

## The Jewish

## Weekly

## Every Action Counts

By Yechezkel Shlomo Levitansky

Years ago, my wife Rochi (Rachel) and I were set to go on shlichut to Sumy, a small city in northern Ukraine, near the Russian border. When we arrived, my family stayed with the shlichim (emissaries) in Kharkov [a 3-hour ride southeast from Sumy], while I went to Sumy to search for an apartment.

One night, I walked to my hotel room feeling very down. I had been there for two weeks already, but I had not yet found a suitable place for us to live. Was this all one big mistake?

The town square was mostly deserted. Over and over again, I replayed the events of the past two weeks in my mind. Packing up our apartment in California and shipping everything away. Flying with my wife and three children across the ocean. Spending weeks looking for a suitable home to live in; half of the buildings didn't even have running water or a bathroom.

Heavy footsteps interrupted my thoughts. I looked up to find a Ukrainian man walking straight towards me. It was dark, and this man was staring at me. I got a little nervous.

"Good evening," I called out in Russian.

"Good evening," he replied. "Are you Chabad Lubavitch?"

I blinked. This was not what I expected to hear! "Yes," I stammered. "Who are you?"

"I'm also Chabad Lubavitch!"

I looked the heavyset Ukrainian up and down. Him, a Lubavitcher? "Are you Jewish?" I asked.

"No."

"So... how does that work?" I asked delicately. "You're not Jewish, but you're Chabad Lubavitch?"

"I work for the Lubavitcher Rebbe!" He said proudly.

The Rebbe? I knew that in Ukraine, people refer to their Rabbis as 'Rebbe'. Maybe he works for a shliach in a neighboring city?

"No, no, no!" he said. "I work for Rabbi Schneerson himself!"

My eyes opened wide.

"A few years ago, I won a lottery for an American green card," he explained. "When I went to live in Brooklyn, I worked for the Rebbe! For three years, I was the janitor at the Ohel in Queens! I know all the rabbis there... Rabbi Refson, Rabbi Krinsky... if you want, you can ask them about me!"

I was stunned. What were the odds? Just moments before, I was doubting my decision to go on shlichut in such a remote location. And right then, in the "remote" town of Sumy, Ukraine, Hashem (G-d) showed me that He knew exactly where I was and that He was with me! How else could I explain my encounter with a Ukrainian gentile who so proudly called himself a Lubavitcher?

And if this Ukrainian man, who was the janitor at the Ohel, could walk around proudly, saying that he works for the Lubavitcher Rebbe, where was my own pride? I was a shliach of the Rebbe!

All my doubts disappeared. I straightened my shoulders and continued walking to my hotel room, ready to build my future in this city no matter what it took. The next day, I found an apartment.

Who would have ever imagined that a little city in Ukraine would have a shul with a minyan and daily kollel (yeshiva for married men), weekly classes for women and a beautiful mikvah? Little did the Jews of Sumy, Ukraine know, but their lives were about to be changed forever.

Each month, I go to the farm to watch the cows being milked so I can bring home fresh chalav yisrael (Jewish supervised) milk for my family. When we first arrived here, though, it wasn't so simple. I needed fresh milk for my baby, so I went around asking the nearby farmers if I could watch them milk their cows.

To my dismay, they all refused! Apparently, they had this tradition that if a stranger watches a cow being milked, the cow will die! I offered to pay a lot of money, but they didn't budge. Finally, I found an old couple who once had Jewish neighbors, so they knew the concept.

I would come at 5 am, watch them milk their one and only cow for an hour, and return home with three liters of milk. One week, they told me that their cow was pregnant and would stop giving milk, so I should come every day to stock up.

When the cow finally gave birth, it had twins! The couple was ecstatic - they could sell one of the calves for a half a year's salary!

## It Once Happened...

It was the talk of the town that "the rabbi blessed the cow". From then on, all the farmers were eager to let me watch them milk their cows in the hope that their cows might be blessed as well!

Let me conclude with a story that might give you an even bigger laugh.

For the first few years of our shlichut, we had to renew our visa very often. The rules constantly changed, and it was a big headache. I hired a lawyer to figure it out for me, and eventually, he told me that I should try applying for residency.

Two weeks after I submitted my application, I was called to the immigration office. I was told that while my application was denied, the head of immigration wanted to speak with me.


"I'll be honest with you," she told me. "I'm not convinced by your story. You brought your entire family from California to live in the small town of Sumy, Ukraine. The only logical reason I can see for you to do that is either because you're a spy, or because you're not normal! And we don't need spies nor crazy people here. So I have to deny your application."

I couldn't believe my ears! There I had it: an official government stamp that my going on shlichut to Ukraine was crazy. And that's exactly what the Rebbe wanted from us! Not to go on shlichut because it makes sense, but because of shtus d'kedusha ('holy craziness'), an unexplainable desire to brighten up the world for the better!

I left the office on a high, ready to conquer the world.

In the end, we got our residency. My wife gave birth to our two younger daughters in Ukraine, which gave us an official legitimate reason for permanent residency. But I will never forget the lesson I learned in that little government office: logic and reason cannot stand in the way of making the world a better place and bringing Moshiach.

Reprinted from an email of [dollardaily.org](http://dollardaily.org).



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times – Parshat Lech Lecha

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:08	5:21	6:01
Tel Aviv	4:23	5:23	5:57
Haifa	4:13	5:21	5:57
Be'er Sheva	4:27	5:24	6:01

### The Oil and the Perfume Merchants

By Rabbi Dovid Caro

The following story happened in the city where Rabbi Yehuda Leib Lowy, zt"l (known as the Maharal Mi'Prague) grew up. There were two stores next to each other. One was owned by a Jew and he sold oil. The other was owned by a non-Jew who sold perfumes.

