

# THE LONG RIDE HOME

By CHAYAH SARAH CANTOR

**T**he traveler walked off the side of the road to rest. Panting, he sat on a rock, removed a silken handkerchief, and mopped his brow. He was still a young man, with a peaceful, unlined face and hair in need of a comb.

After a few minutes, he continued. The sun beat down hard, trying to discourage him, but he ignored it. With merry eyes he surveyed the distant hills.

The sound of clapping startled him. The carriage rolled casually over the ruts and stones, coming closer, until it arrived parallel to him. When a head crowned by a velvet hat poked out the window, it shouted a command to the driver. Instantly the carriage halted.

W

here are you going?" the passenger asked in Yiddish.

"Mezhirech," answered the roadside traveler.

"So am I," the other said.

"Would you care to join me?"

The traveler shrugged in agreement, then opened the polished door.

Inside the carriage he brushed off his black coat, releasing dust. The carriage owner grimaced and began to cough. Though he averted his face, he did catch sight of the dirty coat, the shoes caked with dry mud, and the ragged shirt.

Thank heavens for human kindness, thought the gentleman. If not for the Torah dictate to help a fellow Jew, this poor wretch might never have received such a generous offer for a ride.

"How long have you been on the road?" he asked.

"About two weeks," said the traveler.

"Two weeks?" the gentleman exclaimed. "Well, I suppose so, judging by the looks of you. Two weeks is a long time to be wandering around like a vagabond."

"Oh, I'm used to it," replied the traveler, and his eyes twinkled. "This isn't the first time I've gone to Mezhirech. I try to go there once a month."

"And you always walk?"

"Yes. Sometimes, though, I can get a ride. Usually from a kind Jew like you, sir. And I am grateful."

His speech was refined, though unpretentious, and the gentleman could detect a certain education under the scruffiness. No doubt this was someone who was down on his luck.

"Where do you live?" the gentleman asked carefully.

"Levertov," answered the traveler. "Not originally, though. My father-in-law lives there, so I moved there."

"Oh. So you live with your father-in-law."

"Not anymore," said the traveler wistfully. "I'm afraid, sir, he . . . threw me out."

"Threw you out? What on earth for?"

"He complained that I didn't want to work," the traveler replied, sighing. "I lost some money of his. I'm afraid I'm not a good businessman, like you, sir."

"How do you know I'm a businessman?" asked the other in amazement.

"Oh, I have ways of knowing things," the traveler answered. "Usually by the way one talks or dresses.

Only a Jew who is a merchant would ride in a carriage as fine as this."

"Well, yes," murmured the gentleman. He expanded his chest in happiness. "With G-d's help, I've been successful. Perhaps you've heard of me? Avraham Katz is the name. The *ariens* [the Polish overseer] supplies me with contracts."

"That's quite a clientele, sir. You must be very clever to get that far."

"Oh, business is one-fifth thinking, the rest hard work."

Avraham had thrown this last sentence in the other man's face

with contempt. He had now concluded that the passenger was not a hard-working sort who was down on his luck, but a man who labored as little as possible, hoping to live off the charity of others! No doubt his father-in-law had grown fed up with him for being unwilling to work. Probably the good man didn't want a beggar for a son-in-law, and Avraham couldn't fault him. Neither would he.

"I can't blame your father-in-law at all," said the merchant. "I can certainly empathize with a fellow businessman." He wagged his finger. "People like you should learn to work for your bread. In that way, too, you wouldn't have to beg a ride to Mezhirech. It was just lucky for you that I was going. Divine Providence, I should say."

"So you're on your way there for business, sir?"

"Actually, no," said Avraham in an abrupt change

---

*He had now concluded that the passenger was not a hard-working sort who was down on his luck, but a man who labored as little as possible, hoping to live off the kindness of others!*

---

of mood. "I'm going to see somebody."

"Whom, sir?"

"The Maggid." The merchant smiled. "Are you at all familiar with the name?"

"Yes."

"A holy man. A living testament to Divine power." Avraham proudly pointed to packages stacked on the carriage floor. "I'm bringing those to him."

"What are they, sir?"

"Gifts. Items of greater value than someone like you would ever appreciate. They're like the unblemished animals our ancestors brought to the Holy Temple."

