

# SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



*Likkutei Sichos, Volume 19*

## Devarim, Sicha 5 (First Sicha of the week)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

*At the conclusion of tractate Avoda Zarah:*

*Mar Yehuda and Bati bar Tovi were sitting before the gentile king Shvor Malka. An esrog was brought to the king. He cut a piece with his knife (that had to be Kashred) ...and gave it to Bati bar Tovi. He then took the knife, thrust it into the ground ten times (to Kasher the knife), cut another piece and gave it to Mar Yehuda. "And am I not Jewish?" asked Bati bar Tovi. "I am certain that he (Mar Yehuda) is observant of Jewish law; I am not certain regarding you," the king responded.*

*The Rebbe points out that Bati ate the fruit out of respect for the king, who held sway over their wellbeing. The king knew that Mar Yehuda, however, would remain true to his values, even if it meant refusing the king. This display of Jewish pride not only earned him the king's respect but the king himself Koshered the knife, rather than delegating the task.*

*When a Jew remains true to Yiras Shamayim and Yiddishkeit, this impresses a non-Jew to the extent that he will endeavor to help the Jew perform a mitzvah or even a Hiddur mitzvah!*

### Non-Jews respect Jews when...

Non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism. And non-Jews are embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed by Judaism.

*(Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, A"H, would frequently share this thought. At the 2010 kinus he attributed this to the Rebbe's teachings).*

## A wall of pride

Tishrei holidays of 1927 the Rebbe spent with his parents as he bid them farewell, before leaving the Soviet Union, a few days after Simchat Torah.

After Yom Tov, the Rebbe left for Leningrad, and from there he continued to Riga. His mother, Rebbetzin Chana, accompanied him as far as Leningrad.

Years later, she would recall this journey: "We were traveling in a stifling, crowded train, surrounded by peasants, soldiers, and workers. At that time, the anti-Semitism was so great that a Jew was not safe in a train carriage, even if he did nothing to draw attention to his Jewishness."

"Nevertheless, the Rebbe's mother continued, when it was time for the morning prayer, my son rose, took out his tefillin, and put them on. I was seized by fear. I was afraid that he would be beaten or, even worse, thrown off the moving train. Yet an amazing thing happened: several people, non-Jews, got up and formed a circle around my son. They stood guard over him until he completed the prayer and removed his tefillin. This was a true miracle!

*(As told by Rebbetzin Chana to Nissan Gordon.)*

## Where is your Yarmulke?

At the end of his second year in law school, Baruch Cohen was invited to an interview for a job with a Wall Street law firm. This was a total surprise, as he had not applied for a position with the "white shoe" firm, which normally courted straight-A, Ivy League waspy students. Baruch, in contrast, attended a mid-level law school, was obviously Jewish, and did not have a perfect GPA. The dean told him, "I have no idea why you got this opportunity, but I suggest you not wear your yarmulke to the interview. And make sure those white strings are not coming out of your belt."

Coming from a lengthy line of orthodox rabbis and committed to his Judaism, Baruch was torn. "I grew up in a tough Far Rockaway neighborhood," he recalls. "Where I come from, anyone telling me to take off my kippah was usually angling for a fight." He asked advice from rabbis and orthodox attorneys he knew: wear the kippah for the interview or not? Everyone advised he remove it for this potentially career-making opportunity.

With his kippah in his pocket, Baruch walked into the interview feeling as if he were shirtless. He was stunned to see that the attorney sitting there wore a huge velvet yarmulke and tzitzit. His first question to Baruch was, "Where's your yarmulke?"

Too shocked to speak, Baruch learned that this attorney had seen him clerking in court, noticed his kippah and decided to offer him an interview. As the young law student stood there

defenseless, the elder man laced into him. "This is a firm of leaders, not followers." The interview ended before it began.

Baruch concludes that though he was humiliated and disappointed, this event was a defining moment, sharpening Baruch Cohen's commitment to never apologize for who he was.

*(From Baruch Cohen's Facebook page and from Aish.com)*

### **Batter up. Not!**

A boy from the Chabad community in Arizona made the bold move of walking off the baseball diamond when an umpire called foul on his religious garment, and the solidarity shown by his teammates helped convince the ump to reverse his decision, a New York Jewish website reported this weekend.

Rabbi Mendy Lipskier related that his son Yossi, age nine, was not only the only Jewish boy on the team but also in the entire league. The trouble started during a recent game when his son Yossi came up to take his turn at bat.

"The umpire happened to notice that Yossi wears two uniforms, his team uniform, and also the fringe undergarment uniform of every male Jew – Tzitzit," continued Lipskier. "And then, for the first time, the umpire insisted that Yossi remove his Tzitzit in that it could produce some type of 'interference or unfair advantage.'"

Yossi explained to the umpire that he was wearing a religious uniform and that he had never had an issue with this previously.

When the umpire stood his ground, Yossi walked off the field. His teammates then "volunteered to walk off the field and forfeit the game" in support of Yossi!

The show of solidarity led the coaches and umpire to discuss the situation, after which the umpire rescinded his previous order and let Yossi resume his at-bat.

*(From Haaretz website, June 2, 2014)*

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