

# SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



*Likkutei Sichos, Volume 21*

## Parshas Zachor (*First Sicha of the week*)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

*The Sicha shares that the Fridiker Rebbe stole from his time of learning and personal Avoda for Askanus and to save others. This is also what he expected from his Chasidim, to be involved in Hafatza of Torah and Yideshkeit, including spending time on support and logistics for teaching others Torah, even though they would have to forgo some of their own learning and Avoda.*

*The Sicha also mentions, in section 9, from the Baal Shem Tov, that נשיאי ישראל have a special Bracha that their own Avodah should not lack at all, ואדרבה.*

### **Taking responsibility for the Jewish people!**

Reb Mendel Futerfas relates that his Mashpia Reb Yechezkel "Chatche" Feigen was a strong person who could handle even difficult situations.

Reb Mendel added that Reb Chatche cried only twice. Once after he was appointed as a Mazkir of the Fridiker Rebbe, at a time they were coordinating underground activities across the U.S.S.R. They arranged for Shuls, Cheders, Mikvahs, and other Jewish institutions and directed the flow of selfless Chasidim who went to replace those who were arrested by the KGB or worse.

As can be imagined, this was non-stop, high-stress work that involved life and death and the emotional pressure was enormous. But for Reb Chatche, the real sacrifice was that, due to the breakneck pace at which the work unfolded and progressed, he had precious little time during the day to learn Torah or to pray.

Reb Chatche was accustomed - in the good days - to spending many hours a day immersed in the world of Torah and prayer and he drew his strength and energy from it. The lack of meditative prayer was really bothering him. Girding his loins, he requested from the Rebbe that he be granted one extra half hour a day for his prayers. The Rebbe listened to him, reflected for a few moments, and began a conversation about the pressing needs of the day: the schools, the Mikvahs, and the Shuls of the Jewish communities across Russia. Realizing that the answer was "no", Reb Chatche began crying. A grown man, sobbing over his desire to spend a half hour each day in his spiritual pursuits.

The Rebbe cried along with him, and they stood there like that, weeping together. And then the Rebbe said, "Chatche, if we do what we want to do, instead of what we need to do, how will the work ever get done? What will happen to Russian Jewry?" And back to work, they went.

### The wish of a Rebbe!

*Sichas Yud Tes Kislev, 5714:*

...there are also changes in the leadership of the Rabeim, from generation to generation – as the Avoda changes and therefore the directives of the Rebbe of each generation is unique.

We find this in what we are told each Rebbe wished for himself. There were differences in regard to this, according to the type of Avoda that was needed for that generation.

For example, the Mittlerer Rebbe wished that when two of his chassidim meet, their [everyday] discussion should be about yichuda ilaah and yichuda tataah, [two deep concepts that are discussed at length in Chassidus].”

The Frierdiker Rebbe, however, wished for himself that every Chasid, even a young Chasid, become an "Askan", to affect his environment - in regard to observing Shabbat or regarding studying Aleph Beit, etc.

Both the MR and the FR expected these from all of their Chasidim. In the case of the Frierdiker Rebbe he wanted his Chasidim not only to learn with others deep matters of Torah but also when it is necessary to dedicate themselves to share with others the basic aspects of Yiddishkeit.

## Transforming a Rosh Yeshiva into a Rebbe!

One of the great thinkers of Judaism in the last century was the Rosh Yeshiva of RIETS and Chief Rabbi of Boston, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993). Rabbi Soloveitchik, who descended from an extremely prominent rabbinic family, was himself a master of Talmud, Halacha, Bible, and philosophy and shared a lifelong friendship with the Rebbe, that began as fellow students in Berlin in the late 1920s. In 1980, on a memorable and historic occasion, Rabbi Soloveitchik attended a farbrengen marking the 30th anniversary of the Rebbe's leadership.

The day after the Farbrengen, Rabbi Soloveitchik was visited by Rabbi Avrohom Yitzchak Shemtov, Sheyichye, and was asked to share his impressions and feelings of the farbrengen on the night before. Rabbi Soloveitchik responded with a scene from this week's Parsha, Ki Sisa:

The Jews had sinned. They had built and worshipped a golden calf, raw idolatry, merely weeks after the greatest divine revelation of all time. Moshe had descended from Mount Sinai, broken the tablets, and then re-ascended the mountain, beseeching G-d on behalf of the nation for forgiveness and absolution. Finally, after eighty days (!) of intense supplication, on what thereafter became the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, G-d forgives the people. Moshe then returns with the second set of tablets.

Now the Torah tells us (Shemos 34:29-33): *It came to pass, Moshe descended from Mount Sinai, and the two tablets of the testimony were in his hands....Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while Hashem had spoken with him. Aaron and all the children of Israel saw that the skin of Moshe's face had become radiant! And they were afraid to come near him. But Moshe called to them, and Aaron and all the princes of the community returned to him, and then Moses would speak to them... When Moses had finished speaking with them, he placed a covering over his face...*

Why is it -- Rabbi Soloveitchik asked -- that only now, after receiving the second tablets, did Moshe's face radiate? What did the second tablet possess that created this glow, and why didn't the first set of Tablets achieve the same result?

When Moshe received the first tablets, following forty days and forty nights on the mountain, studying the entire Torah from the "mouth" of Hashem -- he was a teacher, the greatest teacher of all times, absorbing wisdom from G-d himself, to communicate it to the Jewish people and through them to the world. He was the educator par excellence -- the ultimate source of direction and instruction; he could answer any

question and solve any dilemma. This was his state following the first forty days and nights.

Then Moshe came down and smashed the first Tablets of Stone when he saw the perversion of Israel as they danced around the golden calf. He went back up to the mountain and spent eighty days and nights on the mountain praying for Israel's exoneration, beseeching G-d for forgiveness, "fighting" with G-d for his people and protesting G-d's decision to alienate them. He laid his life on the line for his nation. For eighty days straight, he pleaded and cajoled to cause forgiveness to those who might deserve none... The prayers of Moshe on that lonely mountaintop elicited our most powerful and dramatic liturgy, our lifeline when all else fails, known as the 13 attributes of compassion.

Rabbi Soloveitchik continued: During the first forty days on Mt. Sinai, Moshe was a Rosh Yeshiva; during the following eighty days he was transformed into a Rebbe. A Rosh Yeshiva is a teacher, an instructor, a transmitter of wisdom and knowledge; a Rebbe is the unconditional lover of all Jews, the person who suspends his entire self for his people, the individual who will quarrel with G-d Himself for his nation. The bond between a Rebbe and his people transcends logic, transcends decorum, transcends even the laws of the Torah itself. Those laws have been broken, but the connection has not been severed.

So now Moshe's face begins to shine. This is the sort of light reserved not for the great genius of the generation, but rather for the person who sacrifices himself for the Jewish people. It is the light reserved for the Rebbe of a generation.

Rabbi Soloveitchik concluded:

I knew the Rebbe in Berlin, as a Torah scholar, an extraordinary genius. But now – sitting at the farbrengen in tribute to the 30th anniversary of his leadership – I observed that glow... the glow that spread over Moshe's face when he descended with the second tablets...

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