

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 24

Ki Tetze, Sicha 1 (Second Sicha of the week)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

The Rebbe urges all Jews to study Pnimityus HaTorah as the concealed secrets of Torah can activate the concealed, intrinsic powers of the Neshama, which totally transcend sin. Here are three stories connected to the theme.

Tanya connects us to the concealed element of the Neshama

Reb Meir Plotkin Related:

While I was still a student at Torah Vadas, I joined a small group of students in a nearby synagogue for a class on Chassidic teachings. The Chasid who would teach us, also encouraged us students to take on a daily recitation of Chitas, Now, I had no issue with Chumash, as I had studied it before, and Tehillim was easy to read. But Tanya was new to me. I found it difficult to understand, and I balked at it.

I knew that the Rebbe encouraged this practice, but I asked myself: “When the Rebbe says to recite Chitas, does he really mean me? Shouldn’t I first learn more and begin to study Tanya once I can better understand it?”

I wrote about all this to the Rebbe, and in reply, I received a long letter in Yiddish, dated the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Elul, 5717.

“Certainly, you know that there is the revealed element of the Torah and the concealed element of the Torah, which is also called the inner dimension of the Torah,” the Rebbe began. “In the words of the Zohar, they are called the body of the Torah and the soul of the Torah...”

This, the Rebbe wrote, is like the make-up of every person, who has a body and soul and, even within the soul, there is a revealed element and a concealed element. We can see their effect explicitly from the ideas that move us very deeply – the concepts which we delve into with fiery enthusiasm – and those that we would prefer to get over with.

The Rebbe continued: Since we want G-d's blessings in all our daily personal matters, and in order to receive His blessings, the Torah states [that G-d promised them] "if you follow My statutes," which, Rashi explains, refers to Torah study ... Thus, we must learn a minimum of both the revealed element of the Torah as well as its concealed element; Torah's inner dimension ...

He then got to the crux of the matter: "The revealed element of Torah is the Chumash; and the concealed element – this is the Tanya."

The Rebbe explained that I should not feel discouraged if I did not fully comprehend every statement of the Tanya, because just as a child, who is a beginner, studies Chumash differently from the way a great scholar studies, the same applies to Tanya....

But he also admonished me: The main thing that every yeshivah student needs to know is that he must learn diligently and persistently, and ... even if something is not entirely clear to him, he must still do it and, with time, if he applies himself, that which he does not understand will become understood.

That letter had a significant impact on me. From then on, I made sure to recite Chitas every day, including Tanya.

(From Here's My Story by JEM)

A Chasidische Melamed sets a child up for life!

Reb Levi Yitzchak Ginsberg, A"H, related:

Reb Mendel Futerfas and his closest friend, Reb Abba Pilskin, grew up in Charkiv. The teacher who taught them when they were children was not a Chabad Chasid. Though he was G-d-fearing, a good person, and a good teacher and indebted to him for what they learned, still, they felt they were playing catch up, because certain foundations that one can only get through Chasidische Melamed.

Reb Mendel also related that Reb Itche Masmid did not learn by Chassidic teachers and after he took some maskhe, Reb Itche would say that Chaza"l tell us that the Nachash effected Chava with Zuhama - spiritual murkiness and impurity. I absorbed this Zuhama as a child in Cheider and am trying, until today, to overcome it!

The time has come for you to begin studying Chassidus!

Reb Yoel Kahan related:

I gave a Tanya Shiur in a litvishe Yeshiva. A Talmid at the Yeshiva, a brilliant young man, would often ask Reb Yoel questions regarding a sugya in Gemara. Although Reb Yoel tried to convince him to attend the shiur, he refused.

One day, this bochur asked me if an audience with the Rebbe could be arranged for him. Reb Yoel agreed; he was certain that after yechidus, he would be willing to study Chassidus.

The bochur wanted to see the Rebbe urgently, but appointments for yechidus had to be arranged months in advance. Nevertheless, Reb Yoel prevailed upon Rabbi Chodakov, the Rebbe's personal secretary, to allot one minute of the Rebbe's time at midnight the following Monday.

