

SICHA STORY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15 Noach, Sicha Daled

Rabbi Yossi Nemes

The Sicha discussed the importance of influencing non-Jews to keep the Sheva Mitzvos specifically as obligations from Sinai. For a non-Jew, whose intellectual soul is defined by his Metzuius, to reach transcendence, he needs the influence of a Jew, whose intellectual soul is an expression of his G-dly soul.

We present here a well-known story, connected to the theme, that the Rebbe shared at a Farbrengen. As an introduction we share an interesting 'custom' of the Baal Shem Tov.

You're Fired!

It is well-known that the Baal Shem Tov would not ride with a non-Jewish wagon driver who did not perform a gesture of faith and prayer, whenever his wagon passed a church.

David Chase influences the non-Jewish captain of his Yacht, to pray to Hashem.

From Chabad.org:

Through the Rebbe's encouragement, Chase incorporated many Jewish observances into his daily life, including putting on tefillin, which the Rebbe requested that he do as a "gift" for the Rebbe's 79th birthday in 1981.

Chase maintained the practice of praying in tallit and tefillin daily—even aboard airplanes and his personal yacht. In following the Talmudic dictum to face towards Jerusalem while praying, Chase regularly asked his captain, a non-Jew named Nick Winters, of the ship's position and projected route. One Sunday, while docked at Block Island, Winters asked Chase if he could leave the ship to attend church. "You pray to your G-d every morning," he said, "and you're making me feel guilty that I don't follow my faith."

Chase shared the incident with the Rebbe. At a subsequent public talk, the Rebbe told the story, demonstrating how a Jew who is proud and comfortable in his observance can influence all those around him—Jews and non-Jews alike.

From the Farbrengen of Nissan 11, 5743:

The story concerns a Jew, blessed by G-d with great wealth, who owns a yacht. He occasionally spends his vacation time on his yacht, and employs a captain to sail the yacht. When the time for prayer arrived, he knew that during Shemoneh Esreh one must face toward Yerushalayim — toward the east. He did not know in which direction was east on the yacht, and, not being ashamed of his Judaism, he would ask his non-Jewish captain where east was.

The first time this happened, the captain paid no special attention, thinking it was a chance occurrence. When it happened a few times, the captain asked him: “You are not the captain, not even a sailor. Why, then, are you so interested in knowing in which direction is east?”

Because the Jew was not ashamed of his Judaism, he explained the reason to the captain: He wants to pray to G-d. Since prayers pass through the site of the Bais Hamikdosh in Yerushalayim, he must face in that direction — which in that part of the world is in the east direction. That’s why he needs to know where east is.

The captain was very excited and impressed, and said: “If you, a successful man, who employs others (including the captain), consider it proper to bond yourself with G-d three times a day through prayer, and are ready to interrupt your activities to face east to pray properly — I too shall begin to think of G-d!”

I do not know if the captain also said he would pray. But even if not, the very thinking of G-d serves as prayer. Moreover, since “one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah,” it is certain that the captain, remembering G-d, would also have been influenced not to do anything that is contrary to righteousness and justice.

This story teaches that every Jew can influence non-Jews to observe the Seven Noachide Laws — to the extent, as seen in this story, that when a Jew conducts himself properly, his influence is automatically felt. This Jew did not intend to fulfill the Rambam’s ruling to influence non-Jews. He merely was steadfast in his Judaism — and this conduct resulted in a positive change in a non-Jew’s life.