

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 19

Iggeres Hateshuva, Perek 1 (Second Sicha of the week)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

There are three opinions about how many of the Kabbalists recommended fasts, for each sin, we should fast during our lives. Once, three times, or even more than three times. These reflect the three deficiencies a sin causes in the corresponding part of our Neshama.

The Alter Rebbe, in the next chapter, discusses that in later generations our strength is weakened, and we are no longer fit to have extra fasts, rather, we redeem our fasts with Tzedaka.

The Rebbe many times, in Yechidus and letters, and culminating with the revolutionary Mamor תשמ"ו מרגלא בפומי-ה דרבא, תשמ"ו discouraged extra fasts and encouraged serving Hashem VIA a healthy body and with Simcha.

Here is a sampling of stories on the theme.

A Chasid fast from Shabbos to Shabbos!

R. Asher (Grossman) Nikolayever once undertook too fast for a whole week, without interruption - but how can one undertake such a thing without the permission of one's Rebbe? So, he set out to Lubavitch to visit the Rebbe (Rashab]. In the meantime, he began to fast, thinking as follows: If the Rebbe gives his consent, this will be counted as fasting; if not, it will just be dieting...

He set out to Lubavitch on Tuesday, and when he was admitted for yechidus on Thursday, the Rebbe told him: "I would not have agreed to this, because something can be called fasting only if (as a result) one studies and davens (as one ought to). If not, it's just not eating. However, since it's already Thursday, you should complete your fast."

Until Shabbos, the Rebbe periodically sent people to visit Reb Asher and see if he was okay. On Friday, when evening came, the Rebbe sent some refreshments, but R. Asher declined because he held that the time [when it was imperative for him to eat] had not yet arrived - until the Rebbe himself visited him and ate something, and then R. Asher ate, too. Afterward, the Rebbe requested the people around Reb Asher ensure he ate adequately.

(Sichas Leil Simchas Torah, 5699)

Take care of yourself

Harav Zelig Slonim, from Yerushalayim, had a Yechidus with the Rebbe around Yud Shevat, 5729 (1969). The Rebbe remarked to Rabbi Slonim that he did not look healthy and fit "The way you look (fasting and Sigufim) it is as if the Iggeres Hateshuva had not been recently republished!" (In early 5729 the Rebbe published the Iggeres HaTeshuva of Tanya as a separate booklet and encouraged all to learn it.) The Rebbe concluded by encouraging Rabbi Slonim to take care of his health

(מפי השמועה)

No Koach and no money? A simple solution

When Reb Shmuel Gronem, Mashpia in Lubavitch, would teach Iggeres HaTeshuva he would ask the students the following:

The AR writes that if your body is weak and you can't fast then you should redeem your sins by giving a lot of Tzedakah. What happens, however, if you're not healthy enough to fast, and don't have the resources to give Tzedaka. He would pause and then answer: *אז מען איז קרייניק, און מען* If you're sick and weak, and you don't have any money then don't sin!

(מפי השמועה)

Changing direction mid-flight!

When I traveled a second time to the former Soviet Union, after Simchat Torah 5789 (1987), I spent a few days in Odesa. In the evenings I would meet with community members, and during the day I was learning with a single individual, whose name was Zev.

Zev was basically self-taught, had limited contact with the outside world, and became involved with Yideshkeit and Chassidus, just through books that he read and rare visitors.

I would bring along food from the hotel and eat it with whomever I was learning with. After about an hour of learning, I placed a snack on the table, but Zev was not eating. In the

afternoon Zev would not eat again. I asked Zev why, after we had been sitting for hours, he was not eating. He shared that he was observing a series of fasts. We discussed what the Baal Shem Tov taught us about how to serve Hashem with the body, and the Rebbe's emphasis, that we should serve Hashem with joy and not through fasting. At some point, Zev 'got' the Rebbe's message, jumped up, walked quickly to the counter, took an apple made a Bracha, and ate it on the spot!

One moment, he was fasting, because he thought it was the right thing to do. A moment later, when he heard that the Rebbe taught this is not our way, that was it, his fasts were over...