When I told him that he has a yechidus, but only for a minute, the bochur replied that a minute would be sufficient. Shortly before midnight that Sunday, he arrived to see the Rebbe. I was waiting for him and advised him of the procedure for yechidus. Shortly afterwards, he entered yechidus.

The minute passed... and so did five minutes... ten minutes....

After an hour, the talmid emerged, still deep in thought. Despite my request for an explanation of what had transpired, he offered a polite but brief good-bye and headed back to Lakewood.

In the subsequent weeks, I tried to engage him in conversation, but he was avoiding me. Understanding that this talmid no longer desired my company I turned my attention to the other students.

Years passed. One day, while I was walking down the street, I heard a car beeping and someone calling his name. I looked around but saw no one I recognized. The driver was obviously trying to get my attention, but I could not understand why. And how did the driver know my name?

The stranger had long curly hair, and if he was wearing a yarmulke, it was not obvious. How did he know who I was? And what did he want?

"Do you remember me, Reb Yoel?" the driver asked. "No," I confessed. "From Lakewood ... years ago. My name is We used to talk. You arranged for me to come to the Rebbe." I then remembered.

"Can we arrange a time to study Chassidus?" the driver asked, and of course agreed.

After a few weeks of learning I said "There is something that has been puzzling me, I am not asking you about what happened between Lakewood and the present time, but I am still

curious about that yechidus years back. What happened? And why didn't you want to speak to me afterwards?"

The man explained that he had discovered a difficulty with a particular sugya in Gemara, and that no one in Lakewood had been able to resolve the question. He had heard that the Rebbe was a Torah genius and hoped that the Rebbe would be able to help him.

"That's why," he said, "I was happy with a minute of the Rebbe's time. I figured that if he could resolve the difficulty, it would be possible in a minute, and if not, then anything longer would be a waste of time.

"It didn't even take the Rebbe a minute to resolve the question," he continued. "Within 45 seconds, I was getting ready to leave, perfectly satisfied with the answer I had been given. But the Rebbe called me by name, and asked, 'Do you study Chassidus?'

"I explained that I did not. Not that I had anything against Chassidus, but it just was not for me. I was doing well in the study of the Talmud and its commentaries and saw no need to change my pattern."

"The Rebbe explained that the study of Chassidus is important, for it leads to Yiras Shamayim, which is necessary to protect one's Torah study. 'Without the study of Chassidus,' the Rebbe explained, 'a person can lose sight of the Torah's G-dliness. And if that happens, his entire pattern of observance can erode.'

"I told the Rebbe that I was not worried. With Hashem's help, I had been successful in my studies. I was steadfast in my frumkeit, and did not understand why I should change path in midstream. And most important, learning any new discipline takes time. Why should I take time away from Nigleh and invest in a new path?

"The Rebbe continued to press his point, but I remained unmoved. I was doing well and saw no reason to change. The Rebbe paused, a faraway look in his eye. He said: 'When a yeshiva bochur does not learn Chassidus, it might happen that one day he will walk into the study hall and take offense at another student's petty remark. It will disturb him, and he will not be able to concentrate on his learning. In his idle time, he will do such and such [a mild transgression]. That will lead him further, and the next day, he will do such and such [a more severe transgression].'

"The Rebbe continued, describing a chain of ten different transgressions. 'And then,' the Rebbe went on, 'being an honest person, the student will not be able to reconcile his conduct with study at a yeshiva, and he will depart. From that point, it will not be long before he loses contact with his Jewish roots entirely.'

"I was aware that I had taken an hour of the Rebbe's time and did not see the point of going further. I told the Rebbe I would think about the matter and left.

"That is why I did not speak to you afterwards. I felt that if I was going to think honestly about the Rebbe's words, I did not want anyone pressuring me into accepting them. After thinking the matter through, I decided to stick with my original position. I was doing well in my studies. Why should I start a different course? I knew that you would not let me ignore the Rebbe's words and would bring up the matter continually. So, I continued to avoid you.

