

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 18

Pinchas, Yud-Beis Yud-Gimmel Tammuz (First Sicha of the week)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

In the Sicha the Rebbe compares the Mesiras Nefesh of Pinchas, Yitzchak Avinu at the Akeida, and the Fridiker Rebbe. In each of these cases, the sacrifice transcended all calculations and strategies. They were ready to sacrifice their Neshama and spiritual aspirations to fulfill Hashem's desire.

In footnote 26 the Rebbe references the many stories of the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid and their students, where they sacrificed their Olam Haba for the sake of helping another Yid or to do a mitzvah.

The ultimate sacrifice!

One year there was not a single Esrog in Berdichev and this greatly worried Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, giving him no rest. Reb Levi Yitzchak instructed messengers to fan out and search the roads for any traveler who might be carrying the coveted yellow fruit.

One of the messengers approached a traveler and asked him whether he was carrying an etrog. The man said yes. However, the traveler explained to the messenger that he needed to continue onward to his destination. He did not relent even when the messenger pleaded with him to spend Sukkot in Berdichev to allow Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and his community to fulfill one of the holiday's vital mitzvahs. After all, the traveler said, he was just returning from a long journey and had plans to be home by the holiday, and he did not desire to spend it in Berdichev.

Meanwhile, word of the traveler's etrog quickly reached Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. Not waiting for the etrog to arrive at his doorstep, the rabbi quickly made his way to the traveler. Rabbi Levi

Yitzchak began to lay his community's predicament before the traveler, but the latter refused to hear of it until Rabbi Levi Yitzchak offered the stranger a portion of his own reward in the World to Come.

Hearing this, the traveler agreed. He arrived at a local inn in Berditchev, intending to stay there for Sukkot. The townspeople of Berditchev, triumphant about the etrog, were ecstatic.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak sent a messenger hastily to inform the innkeeper of the rabbi's instructions: the man with the etrog was not to be given entry to the inn's sukkah. The same instructions were disseminated throughout the town: all householders were to refuse the man with the etrog entry into their sukkahs.

The traveler, oblivious to this instruction, returned from the synagogue and appeared at the entrance of the inn's sukkah, ready to chant Kiddush and settle down for the festive meal. But the innkeeper, as per Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's request, barred the traveler from even setting foot inside the hut. The traveler began to shout at the innkeeper, who stood his ground, ignoring the man's protests. Realizing that his screaming was useless, the traveler hopped over to the neighbor and asked him if he could celebrate the holiday night inside his sukkah. To the traveler's bewilderment, the neighbor said no. And when he continued to walk about the town looking for a place to make Kiddush, the answer was always no. The traveler had a growing suspicion that some sort of concerted effort was afoot. How could everyone refuse him use of their sukkah?

And so, the traveler decided to ask some of the residents, pestering them until they revealed the instruction from Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. Armed with this information, the traveler ran to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, forcibly voicing his thoughts:

"Is this how you repay me?"

But Rabbi Levi Yitzchak interjected, saying, "Here's the deal. If you disregard my earlier promise of sharing my portion of the World to Come with you, I will allow you to enter my sukkah.

The traveler stood rooted to his spot, a battle waging inside of him. But in the end, the choice was obvious. As much as he wanted to delight in the rewards of the World to Come, his desire to observe the significant mitzvah of sitting inside the sukkah was more important.

"Fine," the traveler acquiesced.

The following day, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak invited the traveler, along with other Jews of Berditchev, for the festive meal in his sukkah. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak then turned to the traveler and remarked:

"Now I once again assure you that you will indeed have a part of my reward in the World to Come. When I first made the promise to you, you did not deserve it. Now that you were willing

to sacrifice it for the opportunity of doing a mitzvah, you are indeed deserving of that lofty reward.”

(Adapted from Shemuot Vesippurim Vol. 1, page 248.)

The people come before Olam Haba!

When the Tzemach Tzedek returned from the Rabbinical Conference of 5603 (1843), the chassidim spoke in awe of his steadfast mesiras nefesh. How even after being arrested twenty-two times in a period of a few months, he wasn't intimidated and didn't cave into the pressure and threats of the government of being charged with treason.

The Rebbe heard this and said that was not mesiras nefesh as I did it to protect the Torah. Reb Boruch of Mezibuzh had real mesiras nefesh. The Rebbe then proceeded to relate the following story:

There was a chossid of Reb Boruch who sold wine. He borrowed money and bought a few barrels of wine, loaded them up on his wagon, and went from village to village selling smaller amounts to each customer. After selling what he had, he returned home, paid off his creditors, paid his family's debts and once again bought on credit and some loans.

On a Thursday night as he was saying krias shema before going to sleep, he contemplated his actions of the day (and of the last few weeks) and felt that his actions and conduct are not the way they should be for a Jew and especially a chossid of the great tzaddik Reb Boruch.

Fortunately, as he was close to Mezibuzh he decided to spend the Shabbos by his Rebbe. Hopefully he will be allowed to ask the tzaddik how he can correct his flaws. He received permission from the innkeeper to leave his wagon in the stable over Shabbos, and off he went to his Rebbe.

Friday night the chassidim would come to the Rebbe's tish to hear his explanations or thoughts on some aspects of the weekly parsha and be inspired. This week, however, in front of everyone, Reb Boruch berated the chossid for leaving his wagon in the inn without proper supervision. What were you thinking, asked Reb Boruch.

