



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

Many years ago, when the Jews of Spain were suffering from the Inquisition, a famous doctor by the name of Avitar Ibn Karashkash lived in Madrid. To escape the wrath of the Inquisition, he left his beautiful and his prestigious job as a skilled surgeon, and exiled himself to a small town. There, he hoped he would be left to live out his life in peace.

Avitar had a young son, Avraham. Avraham was delighted with his new life in the small town where Avitar was able to devote many hours of attention to Avraham and personally supervise his Torah studies. In addition, Avitar carefully instructed Avraham about the special garden he had planted, discussing with Avraham each plant growing there.

One day Avitar called his son into the garden and said, "Today is Tu B'Shevat, the New Year for Trees. On this day it is decided in the Heavenly Courts which trees will bear fruit and which trees will dry up. What is within our power is to plant trees, to care for them and to hope that they will grow and bear fruit. However, this is not dependent on us."

Avraham would never forget that special Tu B'Shevat when his father permitted him, for the first time, to plant saplings. And he would never forget his father's serious words. "Avraham, promise me that you will always try to be a good Jew, to grow upright and faithful to our people."

Twelve saplings Avraham planted that day, according to the years of his life. Then, Avitar took Avraham to a part of the garden where no one else was permitted; Avitar was experimenting with certain plants there. "Avraham," Avitar said quietly to his son, "Remember what I am telling you. If ever you need to leave here and I am not with you, come here first. Take out this sapling and you will find something underneath that will have a tremendous influence on you in the future."

A few months later, in the middle of the night, the hoof-beats of a horse were heard near the Karashkash house. There was a sharp knock on the door. "What do you want?" asked Avitar.

"Are you Avitar Ibn Karashkash, the man to whom G-d has given the strength to heal the sick?" asked the stranger. "That is my name," answered Avitar. "But I am no longer permitted to work in my profession."

"I am Duke Francisco Alba. My dear wife, the Duchess, is very sick and needs an operation urgently. You must come and operate on her or else she'll die. You cannot let her die," begged the Duke in a plaintive voice.

"Certainly you have access to great doctors in Madrid, Toledo, Barcelona," said Avitar. "Why me? You surely know that I am forbidden to practice my profession. Doing so could only endanger my life."

"I have been everywhere and have approached everyone. No one will perform the dangerous operation. I beg of you, help me," the Duke cried. "I will make sure no one harms you. I will bring a ship to take you and your family to safety if necessary. My wife is suffering. Please, help."

The Duke broke out in uncontrollable tears. "I will do what you ask of me," said Avitar. "But one thing you must promise. If anything happens to me, you must take my son to safety." The Duke agreed readily.

Avitar hadn't lost his skill as an expert surgeon. The operation went well and the Duchess's life was saved. But when he returned home, he found the officers of the Inquisition awaiting him.

Avraham broke out in a bitter cry as his father was taken away. Soon, though, the Duke's men arrived; they had heard what happened to the faithful doctor and would take Avraham to a safe haven. They promised him that the Duke would do everything in his power to save Avitar.

Avraham didn't want to go with the Duke's men, but he had no choice. He asked them to wait a moment until he got his things together. Avraham quickly made his way to the special part of the garden. He carefully dug up the sapling and uncovered a box. Opening the waterproof box he found a pair of tefillin and a note. "These tefillin will give you

strength and encourage you in Judaism so that you not, G-d forbid, fall into despair and dejection. In addition, carefully take the sapling you have uprooted, and plant it in new earth. Guard it and care for it painstakingly, and it will be the source of great livelihood for you. For this sapling is from a far-off land. It provides food for the special silkworms that produce the valuable silk material purchased from abroad. Remain a good Jew, my dear son, and the good L-rd will bless you and help you like the blessing of your father who loves you - Avitar Ibn Karashkash."

Avraham wiped away his tears and went to join the Duke's men. He wondered if he would ever see his father alive again.

Months later, while Avraham was living on the island of Majorca, he turned thirteen. Precisely at the moment when he first put on his tefillin he saw a small boat coming closer to the port. As it got closer he couldn't believe what he saw. His father was getting out of the boat!

After an emotional meeting, Avraham found out that the Duke had finally been able to save Avitar from the Inquisition. Avitar explained that he had not come earlier because he had been sick. He did not, however, explain that his "sickness" was due to the terrible torture he had suffered at the hands of the inquisitors.

In due time, Avitar and Avraham gathered around themselves a group of Jews and set up a Jewish settlement on the island. And each year, on Tu B'Shevat, they planted saplings according to Avraham's years.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

**G-d will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:14)**

G-d will only fight your battle on the condition that you "hold your peace" - remain quiet and avoid controversy and disagreement amongst yourselves. (Shaar Bat-Rabim)

**The one came not near the other all the night (Ex. 14:20)**

As the Talmud relates, the ministering angels wanted to sing songs of praise as the Egyptians were drowning in the Red Sea. However, G-d stopped them by pointing out the inappropriateness of rejoicing at a time when "the work of My hands is drowning." An analogy is given of a serious yet necessary operation to save a patient's life. During the painful surgery, there is no room for rejoicing. Only after its successful completion can one begin to offer praise and speak of its benefits. (Yeshuot Malka)

**And they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant...Then Moses sang... (Ex. 14:31, 15:1)**

It was precisely because the Jews believed in G-d and that Moses was His servant, that Moses was able to sing the "Song on Crossing the Red Sea." For having faith in the tzadik (righteous person) actually empowers the tzadik. (Degel Machane Efraim)

**And the waters were a wall unto them (Ex. 14:22)**

When a Jew observes Torah and mitzvot faithfully to the extent that he is willing to jump into the sea, not only does the "sea" disperse, but it is transformed into a protective wall that safeguards him.



