

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 15

Lech Lecha, Sicha 4

The Sicha discussed the importance of influencing non-Jews to keep the Sheva Mitzvos specifically as obligations from Sinai. For a non-Jew, whose intellectual soul is defined by his Metzui, to reach transcendence, he needs the influence of a Jew, whose intellectual soul is an expression of his G-dly soul.

We present here a well-known story, connected to the theme, that the Rebbe shared at a Farbrengen. As an introduction we share an interesting 'custom' of the Baal Shem Tov.

עמל מלאכה – Physical exertion

The Mittlerer Rebbe urged the Jewish masses to go and live in villages and settlements where they could learn to till the soil, or acquire skills and learn crafts which would provide them with an honest, steady income. This would eliminate the constant worry and insecurity that accompanied their existing occupations.

Once they were founded, the Miteler Rebbe would visit the settlements, encouraging and uplifting their inhabitants, and raising funds for their expansion.

Thirty-nine settlements were established in the Kherson region alone; they sustained their communities for the next 120 years, until they were destroyed in world war II.

Here are excerpts of a letter of the Mittlerer Rebbe about this project:

...My own suggestion...whereby the women and children, boys and girls, learn some basic trades, such as the various types of weaving and spinning and allied crafts which are employed in factories.

The training of artisans should likewise be organized and aided in an orderly manner and should be properly regulated for the children of the poor and middle class as well...

They should not despise agriculture. They should acquire good fertile land, large plots or small, and work on the soil; G-d will surely send His blessing on the soil, so that they will at least be able to feed their children properly. No doubt they will have to hire experienced non-Jewish farm hands for two or three years, until they are sufficiently trained to do all the work themselves.

They should not be ashamed of tilling the soil. Were not the fields and vineyards the source of our subsistence in the Holy Land, the richer farmer using Jewish servants and good workers?.. it is written, "If thou wilt eat by the toil of thy hands, happy art thou." ...

עמל שיחה - Effort in Davening and Avodas Hashem

On the first night of Shavuos in the year 5656 (1896), my father delivered the *maamar* that begins, *VeAsisa Chag Shavuos*. It began long before candle-lighting time and lasted two-and-a-half hours. My father then *davened Maariv* in his study. As a rule, his *Maariv* on the first night of Shavuos resembled his *davenen* on the first night of Rosh HaShanah – at length, and with intense *dveikus* – though this was not known to the chassidim.

One of the guests at the evening *seudah*, a chassid by the name of R. Baruch Shneur, (Our Rebbe's Zaideh), addressed my father: "Today we attained *temimus*, completeness – effortlessly. The *maamar* was long, and then there was *Maariv*, so all in all, *temimus* was available spontaneously!"

To this my father responded: "Chassidim do not value gains that are attained after the event and spontaneously, even if they come about via *Chassidus*. True *temimus* is earned by toiling in *avodah*, by exertion. To earn *temimus* one must work hard: that which comes of its own accord is not *temimus*. The above applies to *temimus* in terms of time. *Temimus* also exists in the dimension of space. And above all, one should strive to attain *temimus* in one's soul. This means that the brain rules the heart with completeness... (Sicha First Night of Shavuos, 5702)

עמל תורה - Effort in Torah study

Once the Alter Rebbe called the Tzemach Tzedek and offered to grant him a gift – a blessing for an understanding of Torah. The Tzemach Tzedek declined the offer, saying that he wanted to acquire Torah through toil. He later regretted this, for whatever levels of Torah he would have received as a gift from the Alter Rebbe, there would always be additional levels to toil for. (Likkutei Sichos Vol. 15, page 81)