

# SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

*Vayera, Sicha 3*

### The Context:

The Torah relates that Avraham and Sarah caused the name of G-d to be known throughout the world because of their legendary hospitality.

How did they accomplish this? Rashi, cites an incident from the Talmud describing the hospitality Avraham offered to wayfarers:

“After they would eat and drink, Avraham would say to them, ‘Bless the One of Whose food you have eaten. Do you think that you have eaten my food? You have eaten of the food of the One Who spoke and the world came into being!’” (Rashi on Bereishis 21:33, based on Sotah 10a)

The Midrash elaborates that if the guests did not want to thank G-d for their sustenance, Avraham would charge them an exorbitant fee and only waive it if they blessed G-d. (Bereishis Rabbah 49:4)

### The Question:

What value is there in a coerced acknowledgment of G-d? How did Avraham

make the name of G-d known to those to whom he left no other choice?

### The Explanation:

Every human being is capable of understanding and recognizing the Creator of the universe. But some people develop a strong shell of opposition to this reality as a result of their material obsessions and the indulgence of their own ego. When under pressure, this shell can begin to crack, allowing people to look outside themselves and be receptive to new truths and ideas.

This is what Avraham accomplished through his coercive pricing: By making his obdurate guests uncomfortable, Avraham shook them out of their complacency and caused them to reconsider their own perspective — and even acknowledge G-d.

This idea can be found in several other episodes of the Torah, and in the teachings of our Sages and the Chabad rebbes:

### The Spies:

When the spies brought back their scandalous report about the Land of Israel, the people lost their faith in G-d; they despaired of entering the Land, and cried that they wanted to return to Egypt. But

after Moshe related to them that G-d was angry at them and swore that they would never enter the Land, they had a change of heart. "We will readily go up to conquer the Land." (Bamidbar 14:40) What changed? G-d's anger shattered and humbled their egoistic resistance, and their true, innate faith was again revealed. (Tanya, "Likkutei Amarim," ch. 29)

### The Voice from Heaven:

The Mishnah says: "Every day, an echo resounds from Mount Horeb (Sinai) proclaiming and saying: 'Woe to the creatures who insult the Torah.' For one who does not occupy himself in Torah is considered an outcast..." (Avos 6:2)

If the intent of this Heavenly voice is to encourage the Jews to study Torah, shouldn't it convey the beauty and loftiness of Torah? Truthfully, a Jew does not need to hear about the beauty of Torah, because his soul knows this intuitively; it is only his ego that obstructs this awareness. This harsh Heavenly voice can break a person's opposition and reveal his inner desire to study Torah.

### The Ugliest Man:

The Talmud relates an incident in which Rabbi Elazar encountered "an exceedingly ugly person," and said to him: "Worthless person, how ugly is this man. Are all the people of your city as ugly as you?" The man replied, "I do not know, but you should go and say to the Craftsman Who made me: How ugly is the vessel that You made." (Taanis 20a-b)

What is the meaning of his behavior? The person in question was spiritually desensitized. By calling attention to his spiritual ugliness, Rabbi Elazar awakened

him from his stupor, causing him to recall that he was a Divine creation. Thus he replied, "go... to the Craftsman Who made me," because he now recognized his Creator.

### Can't Help:

A person once had a private audience with the Rebbe Rashab (the fifth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber) and pleaded for help in some personal matters. The Rebbe told him that he could not help him. The man left the audience and was crying in the foyer when he met the Rebbe's brother who asked him why he was crying. When he learned what had happened, the brother confronted the Rebbe and the man was readmitted. This time, the Rebbe gave him a blessing, and his needs were fulfilled.

Why did the Rebbe Rashab first reject the man, and only bless him after he had broken down in tears?

Apparently, at first, the man was unfit for the blessing. But once his exterior was broken by the Rebbe's rejection, he was transformed, and was now fit to receive the blessing.

### The Lesson:

We cannot be satisfied by teaching Jews who come to us with a desire to come close to Hashem. We have to go out into the world and find those Jews who, ostensibly, do not want to live as Jews, and we must reveal their innate passion and faith. Even if their engagement begins with social pressure, they will be transformed, and the desire to be close to Hashem will ultimately become their own desire.

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