

Doubletree Doubletake

How many of us have ever been to a weight loss seminar? How many of us have committed ourselves to a lifestyle change and even spent oodles of money on the products being touted as miraculous at the seminar? Now, how many of us are still inspired a week later? I find that this is true with many holidays as well. How many of us even remember that Tisha B'av just passed? How many of us went to the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation and Project Inspire presentations? How many of us walked out with a fresh commitment to changing the world? Much like our need to be committed to a healthier lifestyle doesn't expire just because we lost our initial steam, so too our momentum to change the world doesn't expire just because it's after Tisha B'av. Well then, let's get to it!

We have learned that the Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed because of Sinas Chinam, baseless hatred and we know that the tonic is Ahavas Chinam, the ultimate getting/giving something for nothing. Last Shabbos I spoke at the Doubletree Hilton in Somerset NJ at a Shabbaton organized by Motti Katz. We talked about our need to do a double-take, or actually, a double-give, with our chesed. Think about how many times you have been influenced to do something good by another person's chesed. Let me share with you some of the inspiring ideas shared by the audience. Guests came from all over the United States and represented Jews from different walks of life.

One of the most touching examples was related to us by a man who started to learn Daf-Yomi to complete the cycle that his deceased brother had started. I asked him how long this has lasted. His answer. . . 30 years! My brother and son have done the same to finish Shas for my father, O"H, but I'll have to check with them in 27 years to see how their 30 years is going. It is amazing that even after the neshama has gone to the next world, it can still be inspiring others to do good on this world. If this is the case then imagine the power that you have to influence others while we're all together here!

After the lecture, when no one else was in earshot, the same man told us that, after retirement, he decided to start to drive for Chai Lifeline to get people to doctor's appointments. The Mitzvah is tremendous and I only wish that he had said it in front of others to keep the double-give of hearing about the chesed that others do and then doing chesed in response, in motion. One of the guests said that she is forever indebted to a niece of hers. Not for a Chesed done to her directly, but for the influence of the niece's chesed on others. Here's the story: The woman had a teenage daughter who was not prone to be helpful in the kitchen. One Shabbos the daughter and the niece were visiting a common relative. The niece was a whiz in the kitchen and immediately took over the kitchen, preparing salads, tableware, etc. The next Friday, the woman noticed that her daughter spontaneously stepped in and took over the kitchen! This continues years later and the woman said that she recently thanked her niece for the influence that she never even realized that she had.

When our children pick up on chesed it is truly exciting. A man from New Jersey told about his daughter's Bas Mitzvah celebration last year. He was so proud that she had been positively influenced by the projects that she had seen at other Bas Mitzvah celebrations that she, too, embarked on a chesed project. Not only that, but she added to her list of Mitzvahs by committing herself to finish learning a

certain amount of Torah (I forget which section, I apologize) in time for her party. He was absolutely glowing with pride as he relayed this.

When I got home, still excited about the ideas shared at the hotel, I received a beautiful call from a neighbor. Over Shabbos I had missed out on a celebration for one of the other neighbors, although I had joined by sending over some candy. Well, the caller told me that my candy did more chesed than I had initially planned. Inevitably after one of these celebrations, there's candy leftover. Rather than giving it to her kids, the hostess sent it on to another simcha that was scheduled for the next day. Here, the same tray of candy did a double give. In this case, the hostess, who worked so hard for the benefit of the honoree on Shabbos was actually the one to inspire herself to do another chesed by working so hard for the benefit of the second honoree on Sunday.

This concept of being inspired by others, or even being inspired by ourselves, can be understood using basic psychological principles. When we do something good, we feel good about ourselves. This enhanced self-esteem then motivates us to do more good. When others do good, it reinforces our sense of brotherhood. This enhanced sense of belonging then motivates us to do good. It is a wonderful self-perpetuating cycle that starts with just one good action, seemingly small or big, perpetuated by one person. Wait until you hear the story of the impact of one man's actions on thousands of others.

One participant in the lecture spoke lovingly of her deceased father-in-law. He loved to encourage others to answer Amen to other people's Brachos. It was a passion of his and he developed a reputation as such. After his death, his son decided to enlarge his father's influence. He took upon himself to change the way school children Daven. Rather than the whole class saying all of the Brachos out loud and in unison, leaving no one to say Amen, he instituted a program to match school children up with "brachos chavrusas" who would answer Amen to each other's Brachos. He and his wife have travelled the world educating schools about this idea and they currently have 300,000 participants! Wow! This hotel guest who told us about the project is scheduled to be a guest on my talk show, Dr. Leah and You. Stay tuned to find out when she will be on. You can log onto JewishTalkRadio.com or call 832-225-5371 Wednesdays from 1-2 to join us. The show is a great forum to share your projects and influence others. I'd love to host you as well.

I am fortunate to live in a neighborhood in Monsey where I witness the domino affect of chesed firsthand. There are neighbors who cook whole meals for the sick who influence others to make the deliveries. There are neighbors who house disabled children for Shabbos leading others to befriend these children at shul. Other neighbors daven so beautifully that, unbeknownst to them, others are inspired to answer a fervent "Amen". Still others organize activities for the local children, influencing the next generation in their performance of Mitzvos. There are neighbors who open their homes regularly to those seeking Judaism, who impact others to do kiruv on the phone. Some lend out chairs, prompting others to lend out tablecloths. One works in a bridal gown gemach, thus influencing other to give to hachnosas kallah. Others pack huge deliveries for Tomchei Shabbos, encouraging others to donate one item. There are the Hatzolah members who devote hours of their time in filling medical needs that influence others to drive a patient to a doctor's appointment. Some of the chesed is public, such as the neighbor's organization that provides household help for families with a sick family member, and some

is private, such as those involved in the Chevra Kadisha. Some women in the neighborhood have even organized a Chaburah to find out where more Chesed is needed! Join the doers. Do a doubletake, double the chesed of others by doing a chesed of your own. Share it with others so that they too, can feel good about themselves and do a double take, or rather, double give!

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