"That's quite generous of you, sir."

"Oh, it's not generosity alone that compels me," retorted the merchant. "I am grateful to him. He gave me more than a carriage ride. The last time I was there, he blessed me, and my wealth has since about quadrupled. I am simply returning what is due."

Two hours later, the carriage approached a sparse set of huts and cottages. They grew denser, giving way to buildings, as the carriage wheeled into the main street of Mezhirech and slowed down. At the town square it waded through a stream of vendors and pedestrians.

"There's the Maggid," whispered Avraham. "For

---

*He reached into his pocket and withdrew a wad of currency. "Here, I'll do you one last favor. Get yourself a proper bath and set of clothes. You're in the same town as the holy man. Should you run into him, you might offend him, the way you're dressed."*

---

Quickly he opened the carriage. "Goodbye. I hope you'll manage to get home."

The traveler nodded and slipped away.

With a sigh of relief, Avraham stuck his head out the window. "To the inn. And hurry, please." As the

carriage began to shake, he stuck his head back in and snorted, "I shall certainly enjoy seeing the Maggid, especially after what I have had to look at for hours."

At the inn the merchant undressed and sank into a hot bath. He had ordered the gifts sent ahead with word of

his arrival. Avraham had decided he might as well be modest about his wealth. He would come to the Maggid bearing only a satchel of gold coins.



*"Where are you going?" the passenger asked.*

An hour later he arrived at the Maggid's door. The servant greeted him, then said, "I'm afraid, sir, that there will be a slight delay. The Maggid is quite busy now. Something unexpected has happened."

The merchant frowned. "I hope it is not serious."

"I'm afraid so, sir. It must be, if the Maggid is in there with his student."

"His student?"

"His student just came to town, sir, with distressing news. They've been together in private conference over the past hour."

"Who is this person?"

"His name is Levi Yitzchak, sir." The servant beamed. "Possibly the Maggid's most brilliant student. No, more than that — a saint. You can tell just by looking at him."

The servant ushered Avraham to a seat and continued, "Word got around that he had arrived here."

"Did word get around that I'm here too?" growled Avraham. Then he chided himself. He knew that the Maggid would normally not keep a man like him waiting. Certainly whatever the Maggid was discussing in his chamber had to be important.

Nevertheless, the merchant, accustomed to equating time with money, hated the thought of sitting idly. But wait he had to, and he scribbled some business calculations to while away the time.

A half hour later, the door opened slightly, letting loose a pair of voices. One of them was identifiably the Maggid's. Quickly Avraham rose, heart beating.

It nearly stopped when he caught sight of the Maggid's disciple.

The disciple still wore the rags the merchant had seen on the roadside, in spite of the money Avraham had given him to buy something decent. The traveler now trailed after the Maggid, continuing to speak. Both faces, student's and teacher's, were clouded with worry, but at the sight of his benefactor the traveler stopped and smiled.

"*Shalom aleichem*," he said simply.

The merchant rushed forward. "Why, Reb Levi Yitzchak," he stammered, "it is certainly a pleasure to see you again." He completely forgot about the Maggid, who stood there quietly. "Please forgive me for the way I acted in the carriage."

"Why, there is nothing to be sorry about," answered Levi Yitzchak. "I am certainly sorry, though, that my appearance offended you."

"Not half as much as my words might have offended you," gabbled Avraham.

"They didn't," replied Levi Yitzchak, and his smile faded. "I am afraid I have more pressing concerns."

The merchant darkened. "Yes, the servant told me." He bowed toward the Maggid. "I was hoping to meet with you, sir. But after the way I shamed your prize scholar, I am embarrassed."

"I bear no grudges against anyone," replied the Maggid. Then he sighed deeply. "Unfortunately, because of the matter Reb Levi Yitzchak and I have discussed, I am afraid I must cut this visit short. I hope to see you again sometime in the future."

"Is it something serious?" asked Avraham.

"It is nothing that cannot be rectified," the Maggid answered.

"I wish," the merchant continued, facing Levi Yitzchak, "there were something I could do, before I leave, which might atone for my conduct."

"You showed me enough kindness by offering me a ride into Mezhirech. Apparently it was a great kindness, considering your distaste for me."

