

# EVERY SINGLE YID

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שני בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

Reb Mordechai the Tzaddik was a talmid of the Baal Shem Tov. Reb Mordechai had two close friends from his days in Yeshivah, and he wanted very much to share with them this new path in serving Hashem, but he was hesitant to leave his Rebbe. Besides, who knew if he would be able to find them, or if they would listen to him?

The Baal Shem Tov once related, "One must have mesiras nefesh to do a favor *b'gashmius*, and especially *b'ruchnius*, for even a single Yid. A neshama descends to this world and lives for seventy or eighty years or more, to do a favor for even a single Yid." Reb Mordechai nearly resolved to begin the journey and seek his friends, but somehow he was unable to do so. He could not bring himself to actually leave. He decided that would remain with the Rebbe for just a few more days, and then he would go.

After a few days, he considered approaching the Rebbe, telling him the whole story, and asking his advice. Then, the Rebbe thru *ruach hakodesh* could tell him where his friends were now, which would save him much time. But Reb Mordechai rejected the idea. Hadn't the Rebbe clearly said that, "One must have mesiras nefesh to do a favor for even a Yid"? So why ask? And asking the Rebbe to use *ruach hakodesh* to save him some time – what chutzpah! Furthermore, if Reb Mordechai would know where they were, then his mesiras nefesh would be less. No - he would not ask! He made the decision to take to the road and search for his friends.

On the day of his departure he rose very early, prepared himself for shachris, and davened. After davening, he packed a small bag containing his belongings and his tallis and tefillin, and began the journey. Reb Mordechai had already passed the city limit when the Rebbe's shamash ran after him with a message that the Rebbe wished to speak with him. When he entered the Rebbe's room, the Baal Shem Tov said to him: "Boruch Hashem, you were victorious in your battle with yourself." The Baal Shem Tov gave him some instructions and a bracha for success. And Reb Mordechai was indeed successful in his mission. After a long journey he managed to locate his friends and bring them to the path of the Baal Shem Tov.

(אגרות קודש אדהר"צ ח"ג ע' קעד)

Chazal write: One who saves one yiddishe neshama is considered as if he has saved an entire world.

(סנהדרין פ"ד מ"ה)

The Rebbe once spoke of the preciousness of helping just one Yid. One of the *nevu'os* of the geulah is that Hashem will collect all the yidden, one by one, actually holding them by hand, and take them out of golus. Since the geulah is dependent on our avodah now, we must learn a lesson from this. Some people only want to work on helping thousands of Yidden and feel that anything less is a waste of their talents. But, just as it is befitting for Hashem to take a single yid to Eretz Yisroel, so is it befitting for us to go help even one single Yid and kindle within him the light of Torah and mitzvos.

On another occasion the Rebbe pointed out the advantage on working in areas which are overlooked, being similar to a *meis mitzvah* (a dead person that has no one to bury him). Also in this manner there is less concern that his work will lead him to *yeshus* (self worth), causing one to be satisfied and go rest.

(שיחיו"ק תשל"ח ע' 385, שיחיו"ק תשל"ד ח"ב ע' 280)

Reb Yosef of Beshenkovitch, a talmid chacham who knew the entire Shas and Rambam by heart, earned the greatest honor from the talmidei chachomim of his town. In the year תקס"ד, the Alter Rebbe advised him, "For the benefit of your neshama, it is better for you to be a wagon-driver than a Rov." Ten years later, in תקע"ד, Reb Yosef, then 70 years old, was offered the rabonus in the town of Lieple. Recalling the Rebbe's words, he refused the offer. He realized that now was the time to fulfill the Rebbe's advice.

For a month he wavered, undecided, confused, not knowing what to do. Eventually, he mustered up the courage and went to the local wagon station. When the wagon drivers saw him, they asked him to where he wished to travel.

"I have not come to travel but to learn to become a wagon-driver," he answered in a low voice. The wagon drivers looked at each other in surprise, and began to joke at his expense. One driver saw his insistence and agreed to teach him the trade.

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In the stall, he was shown how to hitch the horses, attach the saddle and the reins, and oil the wheels. One of the horses whipped his tail and almost knocked out Reb Yosef's eye.

That night, Reb Yosef arrived home dirty and bruised. He changed his clothing and went to shul to daven and give his shiur. Returning home, he found his wife in tears, for she had heard of her husband's visit to the stables. When Reb Yosef shared the Rebbe's instructions, she told him, "In my opinion, if the Rebbe told you this, you mustn't delay even a day. Tomorrow I will sell my jewelry and you will be able to buy a wagon." Hearing her innocent words, Reb Yosef decided to travel to Velizh, where he would learn the trade from a wagon-driver who was also a talmid chacham and a chossid.

