

SICHA STORY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Volume 24

Tu B'Av, Sicha 1 (Second Sicha of the week)

- Rabbi Yossi Nemes, Metairie, Louisiana

Among the themes of this Sicha addressing the end of Maseches Tannis, about Tes Vov Av: 1. Since the primary Tisha B'av calamity, the destruction of the Mikdash, was caused by baseless hatred, then the main transformation on T'U Bav is connected to Ahavas Chinam, unwarranted love. 2. The donations of wood for the mizbeiach was a unique Tzedakah in that it befitted EVERY single Yid. 3. Love and unity are perfectly expressed by all the daughters of Yerushalayim, including the wealthy girls, dressing in borrowed white garments in order not to shame the girls who needed to borrow.

We bring here three stories from the Rebbe connected to these themes. 1. Just how far Ahavas Chinam should go. 2. The Rebbe's reaction to Tzedakah connected to every Yid. 3. The great sensitivity to someone who needs to borrow.

Who is a better candidate for your Ahavas Chinam!

Rabbi Pinchas Weberman, a distinguished Miami Rav related:

There came a time, in 1970, when I realized that we needed to rebuild the local mikvah, as it was starting to deteriorate. So, several local rabbis got together, and we raised the money to rebuild it. Some of us wanted to build the new mikvah according to a high standard, but we found out that the rabbi who oversaw the design did not follow that standard, and the result was a halachically problematic Mikva. But this rabbi refused to change the design. And he found some rabbis to approve his mikvah. We went to war over this issue – a war that took three

years, during which time I lost my naïveté... But we won this war and, in the end, the mikvah was properly built.

Some nine months after these events, I had an audience with the Rebbe. This was during the Three Weeks preceding Tisha B'Av when we mourn the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. I told the Rebbe about the "mikvah war" and about the people who were involved in it. I also told him that I would like to institute kosher slaughter in South Florida. The Rebbe agreed with this idea, and then he said to me, "Involve this rabbi who fought against you. Make him one of the supervisors. Let him help certify the meat."

I was shocked. I said, "Rebbe, after such a war, how can I involve him ... how can I trust him?"

The Rebbe's response was two-fold. He said, "...as long as you know you can trust the shochet and the butcher themselves, as long as you are satisfied with their expertise and standards..."

And then he said, "Besides, we need to remember the things that happened during these Three Weeks. These things happened because of unwarranted hatred between Jews. And how do you overcome unwarranted hatred? With unwarranted love. Now, can you find a better example of unwarranted love than involving this person who fought against you?"

(From JEM's Here's My Story)

Five cents for every Jew on the planet!

In the late 1980s noted philanthropist, Ronald Perelman Sheyichye, gave Lubavitch five cents Tzedakah for every Jew in the world! I believe this is something that he subsequently did a few times. The Rebbe was very pleased with this initiative.

In a 5748 letter to Mr. Perlman, on the theme of Hakhel, the Rebbe concluded:

...For you, esteemed friend, all the above has a special significance because you also have the enviable Zechus of having embraced in one Tzedakah deed all our people, men, women, and children.

On Shabbos Parshas Shelach, 5751, the Rebbe again referenced this unique type of Tzedakah and included it in the Muga Sicha: ...Similarly, in regard to Zevulun, it is possible to give a donation to tzedakah on behalf of someone else and there are some, blessed by Hashem with great wealth, who give donations on behalf of each member of the Jewish people, may there be more like them amongst Bnei Yisroel.

The vanishing loan

Rabbi Yitzchak Sufrin, from London, related:

When I was thirteen years of age, I was doubly orphaned. I had to move into Yeshivah full-time, as I had no other place to go.

I spent the next part of my life—from age fourteen until age seventeen—in Yeshiva's in England.

As far as I'm concerned, the big day came when, in September of 1958, I was granted permission by the Rebbe to come to America on a student visa and start studying at the Chabad-Lubavitch headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. So it was with great excitement that I arrived in New York, where I studied for the next four years.

