech but merely a moshel or "ruler".)

How does G-d prepare for His annual reelection? Does He just sit up there in His "palace" trusting in our good sense to proclaim Him king once again? Does He go after the

vote, mingling with the masses, pressing the flesh, kissing babies? Here's how Chassidic master Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), describes the month of Elul - the month that precedes the divine coronation on Rosh Hashanah:

*It is like a king who, before he enters the city, the people of the city go out to greet him in the field. There, everyone who so desires is permitted to meet him; he receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all. And when he goes to the city, they follow him there. Later, however, after he enters his royal palace, none can enter into his presence except by appointment, and only special people and select individuals. So, too, by analogy, the month of Elul is when we meet G-d in the field...*

While this description bears some resemblance to a politician running for office in a modern democracy, there are, of course, some significant differences. Such as the fact that a campaign promise by G-d is far more likely to be fulfilled than one that is made by your typical office-seeker.

We have entered the month of Elul. The king is in the field; if you need something from Him, now's the time to ask.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Remembering Senator Joseph I. Lieberman



*A high-profile champion of Shabbat observance who cherished his personal bond with the Rebbe*

If there is one word with which Joe Lieberman's name is most associated, it is the Jewish day of rest: Shabbat.

Lieberman, who faithfully observed Shabbat throughout his high-profile political career, passed away on March 27, 2024. He served four terms as U.S. senator from Connecticut, and in 2000 was nominated for vice president on the Democratic Party ticket, becoming the first Jewish candidate to represent a national party platform.

In 2011, Lieberman published his seventh book, titled *The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath*.

Lieberman kept kosher, laid tefillin every weekday morning, prayed three times daily, and regularly studied the weekly Torah portion. He became acquainted with the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson while still in college and maintained a strong relationship with the Rebbe and with the Chabad-Lubavitch movement for the rest of his life.

Lieberman was first elected to the Senate in 1988, scoring an upset victory over Lowell Weicker. On his way to Washington, D.C., to take the oath of office, Lieberman stopped in Brooklyn, N.Y., to receive a blessing from the Rebbe.

"I saw your picture in the paper," the Rebbe told him. "May G-d Almighty bless you to be successful in your new position and to be a source of pride for the Jewish people in general."

"Thank you, Rebbe," Lieberman replied. "I'm going to try my best ... It's a great opportunity and a great responsibility to do whatever I can to sanctify G-d's name."

Joseph Isadore (Yosef Yisrael) Lieberman was born on Feb. 24, 1942, and grew up in an observant Jewish home in Stamford, Conn. His parents, Henry (Chanan) and Marcia (Masha), were both born in the United States to Jewish parents who had emigrated from Poland and Austria in the early 1900s.

### YALE AND A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

In 1960, Lieberman entered Yale University. There he was taken under the wing of New Haven Jewish community activist William Horowitz. It was Horowitz who first took Lieberman along for a visit to the Rebbe's synagogue in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Lieberman cherished the opportunities he had to visit 770 and listen to the Rebbe teach at his legendary farbrengens, which often lasted many hours. He came back "over and over again," and found himself "deeply impressed by the spirituality, the extraordinary scholarship of the Rebbe, by the devotion and attentiveness of the Chassidim there, and by their joy."

Over the course of his storied political career, he traveled across the United States and the world, and developed warm relationships with many Chabad representatives and institutions.

### A PATH OF PUBLIC SERVICE

After earning a law degree and working briefly as a lawyer, Lieberman was elected to the Connecticut Senate in 1970. After serving three terms as Majority Leader in the Connecticut Senate, Lieberman held the office of Connecticut Attorney General from 1983 to 1989. Following his victorious bid for the U.S. Senate, he brought his entire family, including his elderly mother, to visit the Rebbe in Crown Heights.

Lieberman stood out in Washington for his religious convictions and for the integrity that was for him part and parcel of these beliefs.

Lieberman's Shabbat observance came onto the national stage in 2000, when by-then-Vice President Gore chose him as his running mate. In his *Gift of Rest*, Lieberman recalls one particularly memorable Shabbat dinner that he and his wife, Hadassah, spent with the Gores during the hotly contested election recount.