Reb Levi Yitzchak narrowed his eyes. "But I shall ask you to do me one favor. On your way home, stay off the main road. Instead, take the old path, through the woods."

"The woods?"

"The path we bypassed on our way here. Go there, and when you hear someone yelling for help, go out of

---

*A half hour later,  
the door opened slightly,  
letting loose  
a pair of voices.  
One of them was  
identifiably the Maggid's.  
Quickly Avraham rose,  
heart beating.*

---

your way to find him. Then help him, just as you helped me. Regardless of his appearance."

The merchant nodded humbly. He slunk out the door, forgetting all about the satchel of gold that still lay in his hand. Not till he returned to the inn did he remember it and want to send it to the Maggid, but he knew it would have to wait. He had already made one blunder today.



The next morning Avraham Katz ordered the carriage ready for departure. He gave the odd directions to the driver.

The driver widened his eyes. "The old path? Sir, the new one will get you home much faster."

"Do as I say," barked the merchant.

The driver shrugged and flicked the whip, and the horses were off.

The town dwindled, eventually fading from view. The carriage, meanwhile, jostled with each yard. The path, which began in the older section of Mezhirech, cut through abandoned groves and half-dirt fields, giving way to forests clogged with matted trees. Occasionally the carriage swayed or knocked against branches as thick as a man's arm, and the horses neighed in terror. But the driver persisted, the sound of the whip cracking sharply against the silence.

But soon another sound, the sound Avraham Katz had been anticipating, could be heard. Faint at first, it grew louder as the carriage entered particularly dense foliage. Curious, Avraham poked his head out the window and barely missed getting slapped in the face by birch twigs.

"Driver, stop," he called.

The carriage halted. Perking his ears, the merchant listened.

The sound was a voice, definitely Polish. "Help!" it called.

Avraham threw open the door and jumped out.

He followed the direction of the voice. Twice he stumbled over outgrown tree roots, and he tore his silken breeches. Undaunted, he continued. Behind him puffed the driver, angered at the distraction from his routine. (Continued on page 26)



The sound was a voice, definitely Polish. "Help!" it called.

# THE LONG RIDE HOME

(Continued from page 7)

They found the voice at last. Its owner was tied to a pair of branches forking out of an old oak tree. Filthy and half-naked, body drooping, he lifted his head and groaned.

"Help me, please," he repeated weakly.

Avraham hurried over and cut the ropes. The victim slumped to the ground; with Avraham's help as well as the driver's, he was lifted.

"Put him down on that tree stump," Avraham said, pointing a few feet away.

The man was gently carried. He continued to groan, although he did try to walk. Finally he was seated. At Avraham's order, the driver hurried back to the carriage to bring clothing and refreshment. In the meanwhile, the man sat panting for several minutes.

At last his breathing became more regular. "Thank you," he said. "You saved my life." His Polish was impeccable. In spite of the cuts and bruises, something about him exuded grace and authority. This, thought Avraham, was a man of fine background and standing.

"How long have you been here?" asked Avraham.

"Three days," answered the Pole.

"They left me here to die."

"They?"

"My cousin," the victim continued. "He and his henchmen. He tried to take over the estate and my rightful inheritance."

Avraham backed away in respect. "Sir, I did not realize I rescued a man of nobility."

The rescued man nodded. "I am a count. My holdings extend between here and Levertov. For refusing to join the current rebellion, I paid dearly."

Avraham shuddered. The people

---

*"I am a count.  
My holdings extend  
between here  
and Levertov.  
For refusing to join  
the current rebellion,  
I paid dearly."*

---

he did business with, the *ariens*, were known for their extreme conduct — their revolts and their rivalries, and their thirst for the blood of Jews and peasants alike. Avraham had always felt that the *ariens* would eventually direct their hatred toward each other. Apparently this was exactly what was now happening.

"My cousin sits in my palace right now," muttered the count. "He drinks my wine and collects my taxes. No doubt he terrorizes my subjects."

"Sir, what can be done?"

"I must fight him," declared the count. He tried to rise, but fell back in Avraham's arms. "Alas, I shall need an army."

The driver returned, carrying a

bundle. Together he and Avraham propped the man forward.

