

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 15

Vayera, Sicha 3

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

This Sicha describes a person so coarse that he is not a Keli for inspiration until he receives a Shevira, enabling him to become a Keli. The Sicha itself shares a powerful story of the Rebbe Rashab and his brother Reb Zalman Aaron.

The הוראה of the Sicha is to spread Yiddishkeit even employing, when necessary, pressure or coercion (of course in a Torah manner, pleasant and peaceful). If someone will say "what is the point of pressuring a Yid to make a Bracha or put on tefillin when he might be doing it just to get rid of the pressure?" ... A Yid, who intrinsically wants to do Mitzvos, this action reflects his true hidden desire. It could also happen that this Mitzvah, though done under pressure, will lead to Mitzvos becoming his revealed desire, until מצוה גוררת מצוה.

While you can ask any 17-year-old Lubavitcher for stories to illustrate this, I will share two that I heard firsthand....

A Late Friday Bar Mitzvah on Canal Street

This story happened in New Orleans in August 2010, Av 5770. I heard this just two days after it happened!

In downtown New Orleans there was an electronics store, owned by a Chabad Chasid who we will call Moshe. Every Friday, about 3 or 4 hours before Shabbos, Moshe would visit Yidden in the neighborhood to do Mivtzoim and then go home to get ready for Shabbos. This particular Friday, no matter how hard he tried, Moshe could not get out of the store, customers were coming in and vendors calling in with questions. Moshe, who was getting frustrated, promised himself that he will leave in five minutes, no matter what.

At that moment a couple walked in with a male child, Moshe was not paying much attention as he glanced over and saw that the man was obviously not Jewish (i.e., not a Mivtzoim client) and one of the other salespeople was taking care of him.

Moshe noticed out of the corner of his eye that the wife read from the booklet on top of the counter in perfect Hebrew, Dvar Malchut! Moshe asks her are you Jewish? And she says yes, Jewish and Israeli and this is my husband Hussam! They schmoozed for a while, and she told him that her son was fourteen.

Moshe, who instinctively felt he needs to act quickly, walks over to the son and says, "I am going to make you right here a Bar mitzvah!" How? They asked.

Moshe answered, "Bar mitzvah means becoming a Jewish adult". The main thing about a Bar mitzvah is putting on Tefillin! Moshe pulls the boy to the corner of the store, without asking too many questions and without any formalities, and begins to put on Tefillin with him. After having the boy repeat the Bracha and the Shema, word for word, he explains to the boy what it is he is saying.

As he is helping the boy take off the Tefillin, he notices that the father is extremely upset; he also notices that the boy, noticing his father is upset, also becoming upset. Moshe then turns to the mother and sees she is crying, with fresh tears flowing from her face. As Moshe walks over to the mother, she says "I have been trying for over a year now for my son to have a Bar mitzvah. My husband absolutely did not allow it, he said "we agreed to raise our child without religion", he does not believe in organized religion, and considers the Rabbi's, practicing organized Jewish faith, as corrupt and perverted. "Absolutely our child cannot have a Bar Mitzvah and I will take it as a personal affront if he does."

The mother continued: "I tried everything to convince my husband that we have a Bar Mitzvah, I even went to the Chabad Rabbi where we live. The Rabbi met with our family and tried diplomatically to convince my husband to approve. As my husband remained adamantly against the bar mitzvah, the Rabbi said he was going to wait until he comes around, as he does not want to cause a war in the family".

The mother concluded: "Now my son just had a Bar Mitzvah, my dream came true!" She profusely thanked Moshe while still sobbing. Moshe decides to do something about the mood of the father and son. As the father had just bought a camera, for a significant sum, Moshe went over to the father and gave him back a nice sum of cash, approximately half of the profit, and said "Mazal Tov, today is your sons Bar Mitzvah, you deserve a break"! After this Moshe started talking to the father and they had a lengthy positive conversation. Moshe called over the boy and gave him a watch "Mazal Tov, this is a gift for your Bar Mitzvah!"

Late on this hot and humid August Friday, right in the center of downtown New Orleans, father, mother and son were joyous he had his Bar mitzvah.

A Back Door Visit with Morris

Mendel and Yossi would go every Friday to a Toronto factory for Mivtzoim. The factory had a Jewish executive, who we will call Morris, who worked in one of the offices.

Mendel related: We would come and check in with the receptionist at the front desk. For the first few weeks Morris would come out to meet us and we would talk for a few minutes, though Morris declined our offer to put on tefillin. Then, for a few weeks, we did not get to see Morris. We realized, in fact, that when the receptionist called back to his office to share that we were there, Morris ignored us.

One week we found out there was a door in the back of the building, giving us access to the executive offices, without passing the receptionist. We entered the back of the building and found Morris' office and boy was he surprised to see us! We asked him to put on tefillin and he did, seemingly as he realized he was not getting away from us.

An interesting thing happened from that day on. He started putting on tefillin weekly during our visits. Amazingly, of all the people we would put on tefillin with, Morris became the one who allotted us the most time every week. We would schmooze about the Parsha, his family, as well as about other things. Eventually, when his child came to Bar Mitzvah age, we set him up with a Chabad House to Bar Mitzvah his son.

The weekly visits with Morris became very meaningful, and it all started from when we came in the back door...