"When we were done and it was time to leave, Al asked if we were going to walk home," Lieberman wrote. "We said yes, and he and Tipper said they would accompany us. We resisted; but they persisted; and so on that beautiful December night, the four of us—with the Secret Service discreetly walking behind and security cars ahead and behind—walked ... to our house" a little more than a mile away.

Kosher food was likewise something the entire D.C. establishment came to learn about. Once, Lieberman and a Jewish congressman found themselves having lunch on Air Force One with President Bill Clinton. The congressman joked that there were now two sandwiches for him because Joe wouldn't touch his. "What do you mean," Clinton shot back, "we have special sandwiches for Joe!"

And then there was prayer. In the 1990s, Lieberman recalled in another anecdote shared in *The Gift of Rest*, he and the late Sen. John McCain were on a plane headed to Bosnia to visit U.S. troops there. As the morning sunlight dawned, Lieberman arose and donned tallit and tefillin to recite morning prayers.

"I noticed John open his eyes for a moment and look at me, then close them again," Lieberman wrote. "Then, doing a double take, his eyes opened wide." "Where am I? What is going on!" the Arizona Republican blurted out.

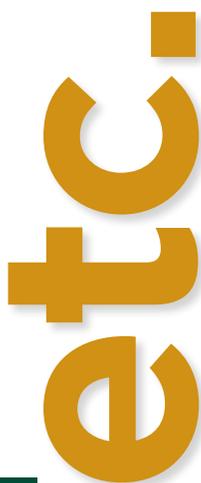
"Johnny," Lieberman replied, "I'm just saying my morning prayers," before briefly explaining what they were. "Oh good," McCain cried with relief, "for a moment there, Joey, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven."

### LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

In 1995, the Rebbe was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal. Lieberman was among the speakers at the celebratory breakfast marking the occasion. "The Rebbe," he said, "doesn't need this medal, but America—through its elected representatives—needed to award this medal to the Lubavitcher Rebbe because of what he means to the American Jewish community and to America generally ..."

For Lieberman, the Rebbe's teachings on leadership were not abstractions or slogans. Instead he put them into practice in his own life.

Joseph Lieberman is survived by his children, Matthew and Rebecca. He is also survived by his wife, Hadassah; their daughter, Hana; his stepson, Ethan; two sisters; and many grandchildren.



## New Shluchim To Amelia Island, Florida



Rabbi Levi and Mindy Katz (née Zucker), along with their son Sholom, are establishing the first Chabad House on Amelia Island in sunny Florida. The new Shluchim have been appointed by Rabbi Yosef and Rivkie Kahanov, head Shluchim to Northeast Florida.

Known as Florida's hidden gem and voted "Best Island in the U.S." in *Global Traveler Magazine's* 2024 Leisure Lifestyle Awards, Amelia Island is a barrier island in northeastern Florida on the border of Georgia. It boasts sparkling quartz beaches and a large historic district full of shopping and dining. The island's natural beauty and rich history make it a popular destination for close to a million visitors a year and residents alike.

While hundreds of Jewish families live throughout the greater area, there is currently no Shul on the island to serve the growing community. Inspired by the Rebbe's vision of reaching every single Jew, the Katzs plan to change that through warm Shabbos meals, inviting events, Torah classes, and more! As one local put it, "Chabad could not have come at a better time."

## Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Three

He would also say: One whose deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom endures. But one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom does not endure.

He would also say: One who is pleasing to his fellow men, is pleasing to G-d. But one who is not pleasing to his fellow men, is not pleasing to G-d.



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## "GREAT AND HOLY QUALITY"

By the Grace of G-d  
In the Days of Chanukah, 5721  
Brooklyn, NY

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter, in which you ask my advice with regard to certain educational problems, especially how to influence the children to get rid of undesirable habits, etc.

Needless to say, these problems cannot be adequately discussed in a letter. However, experienced teachers and educators are usually their own best guides, for, as the saying goes, "None is wiser than the man of experience." Besides, it is difficult to give advice from the distance, especially as the psychology of children may vary in certain aspects from one country to another. Nevertheless, I would like to make one general point which can be universally applied in educational problems, a point which is emphasized in the teachings of Chassidus.

