

# SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



*Likkutei Sichos, Volume 17*

## Shmini, Sicha 4 (*First Sicha of the week*)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

*In the Sicha, Section 11, it talks about the Avodah of שְׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם – ‘Raise your eyes heavenward’. Due to the time pressure of Erev Pesach, I bring here two of the more well-known stories related to this theme and the second one not translated.*

*חג כשר ושמח to all.*

### **Sicha, The Last Day of Pesach, at the Evening Seudah, 5703:**

I once knew a man called R. Pesach who was a chassid of my grandfather the rebbe Maharash.

This R. Pesach was certainly no Torah scholar, nor for that matter was he schooled in worldly matters, but when he married into a family from Homil he made a comfortable living by buying various kinds of merchandise there and selling it on commission to the storekeepers in the hamlets round about.

Just before Rosh HaShanah of the year 5627 (1866), he joined a group of chassidim which was led by a chassid of renown by the name of R. Mordechai Yoel, and together they made the journey to Lubavitch. When his turn came for yechidus, he handed the Rebbe a kvitl in which he mentioned that he made his livelihood by driving his wagon from town to town.

The Rebbe blessed him warmly and said: “You can always fulfill the words of the Navi, שְׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם – ‘Raise your eyes heavenward [and behold Who created these].” And then he added: “Shema is Yisrael.”

R. Pesach went to find R. Mordechai Yoel, and asked him to explain what the Rebbe meant.

“Every synagogue,” began R. Mordechai Yoel, “is built with large windows, not only to admit light but also to enable people to look out at the sky. For the heavens, we read, are reminiscent of the Throne of Glory, and looking skyward inspires a man with the awe of Heaven. And this is what the Rebbe told you. Since you spend much of your time on the road, and see the sky not only when you are seated in shul, you are thus able at all times to fulfill the instruction of the Navi, שָׂאוּ מַרְוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם – ‘Raise your eyes heavenward, and behold Who created these.’ Now the word שְׁמַע is made up of the initial letters of the first three words of this verse, and when a person says the Shema with every fiber of his being, he is elevated thereby to the level of Yisrael.”

R. Mordechai Yoel went on to distinguish between the significance of the name Yaakov and the name Yisrael...

“And that,” R. Mordechai Yoel concluded, “is what the Rebbe meant when he said ‘Shema is Yisrael’: through experiencing Shema in the sense of ‘raising your eyes heavenward,’ one can become worthy of being called a Yisrael.”

R. Pesach used to visit Lubavitch every two or three years, but I met him there for the first time on the eve of Rosh HaShanah 5652 (1891). As we walked together to the shul at the Ohel, he told me in detail all about that first yechidus that he had with my grandfather on the fourth of Tishrei, 5627 (1866), between Minchah and Maariv.

He concluded with these words: “When R. Mordechai Yoel explained what the Rebbe had told me I felt my heart lighting up, and from then on I yearned to understand things. My neighbor, a chassid whom we knew as Hirschel the Watchmaker, taught me every so often, until within a few years I was able to study several lines for myself out of Tanya, Torah Or or Likkutei Torah. The Rebbe’s words at yechidus put me on my feet!”

I was then too young to understand – and certainly, to feel – his relived experience as he recalled that meeting, but I was richly aware of his liveliness, his deep-seated pleasure. Their intensity, after the passage of no less than twenty-five years, amazed me...

As the years rolled by, R. Pesach became a rich man and moved to Lodz, where he dealt in manufactured goods. Then in 5688 (1928), when he was about ninety years old, he again told me what he had heard from the mouth of my grandfather at his first yechidus – and still with the same relived delight, as if this encounter had taken place the day before.

This time he concluded his recollection as follows: "From the time I stopped working on commission and first set out to try my own fortune on the road, I have always sought lodgings with large windows, and I always take a seat near a window so that I will always be able to fulfill those words: שָׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם – 'Raise your eyes heavenward.' Over sixty-two years have now passed since I was privileged to hear from the Rebbe, your grandfather, that Shema is Yisrael. Throughout all those years, whenever I have said Shema Yisrael, at whatever point in the prayers – whether it be in the daily reading, or while the sefer Torah is being taken out of the Holy Ark, or during the responses of Kedushah, or in the additions to the Tachanun prayer on Monday and Thursday mornings, or during the climax of Yom Kippur at the conclusion of the Ne'ilah service – I have always recalled the Rebbe's words, that Shema is Yisrael.

"One request I have yet to the Almighty: When the time comes for me to return to Him the soul which He has entrusted in my keeping, and I am to breathe Shema Yisrael for the very last time, I pray that He grants me a clear mind, so that then too I will be able to recall those words the Rebbe told me – Shema is Yisrael!"

Let me confess, unabashedly, that gazing upon that homespun peddler from Homil, R. Pesach the son of R. Yisrael – ... his artless attachment to the Rebbe's teaching – I *envied* him...

### Hayom Yom: Cheshvan 19:

In response to a question at yechidus, the Alter Rebbe once gave the following response: "Chassidus is Shema Yisrael. The word Shema (שמע) is an acronym for the words, 'Raise your eyes on high' (שאו מרום עיניכם) – 'on high,' not 'heavenward.' That means higher and higher, reaching beyond the intellect. Yet [we should] understand this very [non-intellectual] dimension with our minds as well – as the verse continues, "and behold Who created these."

### שיחת שמחת בית השואבה, ה'תשי"ד

חסידיים מספרים שפעם בזמן הצמח-צדק גזר ניקאלאי – בין שאר הגזירות – שלא יחבשו כובע עגול (כמו "יאַרמולקע" גבוהה), אלא כובע בעל מצחי' (הנקרא "דאַשיק" או "קאַזיראַק") שבולטת מלפנים. ואמרו, שזוהי גזירה מצד הקליפה, שרצונה להעלים ולהסתיר על הענין ד"שאו מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה", שכן, המצחי' מונעת לשאת את העיניים ולראות את השמים

אינני יודע אם ניקאלאי ידע אז אודות חסידים, אינני יודע אם מאורע זה הי' קודם הרדיפות או לאחר הרדיפות וכו', אבל בכל אופן אצל חסידים לא הי' ספק שזהו העלם והסתר על הענין ד"שאו מרום עיניכם", ובמילא ידעו שצריכים להלחם נגד זה

מה עשו חסידים – בהיותם פקחים ("חסידים זיינען דאָך קלוגע") – חבשו את הכובע כשהמצחי' מכוונת לצד העורף

ותוכן הסיפור, שבהפיכת המצחי' לצד העורף – במקום ללחום נגד המצחי' עצמה, להסירה מהכובע, ולישב במאסר בשביל זה – הראו חסידים שיכולים לנצל את ההעלם וההסתר גופא, שבמקום להסתיר על הקדושה ח"ו, יסתיר על העינים שבבחי' אחוריים דקדושה, "כמאן דשדי בתר כתפוי לשונאו", שהם העינים דלעו"ז, ואילו בצד הפנים נשאר מקום פנוי בשביל שאו מרום עיניכם (ובמילא) וראו מי ברא אלה.

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