

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 15

Miketz, Sicha 3 (*First Sicha of the week*)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

The Sicha describes our identity, as Jews, is the realm of Kedusha. Mundaneness and materialism are completely foreign to us. Even as we are commanded to involve ourselves in the mundane during Chol, we remain above physicality and it is this very aloofness that enables us to sanctify and elevate the mundane, rather than be dragged down by it.

What is our protective Fur coat?

A story about the Previous Rebbe printed in Sefer HaMaamarim 5701, p. 163:

In the days of Czarist Russia, the head of State for many years was a man called Stolypin, a renowned anti-Semite who made many decrees against the Jews. Once, the Rebbe Rashab heard about one of the decrees that Stolypin was about to make and he instructed his son, Reb Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn (the Previous Rebbe), to try to nullify the decree. The Rebbe traveled immediately to Petersburg, the capital, to discuss the matter with other communal workers. When all other avenues failed, the Rebbe decided to visit the minister Pobiedonostzev who was highly regarded by Stolypin. Although the minister was also anti-Semitic, he was deeply religious and therefore respected ministers of other religions.

After significant efforts, the minister agreed to meet the Rebbe; however, the meeting was set for a Friday night, and the minister lived a fair distance from the city. The Rebbe decided that the best course of action would be to travel to the minister's town and spend Shabbos there.

In those days, the environs of Petersburg were out of bounds for Jewish dwelling, and although in Petersburg itself there lived a few Jewish merchants, doctors, etc., outside the city there lived no Jews. Since there were no Jewish families with whom to stay for Shabbos, and it was impossible to stay in the street because of the freezing conditions, the Rebbe was forced to stay

at an inn for Shabbos. He waited at the inn until the meeting, and after the meeting he remained at the inn for the duration of Shabbos.

One could easily imagine how the Rebbe felt staying at the inn among drunken peasants who were virulently anti-Semitic; how much more so since it was doubtful if his mission would be successful. If he had made a “calculation,” he could have reasoned that he was not necessarily obligated to go and spend Shabbos among drunken peasants and put his life in danger on a doubtful mission. However, since the matter affected the Rebbe so deeply, he made no calculations and risked his life to save his people.

The Rebbe related this same story (Yud Shevat, 5741 and other occasions) on another occasion and added that when the Previous Rebbe told the story he said that since the weather was very cold, he put on a fur coat, something that was unusual. The Rebbe asked, why was it necessary for the Previous Rebbe to add what kind of coat he wore? He explained that this teaches us that even if one must go to a place that is spiritually freezing to save another Jew, one must nevertheless take great precaution that one should not be affected by the environment but should wear a spiritual “fur coat” for protection.

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Reb Sholom Ber Lipskar, Sheyichye, asked the Rebbe what are the special protective garments a Shliach should wear? The Rebbe answered: לבושים שמבדילים בינו ובין העולם “Garments that separate between the Shliach and the world around him.”

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“Gevald, Reb Shmuel Michel, what are you focused on?!”

The Freidiker Rebbe related that the Chosid Reb Shmuel Michal Treinin, from Petersburg, was put-together and had a serious disposition. As a result, he would always ensure that all his clothing was perfectly buttoned.

Reb Michoel “Der Alter” Bliner once traveled to Petersburg to lobby for a deferral on behalf of a bochur who was conscripted to the Russian army, so that the bochur would be able to learn instead. As a polished and well-connected activist, Reb Shmuel Michel accompanied him to his meeting with an official who held sway in this matter.

Their route led them down Petersburg’s main thoroughfare, and Reb Michoel’s appearance in Petersburg was the same as in Lubavitch—he had just completed one of the preparations for davening mentioned in Shulchan Aruch, and some of his buttons were undone. Reb Shmuel Michel turned to him and—trying to maintain the other’s dignity—said, “Reb Michoel, we’re

going down the main road—Nevsky Prospect—perhaps you should button your clothing.” Reb Michoel turned his gaze to him and said, געוואלד ר' שמואל מיכל איו וואס איר ליגט, “Gevald, Reb Shmuel Michel, what are you focused on?!”

(Sichas 13 Tammuz, 5715)