I refer to the effort to make children aware that they possess a soul which is a part of G-d and that they are always in the presence of G-d (as explained in Chapters 2 and 41 of the Tanya). When this is done persistently, and on a level which is suitable to the age group and background of the children, the children come to realize that they possess a great and holy quality which is directly linked with G-d, the Creator

and Master of the world, and that it would therefore be quite unbecoming and unworthy of them to do anything which is not good. At the same time they come to realize that they have the potential to overcome temptation or difficulty, and if they would only make a little effort on their part they would receive considerable assistance from On High to live up to the Torah and mitzvoh, which constitute the will and wisdom of G-d.

As for the problem of some children having a habit to take things not belonging to them, this may fall into one of two categories:

- a) The attitude mentioned in the mishnah in Pirke Avoth: "Mine is thine and thine is mine." In this case the effort should be made to educate the child that just as it is necessary to be careful not to offend or shame another person, so it is necessary to be careful not to touch anything belonging to somebody else.
- b) An unhealthy condition which should be treated medically by specialists who know how to handle such an aberration.

I would like to add one more point, which is also emphasized in the teachings of Chassidus, namely, to be careful that in admonishing children the teacher or parent should not evoke a sense of helplessness and despondency on the part of the child; in other words, the child should not get the impression that he is good-for-nothing and that all is lost, etc., and that therefore he can continue to do as he wishes. On the contrary, the child should always be encouraged in the feeling that he is capable of overcoming his difficulties and that it is only a matter of will and determination.

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

"L'Chaim!" declared a chasid at a gathering. "May we merit the coming of Moshiach!"

Another chasid remarked, "You should include another wish: May we merit to serve G-d properly. Just imagine

what would happen if Moshiach came now. We would be overcome with shame and would be too embarrassed to greet him. Thus, we should include a request to serve G-d properly so that we may become worthy of facing the Redeemer."

(From My Father's Shabbos Table by Rabbi Y. Chitrick)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'chaim Publication.

### From the Archives

*The bikurim were a unique expression of thanks to G-d, showing an awareness that the blessings which we receive emanate from Him. To emphasize our gratitude for these blessings, we are enjoined to give the first and the best produce as an offering to G-d. Furthermore, we make a public statement of thanks before G-d in the Holy Temple.*

*The concept of expressing thanks to G-d is one of the fundamental principles of Jewish life. We begin each day with an expression of thanks when we say the prayer, Modeh Ani, in which we gratefully acknowledge G-d's return of our souls. This first act upon awakening is the foundation for all of our subsequent conduct which includes many blessings and expressions of thanks.*

*The importance of thanking G-d is further emphasized by the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that the creation of the world is renewed every moment. This reflects the unbounded nature of G-d's kindness. The comprehension of this idea should arouse our unbounded and deep-felt gratitude, for we realize how everything is dependent on G-d's kindness at every moment.*

*All facets of our lives are bikurim to be offered to G-d. Thus, we should not think that our commitment to G-d involves only "Jewish things." Instead, every aspect of our conduct should be permeated with holiness and should be carried out as befits a person who is in the presence of G-d.*

*All of our thoughts, words, or acts are bikurim, a first fruit offering to G-d. They should therefore be the best we have to offer.*

*By living our lives in a manner of bikurim, not only do we thankfully acknowledge G-d's kindness, we also cause everything in our lives to be sanctified and holy.*

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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# IT HAPPENED ONCE

The royal kitchens in the Czar's palace were humming with activity. The chefs had been ordered to prepare a lavish meal to be served at the reception honoring the visiting king, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, the Czar's relative. On the menu was a favorite delicacy--stuffed derma. A tender calf was selected and the preparation of the dish was meticulously supervised.

The chef's efforts were crowned with success, and the visiting Kaiser could not praise the dish enough. "I would like the recipe for that extraordinary cuisine," Kaiser Wilhelm told the Czar. "My mouth is watering just at the thought of my cooks serving this dish."