"Sir," began Avraham, "at the moment I think a battle is the last thing you need. At the moment you could not defeat a woman, let alone your powerful cousin. I remember passing a brook not far from here. You must bathe and rest. My driver has brought you food and clothing."

"Thank you," whispered the count.

He fainted. The driver hoisted him onto his shoulders, while Avraham raised his legs. Together they transported their noble cargo to the carriage.

Hours later the carriage had parked along a brook. The count — washed, fed, and dressed in the merchant's finery — looked elegant once again.

"Again, I thank you," he announced. "I hope some day to repay you."

(Concluded in the next issue)

Don't Miss Out!!!  
Subscribe Now!

Jewish  
Reader

Send \$12.50  
for 10 issues

The Jewish Reader

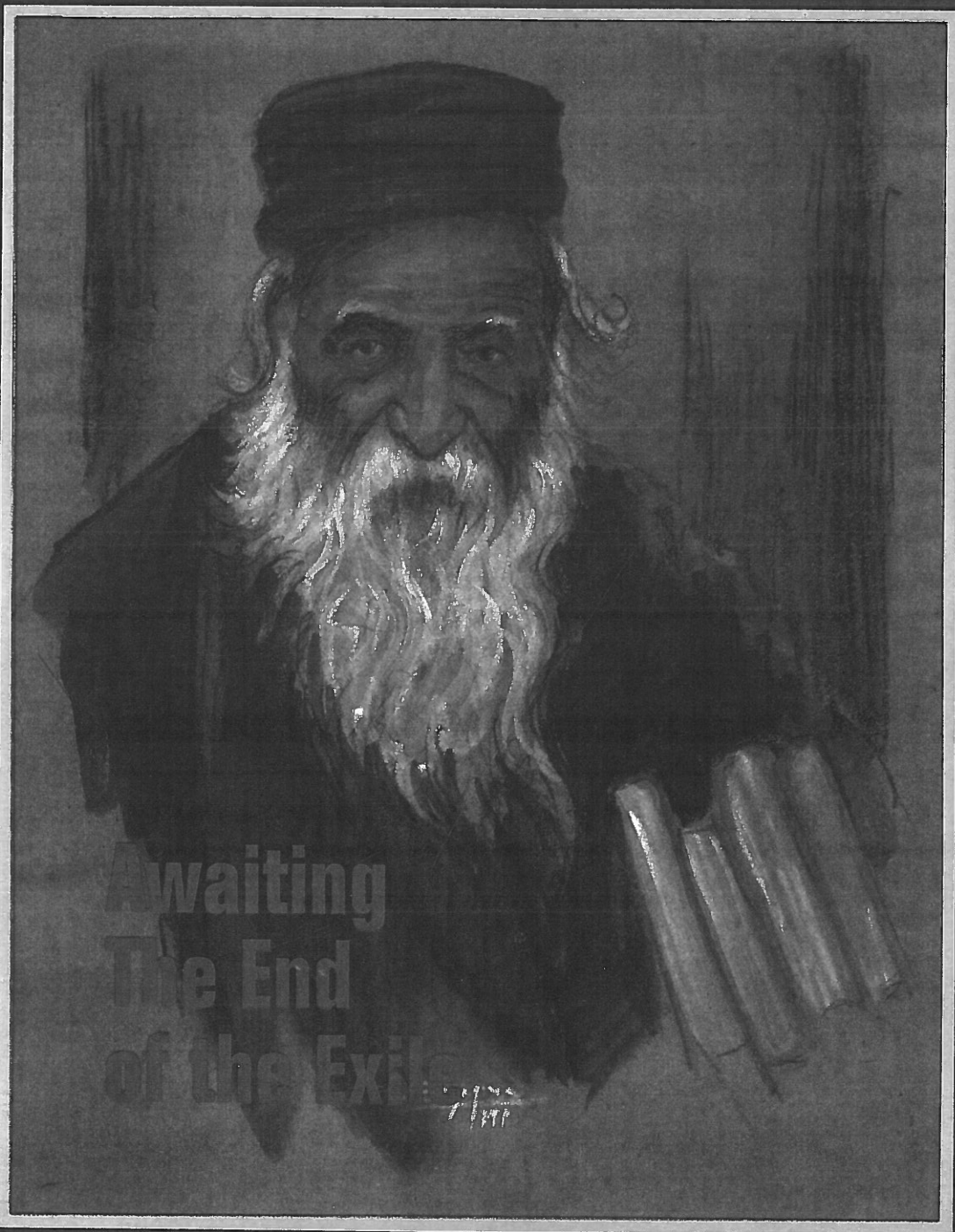
705 Foster Avenue  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230

