



KI HEIM
CHAYEINU
כי הם חינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

The Teacher's Teacher

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E21)

A student became his teacher's teacher.

A road to שמירת שבת

Klal Yisrael is blessed with many people who chose to observe Torah and Mitzvos. They grew up in homes where Shabbos was not observed, and they made the bold decision to undertake Shabbos observance. Each person who undertook this great step has a story to tell as to what prompted them to do so. While the stories are varied, there is often an impact, a Kiddush Hashem of sorts, involved. Someone's קדושה shone through and a sensitive soul picked up on the special truth of that קדושה. The yearning soul felt the tug – and with it the desire to be like this person.

One cannot prepare for, nor rehearse a moment of Kiddush Hashem. One can only live a life of קדושה as best as one is able and הקב"ה takes care of the rest. If one has the זכות, others will feel the impact and there will be more קדושה in the world than was there before.

Not only can one not prepare for such moments, but one is also often unaware that such a moment occurred. Who can know the ripple effects of someone who saw someone who acted in accord with our sacred tradition and the flame was ignited? Such information is stored in the Heavenly Ledgers and, in most cases, one does not find out about one's impact during one's lifetime. Our job is not to keep score, but to focus on living in a way that sanctifies Hashem's

blessed name because that is the way that He wants us to live.

Need to know

Sometimes, however, knowing that one has had a spiritual impact on another can have far-reaching implications, and when one needs to know the Ribono Shel Olam has infinite ways of letting one know. The following story demonstrates one of those ways.

*Most of us
do not know
our impact
on others.*

An irreligious boy – but...

Our story revolves around a Jewish boy, let's call him Jeffrey, who grew up in suburban New Jersey. His family was physically, emotionally, and spiritually distant from anything that related to

Torah and Mitzvos. Their spiritual recharge came in the form of an annual drive to a Shul located miles from their home (and their hearts) to attend High-Holiday services.

But Jeffrey's parents made a fateful decision to send their son to a Jewish Day School. They did so for cultural reasons, and they certainly did not expect nor intend that his attendance there would have any practical implications for his, or their, life. How could they have known...

A spiritually sensitive child

Jeffrey was a good student academically but, more significantly, he was spiritually attuned.



KI HEIM CHAYEINU

כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

And owing to something along the road of his studies, the young Jeffrey began to think about a relationship with Hashem and His Mitzvos.

It did not happen overnight. But slowly and surely Jeffrey felt increasingly connected to Yiddishkeit. His parents' store, where he would go to help on Shabbos, became increasingly foreign to him. By the time Jeffrey was ready to become a Bar Mitzvah, he felt ready to do just that, take on Mitzvos.

The upcoming Bar Mitzvah

Jeffrey's parents' only Jewish connection was to the Shul they attended three-days-a-year. And so that is where they decided to mark Jeffrey's Bar Mitzvah. They were quite shocked when Jeffrey announced that he was going to stay in the Shul building over Shabbos to avoid being driven to Shul on Shabbos.

Not knowing what to do and not wanting their young son to be alone in the building overnight his parents called the Shamash of the Shul and shared their plight. Their young son insisted on not being driven to Shul for the Shabbos of his Bar Mitzvah. The Shamash quickly understood the nature of the request and indicated that he and his wife would be only too happy to host Jeffrey for Shabbos.

Jeffrey joined the elderly couple for Shabbos. The Shamash and his wife did what they could to make the boy comfortable. In addition to the Seudos, Jeffrey attended davening on Friday night and, of course, in the morning, was joined by the relatives and friends who drove in from near and far for the festivities. The Bar Mitzvah was lovely, but it only served to fuel Jeffrey's

growing interest in learning about Torah and Mitzvos.

Looking for more

Jeffrey expressed an interest in supplementing his Jewish studies and his parents were introduced to Rav Dovid Trenk זצ"ל, beloved Rosh Yeshiva of the Adelpia Yeshiva. They asked Rav Dovid if he could find someone who would learn with Jeffrey a couple of times a week. Rav Dovid זצ"ל answered in the affirmative. He would find someone, and that someone would be Rav Dovid himself.

And so began the next step in Jeffrey's spiritual journey. He immediately took to Rav Dovid's warmth and authenticity and they learned 'together' as was Rav Dovid's way. Sometimes they would meet at the Yeshiva and other times they would meet at the Trenk home, thus giving Rav Dovid's dear wife (and my cousin) a chance to get to know Jeffrey.

What was the secret?

At some point Mrs. Trenk asked Jeffrey what sparked his interest in Yiddishkeit. Jeffrey quietly shared what was in his heart, but that he had never said. His fourth-grade Morah at the Day School made an impact on him. She was living a life of קדושה that spoke to him; she was the sort of person that he would like to become.

Mrs. Trenk knew who that Morah was. She was none other than the daughter of Rav Shneur Kotler זצ"ל, Mrs. Esther Reich (Rebetzin of the Rosh Yeshiva Rav Uren Reich שליט"א). Mrs. Trenk made a mental note to reach out to Mrs.



KI HEIM
CHAYEINU
כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

Reich and let her know how her influence as a fourth-grade Morah was bearing fruit.

A forgotten call – a fortuitous moment

As much as we have good intentions, our lives are full and sometimes things get pushed off, and so it was with that phone call. Then, close to the start of the new school year Mrs. Trenk was at the grocery and there was Mrs. Reich! She grabbed the opportunity to tell Mrs. Reich about how Jeffrey's story was unfolding. Mrs. Reich indeed remembered Jeffrey as an exceptionally fine and sensitive boy. Mrs. Trenk then related how Jeffrey has been growing and learning and that he traced his spiritual journey back to his having been in Mrs. Reich's class.

Divine timing

Mrs. Reich had a surprising reaction to the news. Mrs. Trenk could not have known that just that day Mrs. Reich was planning to call the school to resign her job. The schedule at the school had changed and continuing her teaching would have involved a much-earlier start of her day, competing with her own home and child-care responsibilities. She was going to make the call to resign...but she did not. Having heard that a Torah life was launched in her classroom was enough to push her past the considerable

hurdles. She would continue to teach at the Day School.

Sometimes we need to know

And that brings us back to the beginning. Most of us do not know of our impact on others, and, by and large, our influence is out of our field of vision. But sometimes we need to know. And when that happens, Hashem orchestrates it so that the information reaches us.

We are all teachers

Mrs. Reich was a fourth-grade teacher. One might think that only someone who is seen by many students daily needs to be concerned with one's effect on others. That thought could not be further from the truth. The reality is that each of us are impacting others daily. We, and the lifestyle that we espouse, are on display all the time. The opportunity for קידוש השם is always present. Those around us are making crucial decisions about how they would like to live their lives based on our smile, our sincerity, and our loyalty to the Torah.

We are, indeed, all teachers. And Jeffrey turned out to be his teacher's teacher. He taught her about her impact, and she learned the lesson well.

Takeaway: I will try to take my potential influence on others a bit more seriously.