A year passed and Reb Yosef became used to his new lifestyle. One evening, he stopped over at a Yiddishe inn, and sat down to learn torah. The innkeeper introduced him to a guest who needed to travel the following day. The guest, 'Solomon Gamitzki' (Shlomo Leib), was a Yid who had left the ways of Yiddishkeit, and had become a friend and employee of the Batchaikov Count. "What time will we leave?" asked the guest. "After davening," was Reb Yosef's reply. "At what time?" he retorted. "To me, it makes no difference whether you daven or not; I need to know when we will travel, to know when to wake up, wash, and eat." "...And daven," added Reb Yosef. "That I leave for you," concluded the guest. When the guest realized that Reb Yosef would not be ready to leave until 10:00 am, he ordered another coach for 5:00 am.

He went to sleep for the night, but awoke shortly after midnight, bewildered. Someone was crying. He opened his door and saw Reb Yosef sitting on the floor, saying tikun chatzos by candlelight and weeping. Reb Yosef's crying penetrated deeply into his heart. Memories of his youth, his father, his melamed, the wife and children he had left, all passed before his eyes. When the night came to its end, he watched Reb Yosef daven, with great kavana, and his eyes filled with tears. At 5:00, the innkeeper came to notify him that his coach was ready, but he decided to travel with Reb Yosef instead. Hours passed, and Reb Yosef was still davening. Overcome with anguish, the guest went to the innkeeper, borrowed his talis and tefillin, and davened too.

Because of the intensity of his feelings of regret and teshuva, Shlomo Leib became extremely ill, hovering between life and death for several days. The count sent his own doctor to examine him, but the doctor gave up hope. Reb Yosef remained at the sick man's bedside, fasting and saying Tehillim, helping him with his decision to return to his family and Yiddishkeit. Eventually, Shlomo Leib regained his strength and was able to leave the inn. Reb Yosef traveled home and when he arrived, he saw many Chassidim preparing to travel to the Mittler Rebbe in Lubavitch.

While in Lubavitch, Reb Yosef was greatly surprised to meet Shlomo Leib. He had resigned from his job with the Count, and had now come to Lubavitch to learn and be near the Mittler

Rebbe. Reb Yosef entered into yechidus with the Mittler Rebbe who informed him, "My father appeared to me last night and told me that Yosef of Beshenkovitch has fulfilled his mission. My father has turned a lamdan into a wagon-driver for one Yid, and now, for the benefit of the public, he has commanded me to appoint you as mashpia to the Chassidim in Beshenkovitch."

(הקדמה לפוקח עורים)

Relating this story at a farbrengen, the Rebbe explained that Hashem had destined for Shlomo Leib to do teshuvah anyway. Nevertheless, the Alter Rebbe chose Reb Yosef, causing him to sacrifice many years of advanced avoda, because it was his avoda and the main reason for his neshama's descent into this world. Similarly, we must never hesitate to reach out to another Yid, for that may be our primary purpose here below.

(תו"מ חל"ג ע' 203)

A Papa chossid related: One of today's elder Papa chassidim was born and raised in a small city in Hungary. Because he was blessed with exceptional intelligence, it became necessary for his parents to put extra effort into sheltering him from secular influences. However, secretly, the child joined a group of Maskilim ('enlightened') and slowly drifted away from Yiddishkeit. Eventually his parents threw him out of the house to prevent him from influencing the rest of his family.

He went to learn in the local gymnasium and because he was so successful his professor advised him to continue his studies at the prestigious Sorbonne University in Paris. He was happy to go to a new place where he would not be embarrassed of his family and townspeople, and no one would know of his yiddishe origins.

On his first day at the Sorbonne, while walking to his classroom, he was shocked to see a chassidish yungerman with a beard and peyos approaching him. The yungerman asked him, "Did you put on tefillin today?" Shocked, he remained speechless. Before he had a chance to get back to himself, the yungerman took hold of him and said, "No problem! We put on tefillin with many yidden and we can put on you as well." He pulled out a pair of tefillin and put it on with him. Every single day the yungerman came to put on tefillin with him, until he did complete teshuva.

The chossid concluded the story: The yungerman was none other than the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and that bochur is now one of the elder chassidim of Papa. The fact that he is a frumeh yid today is thanks to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

(ורבים השיב מעון ע' 75)

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