The oil store was always bustling with customers as the store owner was known for his service and honesty. He was very successful. The other store was nearly always empty as he was known to be dishonest in business.

One night the perfume store owner came to his store and made a small hole through the wall to the oil store. When he was bored and his store was empty he would look through the hole and watch what was going on in his neighbor's store. One evening he saw the Jewish store owner counting a large sum of golden coins and wrapping them up in a red cloth.

The man started thinking how he could get his hands on the money. He ran in to the street, started shouting and crying that someone stole his money. The police were called and he told them that his money was wrapped up in a red cloth. They asked him if he had any suspicion and he told them that the only person who saw him counting his money was his Jewish neighbor from the oil store.

Obviously, as soon as the police checked the store they found the money and the store owner was arrested. He couldn't understand what he had done wrong but his claims went on deaf ears. The case was brought to the local judge who couldn't decide who was telling the truth and who was lying. He therefore sent the case to the city governor.

The governor was in a similar dilemma. He couldn't decide who was the true owner of the money. He postponed the case for a few weeks. The strange story became the talk of the town. One night the governor was walking through the city and overheard some Jewish kids playing a game of the upcoming court case about the money.

The governor was curious to see how it went. He heard a young boy who was playing the part of the judge calling the two sides to tell their story.

The young Yehuda, the future Maharal listened carefully. After hearing both sides he said, "I want a bowl of hot water brought here."

When the water was brought the Maharal said, "let us put the coins into the water. If the coins belong to the owner of the oil store then surely they were touched with oily hands and therefore the oil will rise to the top. But if the water is clean then it means that the owner of the perfume store is right.

The governor went home and called for a public hearing. He ruled exactly like the young Maharal and had the coins dropped into a bowl of hot water. Of course, plenty drops of oil started rising to the top. Everyone praised the governor but he told everyone that it wasn't his wisdom but it was the wisdom of the Jewish boy.

Rabbi Shmelke Reich from Worms took the Maharal as a son in law for his daughter Pereleh when he was fifteen years old. After the engagement he sent the Maharal to study in the Yeshiva of the Maharshal. During the next few years Reb Shmelke lost his money and wasn't in any position to support his son-in-law. Heartbroken, he sent his future son in law a letter telling him about his position and he wrote that since he cannot support him, he doesn't want him to have to wait and allows him to drop out from marrying his daughter.

The Maharal replied that he has no intention of backing out from his side. However, if he doesn't want his daughter to wait, he should get her engaged to someone else that way he will know he is free. The young Kallah decided to open a small bakery to help support her parents. This went on for over ten years. The Maharal and his Kallah remained engaged. The Maharal sat and learned diligently and was known as Reb Leib Bachur.

After ten years there was a war and a large group of soldiers passed through the city of Worms. One of them stopped by the bakery and stuck his spear into a bread to eat it. Perele begged him in tears not to steal the bread as she was from a poor family and working to support her elderly parents. The soldier replied, "I don't have any money to pay you but I am riding a horse and sitting on two saddles. I will give you one of them." The horseman took a saddle and threw it into the bakery. When Pereleh picked it up she saw it was torn and gold coins started falling out. She ran home to tell her parents.

Reb Shmelke immediately sent a letter to the Maharal and told him that he can come to the Chassuna as he has funds for them to get married. Rabbi Yitzchak Katz, son-in-law of the Maharal told over this story that he heard from his father-in-law. He added that later as Av Beis Din when similar cases came to him of families that couldn't keep to the promised dowry he tried to convince them not to break the engagement. In very extreme circumstances he would tell the Dayanim to give a ruling in their home but not in his Beis Din room.

What gave Avraham a great name?

At the commencement of Parshat Lech Lecha, Hashem commands Avraham and Sara to make aliyah, a pilgrimage, to the land that He would show them, the land of Canaan. Hashem promises, "וְאֵנִי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל - I will make you into a great nation," "וְאֵנִי לְבָרְכְךָ - and I will bless you," "וְאֵנִי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל - and I will make your name great."

The Gemara in Masechet Pesachim, brought down by Rashi, explains that the commencement of our Amidah, our central prayer when we stand before Hashem three times a day, is based on this text.

The Torah tells us that Hashem said to Avraham, "וְאֵנִי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל - I will make you into a great nation." That's why we proclaim, "אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם - G-d is the G-d of Avraham."

Hashem continued, "וְאֵנִי לְבָרְכְךָ - and I will bless you." That's why we say, "אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק - the God of Isaac."

Finally came the third statement, "וְאֵנִי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל - and I will make your name great." That's why we say "אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב - the God of Jacob."

Now Rav Soloveitchik asks a great question.

We can understand the connection between the second statement, 'I will bless you,' and 'אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק.' Avraham was blessed through Yitzchak, because Hashem blessed Avraham miraculously with a child (Yitzchak) when he was old. However, what is the connection between the third statement and 'אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב' - that is, in what way did Avraham's 'name become great' through Yaakov?

Rav Soloveitchik explains beautifully. He says that when it comes to parenting, it's a marvelous achievement to see one's child walking in one's footsteps. But it's an even greater achievement to witness one's grandchildren emulating one's ways. That is exactly what Avraham achieved through Yaakov having internalized the values of his grandfather and who in his own right became a great person. Therefore we see that Avraham's name became great through his grandchild.

A very important lesson emerges for us from this. Famous and renowned people can make national and global impacts but ultimately the most significant impact that anybody can make is within their own families.

So let's all join as one family and let's pray with all our hearts for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

**לך לך**

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MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 126  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1686  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6336

HAFTORA:  
Yeshayahu 40:27 - 41:16

*Yossi*