"Several months afterwards, I confronted a particularly difficult sugya in Gemara. I labored on it for days. Finally, I thought I had a resolution. Satisfied with myself, I went from the library to the study hall. There I saw two other students discussing the same passage. 'I'll try my explanation on them,' I thought.

"I did, and they did not accept it. One of them even ridiculed my whole approach. That was hard for me to accept. I had labored on the subject for days, and not only was my explanation not appreciated, but it was also rudely dismissed. I left the study hall in a huff.

"Afterwards, I could not get my mind back on my studies. I was tired after having worked so long, or maybe I was still agitated about what the other student had said, but I needed to take the night off. And that night I committed the first of the transgressions the Rebbe had mentioned.

"From that night on, my life was not the same. The pattern the Rebbe described unfolded. Each of the ten transgressions he had mentioned occurred, just as the Rebbe said they would. And then I left Yeshiva. And from there ... well, I do not have to go on. You can see for yourself.

"I had strayed so far from Yiddishkeit that although I married a Jewish girl, we did not raise our children with any knowledge of their heritage. In our house, there was neither Shabbos nor Yom Tov. We did not even go to shul on Rosh HaShanah or Yom Kippur.

"One day, my son came home from school upset. 'Daddy,' he told me, 'Somebody called me a dirty Jew. What is that? Are we Jewish? What does it mean?'

"I was at a loss to answer him. I told him that we would find time to talk about the matter and changed the subject. But it bothered me. Why couldn't I think of something to tell my son about being Jewish?

"The next day, when I went to the newsstand, I saw The Jewish Press. I thought I would be able to find something there that I could tell my son. While flipping through the pages, I saw an announcement of a farbrengen with the Rebbe. Maybe I would find an answer there. I jotted

down the address and noted the date and time. It was late, but I resolved to stop in for at least half an hour.

"I remembered 770 when I entered. I took a place in the back of the room and focused on the Rebbe. Although it had been years, I still understood Yiddish, and was able to follow what he was saying. And I was surprised. He was repeating the same concepts that he had told me at yechidus!

"He was saying how even a person who is proficient in the study of Talmud should study Chassidus, for Chassidus endows a person with the fear of G-d. 'Without the study of Chassidus,' the Rebbe explained, 'a person can lose sight of the Torah's G-dliness. And if that happens, his entire pattern of observance can be easily eroded.'

"After half an hour, I left. It was late, and I wanted to get home, but I knew I was going to come back. I kept buying The Jewish Press, waiting to see when there would be another farbrengen. When I saw the advertisement, I set aside the date.

"Again, I found a place in the crowd of chassidim. I could see the Rebbe, but I doubted he could see me. Again, his message was familiar. 'A student may protest that he is doing well in his study of Talmud. Why then should he begin the study of a new discipline?' And he continued, using the same arguments he had used years before to emphasize the contribution Chassidus can make to a person's Divine service.

"This was more than coincidence. Twice I had come to see the Rebbe, and twice he spoke about the same subject he had spoken about years before, using the same words! He was speaking to me personally, but I could not understand how he could have picked me out in the crowd, or how he could have recognized me, considering the way I now looked."

"The next time I went to a farbrengen was the last night of Pesach. This time there was no microphone, so I had to work my way in among the chassidim to hear.

"As I reached a place from which the Rebbe's voice was audible, I heard him say: 'When a yeshiva student does not learn Chassidus, it might happen that one day he will walk into the study hall and take offense at another student's petty remark. This will disturb him, and he will not be able to concentrate on his studies...'

"Although I could not imagine that the Rebbe remembered me, I made up my mind to wait until the farbrengen was over and join the line to receive kos shel berachah from the Rebbe. I resolved that if I could detect any sign of recognition in his face, I would start studying Chassidus.

“As I came before the Rebbe, his face broke out in a wide smile. He addressed me by name and said, ‘Maybe the time has come for you to begin studying Chassidus?’

“That’s why,” he concluded, looking me in the eye, “I sought you out.”