### 5:03 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
9 Shevat / February 7  
Torah Portion B'Shalach  
Shabbat ends 6:05 PM

**Dedicated to the Rebbe on 75 Years of Leadership**  
whose teachings and example are a never-ending source of life for all mankind.  
May we continue in his path and complete the mission with which he has charged us: to make the world conscious of the imminent Redemption and to prepare the environment where this ideal can be realized.

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**The Weekly Publication  
for Every Jewish Person**  
יוסף יצחק שניידמן

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson  
"To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, Beshalach, we read about that pivotal moment in Jewish history which followed the exodus from Egypt - the miraculous splitting and crossing of the Sea of Reeds. Even though the Exodus had happened seven days earlier, the Jewish people were not completely free until the splitting of the sea, as they were still being pursued by the Egyptians.

It was only after they crossed the sea and the Egyptians drowned, that the Exodus was complete. Because the crossing of the sea marked the culmination of our liberation, we mention the splitting of the sea in our prayers. Because we have an obligation to mention the Exodus every day, and according to some, one must also mention the splitting of the sea, the end of the Exodus, otherwise it isn't considered as if he mentioned the Exodus at all. Because until the splitting of the sea, we weren't completely free.

From this is understood, that in order to free ourselves from our personal Egypt, as we say in the Haggadah, "In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself, as if he came out of Egypt." And as it is explained to mean, "In every generation, and every day," we have to act in the way of "journeying forth."

In other words, there are two stages in the Exodus, first leaving Egypt, and second, the splitting of the sea. Leaving Egypt is the first stage, in it we negate the confines and the servitude to the evil inclination and the animal soul, and we serve G-d through accepting His yoke. Without which there is no freedom, because if he is not able to keep even one mitzva (commandment), because of the hold the evil inclination and animal soul have on him, he is not truly free. The problem he faces after entering this stage, is that since he is only serving G-d through accepting His yoke, Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the evil inclination and the animal soul, continue to chase after him and cover up the light of the G-dly soul that is in him.

However, when he enters the second stage, he starts to serve G-d in a way that "turns the sea into dry land," he uncovers and reveals the G-dliness that is hidden in the world, he sees G-d in everything, then he is truly free, the evil inclination and the animal soul can't bother him anymore.

When he works on himself and reveals his true purpose, and follows the path that G-d wants him to take, in other words, the path that allows him to "journey forth," then he is truly free.

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.

## The Meaning of Self Sacrifice

On Shevat 10 on the Jewish calendar, upon the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson in 1950, leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement passed on to his illustrious son-in-law, our Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh Rebbe of Chabad. The following is based on one of Rebbe's talks concerning the life and self sacrifice of his saintly father-in-law.

On the day of a person's yahrzeit, we think about that person. But we are not just remembering—we are learning from his good deeds. This is especially true on a day like Yud Shevat, when we celebrate the yahrzeit of the Previous Rebbe.

The Previous Rebbe led a life of mesirus nefesh. Mesirus nefesh means "giving up one's life." Throughout our history, many people gave up their lives because of their Jewishness. But mesirus nefesh isn't only actually giving up one's life.

Mesirus nefesh - self sacrifice, is also living our lives without thinking of ourselves, concentrating instead only on doing what HaShem wants.

Mesirus nefesh - self sacrifice was the Previous Rebbe's way of doing things wherever he was. First in Russia with tremendous mesirus nefesh, he spread Torah despite terrible hardships. He was arrested, imprisoned and beaten. And still he persisted. What's more, he took upon himself the responsibility of sending others to spread Torah with mesirus nefesh.

After he was forced to leave Russia, he arrived in Poland.

There, though the government did not interfere with the study of Torah, the Previous Rebbe also showed a great amount of self sacrifice in his work. He had to confront other Jewish leaders in Poland who did not agree with what he was doing.

"Why are you putting so much effort into setting up yeshivos in small towns scattered throughout Poland?" they argued. "It's hard enough to establish the big yeshivos that exist in the main cities." But the Previous Rebbe just continued his difficult work, making sure that Jews in the distant small towns would also have a Jewish education.

When he came to America because of World War II, the Previous Rebbe continued spreading Torah with mesirus nefesh.

But why did he need self sacrifice in America? America is a free country. Everyone can do as they please.

That's true. But many Jews who came to America from Europe thought it would be a better idea not to show their Torah lifestyle too much. "America," they said, "is different. Here we should look like everyone else."

The first thing the Previous Rebbe said when he arrived was: "America is not different!" With enormous mesirus nefesh, he persuaded Jews to keep the Torah and its mitzvos openly and proudly. That paved the way for America to become a land where Jews keep the Torah and its mitzvos with joy and pride.

(Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XVIII, Parshas Chukas-Balak)