# The Jewish Reader \$1.75

Kislev 5752

Vol. 4, No. 3

November 1991



# Table of Contents

3

## The Long Ride Home

By Chayah Sarah Cantor

A merchant insults the Berdichever Rav.

8

## Unshaken As The Continent

By Chani Gerstner

The immigrants face trouble in New Amsterdam.

16

## Torah Highlights

By Avraham M. Goldstein

The blessings over the menorah.

20

## The Antique

By Devorah Kirsch

Chanukah arrives at Valley Forge.

24

## Leader Of Leaders

By Chayim S. Chasan

Life of the great leader.

27

## Letters from Kiev

By Yehudis Bendet

A summer of change in the Soviet Union.

This Month, Page 17  
Our Story, Page 18  
News In Review, Page 30

Mayer Bendet,  
editor  
Avraham M. Goldstein,  
managing editor  
Chayah Sarah Cantor,  
associate editor  
N. Nodel, Shmuel Shaked,  
illustrations  
Elie Benzaquen,  
cover art  
Fayge Silverman,  
teacher's guide

**THE JEWISH READER** (ISSN1049-1538) is published monthly, except July and August, by HaChai Publishing, 705 Foster Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y.

Subscriptions: 1 year 10 issues \$12.50, Foreign \$US15.50

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE JEWISH READER, 705 Foster Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230. Reprinting of any part of this publication without written permission from the publisher is prohibited.

All requests, subscriptions, and manuscripts should be addressed to:  
The Jewish Reader, 705 Foster Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230. (718)692-3900





## TO OUR READERS

On our cover this issue is a drawing of a "simple Jew." Of course, this man is "simple" only in the sense that he follows Hashem's Torah with simple, pure faith. He spends as much time as possible in the *bais midrash*, studying Torah.

It is this picture that the Syrian-Greeks, under Antiochus, tried to destroy, by their rules against the learning of Torah and the performance of mitzvos. The Chashmonaim, under Yehuda HaMaccabee, defeated Antiochus, rededicated the Temple, and restored the Torah to its rightful place.

Our main story is one of the most famous told about Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev. Due to its length, it will conclude next issue.

Also of special interest is "letters from Kiev." How do young Russian Jews feel about our heritage? In this moving article you will come to gain a better understanding of our brethren in the Soviet Union.

We wish our readers a very Happy Chanukah.

This Publication is made possible by a grant from the educational division of the



# MAIL ROOM

## Enjoys Good Writing

Aidel Pesel Wajngort is a really fine writer. Her latest story ["The Believer," Cheshvan] was very exciting and interesting. How Rav Meir of Premishlan helped the couple in trouble made me think of the important *tzaddikim* that we have.

I hope you will print more stories by Aidel Pesel Wajngort in your next issues.

I also remember you used to have Torah contests. Please print some more of these contests.

Gila Bracha Braun  
Brooklyn, NY

## ATTENTION PARENTS!

We ask you to judge for yourself the importance of a magazine like ours, which is aimed at enhancing the enjoyment of education by your children.

Take advantage of this fine educational tool now.

### DON'T DELAY!

Take advantage immediately of this unique and INTERESTING, EDUCATIONAL, ENTERTAINING magazine offer.

Cut along dotted line and send.



SEND ME  1YEAR  2YEARS  Gift Subscription

Enclosed please find check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_, payable to The Jewish Reader. Magazine to be mailed to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a gift card from:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



Subscription rates: 1 year (10 issues) \$12.50. 2 years \$23.00. Canada and Foreign US\$15.50 per year, US\$29 for 2 years. Group subscriptions: 10 or more to one address \$10.00 each; outside USA \$12.50 each.

Send to: THE JEWISH READER  
705 Foster Avenue  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230