The Czar ordered the chief chef to prepare a detailed list of ingredients and instructions. Kaiser Wilhelm left Russia still singing the praises of the delicious meal. Upon his arrival in Germany, he immediately summoned his chef. "Here is an outstanding recipe," he said, handing him the paper. "I would like you to prepare this dish for dinner." The chef took great pains to follow the instructions, and soon the dish was ready to be served. The Kaiser sat in eager anticipation as the doors of the kitchen flew open. However, as the stuffed derma was set on the table, he could not conceal his displeasure. "Goodness me!" he exclaimed, bringing his hand to his nose. "What an unpleasant stench coming from the food!" The platter was quickly removed from the table.

Quite disappointed, Kaiser Wilhelm wrote to the Czar, demanding to know why his chefs could not produce that same delicacy, despite their strict adherence to the recipe. The Czar called for his chef, asking, "Do you have any idea why those cooks were unsuccessful?"

The chef knitted his brow for a moment, then suddenly he burst out laughing. "It's quite simple. I hadn't included in my instructions, that the intestines be turned inside out and washed thoroughly before being spiced and stuffed. That seemed to be so obvious, unnecessary to mention. Evidently, it wasn't so obvious to the German chefs."

Thus, we must know that a true teshuva--repentance is achieved only by "turning one's heart inside out" and cleansing it of all one's sins.

*(From My Father's Shabbos Table, Rabbi Y. Chitrick)*



There was once a poor farmer's widow who had many hungry children, but no food to feed them. One day she found an egg, and overjoyed, she ran to her children and told them that their troubles were finally over. "I will take this egg and ask our neighbors if I can put it under one of their sitting hens until it hatches. But we won't eat the chicken. We'll set her on her own eggs until they hatch, and they will have many more eggs which will hatch into many more chickens. When we have enough of them, we'll sell them and buy a cow, and she'll have calves. Then, we'll be able to sell some of the calves and buy a field. Then, we'll have a field, and cows, and chickens and eggs and milk, and we'll never be in want again.

She was so excited by her vision of the future, that she accidentally dropped the egg. It broke, and with it went all her hopes and dreams.

The moral of this story was explained by Rabbi Chaim of Sanz who said: "We are all like the poor woman in this story. When the days of teshuva are here we make all kinds of wonderful resolutions. We will do this and do that, we will reform all of our undesirable traits and rectify all of our misdeeds. And yet, as the time goes by, we somehow fail to make the moves that would set our good resolutions into motion, and we are the same people as we were before. Therefore, we must do everything to ensure that we carry out our resolutions to do teshuva when the opportunity is before us.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

*On the weekly Torah Portion*

**And it shall come to pass, when you come into the land which the L-rd your G-d is giving you (Deut. 26:1)**

The Jews' entrance into the land of Israel is symbolic of the soul's descent into the body and its being forced to live in the physical world. The Midrash teaches that the words "and it shall come to pass" are always used to denote something of great joy. Though the G-dly soul is saddened when it temporarily leaves its place under G-d's throne to dwell in a Jewish body for a certain number of years, it is a joyous occurrence, since the descent is to elevate the corporeal world through doing mitzvot.

*(Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

**Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field (Deut. 28:3)**

A city has certain advantages over rural life, among them the pleasure of others' company and the availability of places of Torah and learning. Rural life also has its advantages, such as a more relaxed life style, fresher air, and warmer relationships between neighbors. G-d's blessing is that we should be equally blessed in both locales.

*(Chatam Sofer)*

**You will become mad from the sight of your eyes (Deut. 28:34)**

"The sight of your eyes" means "your leaders"--those who serve as "the eyes of the congregation." This is therefore one of the harshest curses, that the Jews will recoil in shock and horror when they behold who their leaders are...

*(Rabbi Shimon Sofer)*

**And there will you offer yourselves for sale to your enemies, for bondsmen (Deut. 28:68)**

You will be forced to sell yourselves to your enemies, who are themselves enslaved. "A slave who attains power" is the harshest ruler.

*(Harei Besamim)*

Dedicated in honor of our dear parents  
**Misha and Olga Rovner**  
 And our dear children  
**Jacob and Jordanna Rovner**  
 Wishing you a Ksivah Vchasmah Tovah  
 A sweet and good year  
**By Anna and Serge Rovner**



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