

Good Yom Tov Everyone. The taxi was late and Rav Yeruchem Miller, a rav in Bat Yam, Eretz Yisroel, nervously looked at his watch. He had a meeting scheduled for 4:30 with the Torah Sage Rav Shach, of blessed memory, and did not want to be late for the appointment. There were some urgent matters to be discussed and he knew that the Rosh Yeshivah's time was precious.

A few moments later the taxi arrived. As it pulled up to the curb, it splashed through a large puddle and drenched Rav Miller's kapota (frock coat). The driver, a balding, burly man, motioned for Rav Miller to fasten his seat belt and he then clicked on the meter.

Rav Miller overcame his initial annoyance and initiated a conversation over the sound of the blaring radio. After a minute or so, Benny the driver displayed enough courtesy to lower the volume and join in the conversation. Rav Miller always tried speaking with under-affiliated Jews, knowing that every good word counts.

Benny the driver showed a disdain for religion and a cynicism toward anything even remotely spiritual. After each sarcastic comment, Rav Miller thought about reprimanding him or at least debating and challenging Benny to back up his condescending remarks — but he decided it would be counterproductive.

The trip to Bnei Brak went a little quicker than Rav Miller had anticipated and the taxi pulled up at Rav Shach's house 15 minutes before the scheduled appointment. Benny turned off the meter and told Rav Miller the amount.

As an afterthought Benny asked who he was visiting in Bnei Brak. Rav Miller replied that he had come to see Rav Shach. When Benny appeared indifferent, Rav Miller was astounded, "You mean to tell me you don't know who Rav Shach is?"

"Tell me why I should even care who he is." The sarcastic tone Benny had used at the beginning of the trip began to rear its ugly head once-again. "Why would you need to come to some old rabbi anyway?"

Rav Miller explained that he had come to ask Rav Shach for advice on a number of communal affairs in Bat Yam. Furthermore, there were some sick individuals for whom he wanted the Rosh Yeshivah to daven.

This last statement, surprisingly, seemed to strike a chord with Benny. Rav Miller saw this as an opportunity to get through to him. "Why do you look so sad?" he asked. "Do you know someone who is sick?"

Benny looked down and his expressive face indeed seemed saddened. "Actually, I do have a friend who is very sick —" His voice trailed off, and the tone carried with it a sense of despair. Rav Miller urged Benny to join him in visiting the Rosh Yeshivah, even offering to pay for a running meter, in case Benny would claim he wanted to get back to work. Benny agreed.

Benny was both nervous and incredulous that he had been convinced to tag along and visit the aged rabbi. But the moment the door opened he was able to feel the sensitivity and warmth of the "old rabbi." Rav Shach spoke to Rav Miller for a moment, then spoke to Benny with warmth and compassion. "I understand you have a friend who is sick and needs a blessing and some prayers for a complete recovery." Benny nodded, surprised that his passenger had alerted the Rosh Yeshivah.

"Yes, that's true." Said Benny finally. Rav Shach removed a siddur from the bookshelf and began to recite a chapter of Tehillim - Psalms. After he finished, Benny asked Rav Shach to recite a Mi She'beirach – a prayer for the sick.

The Rosh Yeshivah immediately started to recite the prayer and paused at the part that calls for the name of the sick individual. Benny said the name "Roki" — which sounded very strange — and Rav Shach looked quizzically at him. Benny explained that the sick friend was none other than his dog — Roki!

Without missing a beat, Rav Shach continued with the Mi She'beirach, wishing Benny a refuah sheleimah for his sick friend. Rav Miller was shocked and embarrassed at the turn of events but Rav Shach did not seem to mind at all.

After Benny left, Rav Shach explained to Rav Miller that Benny's pain was clearly evident and the davening was as much for him as for the animal. And if he could gladden the heart and ease the pain of a fellow Jew, then it was well worth it. (Reb Yechiel Spero, p.310 Touched By a Story 2)

This story illustrates the ideal level of love for our fellow Jews which we should have. Jews around the world are busy now preparing for the Yom Tov of Sukkos. Sukkos is a time when we have increased interaction with our neighbors and friends. Whether it involves building a Sukkah which borders on the neighbor's property or the competition to find the nicest esrog and lulav, this holiday season can test our ability to get along with others.

Sukkos is called "zman simchaseinu" the "time of our happiness." Why did the Sages decree that this time be called the time of "our" happiness? Why is phrased in the collective form of "our?" This comes to teach us that during this Yom Tov, we must strive to make everyone happy, not just ourselves and our families. We should therefore dedicate ourselves to treating others properly and also welcoming others into our Sukkahs, especially those who have no other place to go on Yom Tov. That way these days will truly be "zman simchaseinu" - a time of happiness for all. **Good Yom Tov Everyone.**