The chossid was humiliated, but accepted it, thinking, most probably, the Rebbe did this to atone for my flaws.

However, during the meal on Shabbos day and during the third meal late Shabbos afternoon as well, the Tzaddik Reb Boruch continued to berate and embarrass this chossid.

It came to a point that another guest who happened to be related to the Rebbe couldn't contain himself anymore and said to Reb Boruch, my dear mechutan our sages tell us whoever shames a person in public has no portion in the world to come, and you did so on three occasions.

Reb Boruch replied, Mechutan, don't you think that I am aware of that statement, but what was I to do?

This chossid in his sincerity came to seek guidance and left his wagon with barrels of wine in the barn of the inn in a nearby village. The inn has many customers and some of them noticed that this wagon was left unattended and were discussing among themselves that it is a golden opportunity to enjoy the wine, after all it is on the house.

If that had happened, this chossid would have been financially ruined. He would not be able to pay off his debts, the wholesalers wouldn't trust him anymore, and he would lose his source of income.

So, I decided to humiliate and indeed mortify him. The anguish that he received from this equaled the anguish he would have experienced had his wine been enjoyed by those customers in the inn and been left without a source of income. By doing this heaven decided that he should not have additional anguish caused by the other people in the inn where he left the barrels alone.

I am willing to forgo and lose my share in the world to come if that prevents a single Jew from losing his livelihood.

That concluded the Tzemach Tzedek is mesiras nefesh, but what I did was for the entire Jewish nation as well as for the honor of the Torah, and that is something anyone would have done, no matter the price he would have to pay.

(As told by Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon in the name of Rabbi Nissen Mangel)

Until the last drop of blood!

Sichas 13 Tammuz, 5702 (1942):

Fifteen years ago, G d Himself sanctified His own Name.¹ That was a victory of the light of the Torah over the tormentors of the Torah and over the tormentors of the Jewish people. Today, too, we need a victory of the light of the Torah over the tormentors of the Torah.

I have often wanted to recount those events in detail, but the appropriate opportunity did not present itself. Today, since they are connected to today's date, we will relay part of

On Yud-Beis Tammuz, 5679 (1919), my father delivered a maamar of Chassidus for me alone. (On Yud-Beis Tammuz every year my father would deliver a maamar of Chassidus just for me, apart from the maamar that he would deliver publicly on Shabbos.) Yud-Beis Tammuz was my day, my Yom-Tov. In addition to the maamar he would relate narratives and expound various subjects. Stories of tzaddikim, especially when related by a tzaddik, are actual Torah.

My father's maamar on that occasion focused on mesirus nefesh, self-sacrifice... (In the Sichra the FR shares the Nekuda of the Mamor).

That was the last Yud-Beis-Tammuz-maamar that I heard from my father in This World. Over the years, he had often spoken to me about mesirus nefesh for the Torah, and a few days before his passing he told me that for the sake of the Torah one should give his life – not potentially, but, and he repeated this during his last moments in This World.

After his passing⁵ came the decrees against the Torah and the chadarim.⁶ Accordingly, in 5682 (1922), nine temimim, alumni of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah, met in Moscow. I was the tenth person. We swore that we would be prepared to sacrifice our lives, to the last drop of blood, for the cause of the Torah. Everyone undertook responsibility for a particular region. That commitment made a great impact on the entire country. Hundreds of Talmud Torah schools and chadarim were established – but not like here in America, where the function of a Talmud Torah school is to teach a child how to say a blessing when called to the Reading of the Torah, or how to say Kaddish. Over there, there was earnest learning.

Then came the persecution by the Yevseksia. Classes had to be held in hiding, in cellars – not cellars as in America, but simply dungeons dug in the ground. They were cold, without fire, without windows, and that is where children were taught for a few hours every day. Even deep underground people were afraid, because if they were caught, the teachers were cruelly tortured and exiled [to Siberia], the children were tormented, and some people were shot – all at the lawless whim of the authorities. To protect the pupils against sudden discovery, their mothers would walk about in the streets near those dungeons as if they were peddling beans so that in case of need they could give due warning.

Since some of the children fell ill because of the conditions in the cellars, some householders objected to the system. So, being then in Leningrad, I called together some of them and said:

Every part of the divine service in the Beis HaMikdash was carried out by kohanim and levi'im. The slaughtering of a sacrifice could be done by someone else, but every main avodah was done by a kohen. One solitary avodah was done on Yom Kippur by someone who was not a kohen – namely, leading the scapegoat to Azazel. That task had to be done by “a prepared person,”⁸ by someone who was prepared to do it. Even though we learn that this person would not survive

that year,9 people vied for that avodah – because it was an avodah of the Beis HaMikdash. How much more so, when we are speaking of the avodah for the Torah, which gives life, should there be people ready to do this work.

These words made such an impact that many chassidim risked their lives for the sake of maintaining Torah classes, and hundreds of chadarim were established. Indeed, at the time of my arrest in 1927, I derived satisfaction from the certainty that this would result in the establishment of hundreds of new chadarim...

(See the continuation of the Sicha as to the application for us in America. The Rebbe, in the Sichos, also applied the message of this story to our generation. See for example Sichas 13 Tammuz 5732)