During the time I was there, I had several opportunities to have an audience with the Rebbe—usually on my birthday. These visits were short. I wasn't a businessman; I wasn't a married man; I was a boy in yeshivah. What problems can a boy in Yeshivah have? Still, the Rebbe always imparted words of encouragement to me.

The next major milestone in my life occurred four years after my arrival in New York, in the summer of 1962, when I got engaged to my future wife, thank G-d.

I went in to see the Rebbe to ask for his advice on what I should do now: where I should settle down and how I should support my future family.

...it was ultimately settled that London would be the best place for me. And, by the way, I found out later that there was no job for me in London, but when they heard that the Rebbe had said that I should seek a job opportunity in London, they created one for me. I've been here for the past 45 years, so it was the right move.

As I was discussing my future with the Rebbe, he suddenly asked me, "Are you buying your bride a present for the wedding?"

The thought had entered my mind, to be honest. But there was a certain problem associated with this—namely, lack of money. Because of my situation, not having parents to fall back upon, and because I had not been working while studying in yeshiva, I didn't really have any resources.

But I said, "Of course, yes. I'm buying her a present."

"Do you have the money to do that?"

"Actually, I don't . . ."

“So, what do you plan to do?”

“I hope to borrow. And I hope to be able to repay.”

“Do you have someone to borrow from?”

“Not yet . . .”

“What about other expenses? You’ll have other expenses in preparing for the wedding . . .”

I had no satisfactory answer.

He said, “Tomorrow, go into my secretaries’ office and present a list of items for which you need to borrow money, and I’ll arrange the loan.”

I did that. The next day, I walked in with a list of things which included my bride’s present, the other costs required to prepare for the wedding, and tickets to England for the two of us. It came out to \$1,200. That might not sound like a lot today, but it was a lot of money back then—so much that the secretaries tried to bargain me down. Still, I got the \$1,200. I was to repay it at the rate of \$50 a month for 24 months so that within two years the debt would be cleared.

Okay, I was a youngster, full of hope, and I was sure everything was going to be fine—no doubt, I would get a fortune in wedding gifts . . .

I bought my bride a beautiful present—so nice that she still tells people about it and encourages newly engaged fellows to do the same for their brides-to-be. She tells them, “My husband was told by the Rebbe to buy his wife a present.”

We arrived in England, I started working, and from my wages I faithfully repaid \$50 a month for the first two months. But my salary was just about enough to cover my rent and some necessities, but it did not leave sufficient funds to pay back \$50 a month. Somehow or other, a few months later, I managed to make a third payment.

Then it dried up. I just did not have the ability to repay that loan. And I started to get reminders from the office. When you get reminders, you eventually pay some more, so I made a fourth payment and brought my debt down to \$1,000.

I got further reminders, but my financial situation did not improve, and I was unable to repay the debt at that time. So, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe, asking for a blessing for sustenance and livelihood, and saying that I was finding life a bit difficult in that respect.

I’m sure he gave me his blessing—I have no doubt about it. But the strongest point, which was the clearest indication of his care, was that from that point on I never got another reminder from his office to repay my debt. In no way, shape, or form whatsoever. I heard nothing at all.

Thank G-d, with time things improved, and there was a moment when I was able to actually amass the amount I still owed. I came to New York, feeling very happy with myself. I went into the office, and said, "I have a debt I wish to repay."

They asked me for my name, the details, and the year the loan was made, to look it up in the files. But there was no record whatsoever of any debt in my name—nothing outstanding. Nothing could be found at all in the records that such a loan ever even existed. They couldn't find anything!

I said, "The fact is I owe \$1,000, and I want to repay it."

They said, "Well, you don't owe anything!"

I said, "I'm sorry, the Rebbe made the loan; he took the initiative, and he arranged it for me. I do not wish to remain in debt. Here is the money—enter it in your books however you wish, and let's end this story."

It was then that I realized how great the Rebbe's sensitivity was. He knew I had no family, that I was dependent on others, and that my resources were highly restricted. And he felt for me like a father. After first offering me that loan, he later took care of it for me. I will always be grateful for this.

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