

The דרכי שיה, which is a weekly sheet put out by the family of Rav Chaim Kanievsky זצ"ל, had this interesting מעשה a number of years ago, which is one of the most amazing and important articles I've ever read about ראש השנה. The moral of the story, which they don't bring down, is every little step towards תשובה is counted as a very important item up in שמים. Whatever we do, as long as we're starting on that journey, we must keep in mind that every little step is an important accomplishment. The story is quoted in the name of Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, and he says as follows: a chashuv Yid told me that this is what happened to him on a recent trip to America.

He said, I was going to America for business, and the majority of my business was going to be located in Miami. I have a cousin in Miami who I have not seen in many years and despite the fact that he's far away from Yiddishkeit and שמירת התורה, I wanted to get together with him. I called him and asked him if it was okay if I came to visit. He said, sure, come on down.

As soon as I came to his house, I was astonished to see he was wearing a yarmulke, and not a כיפה סרוגה, a big yarmulke. I thought to myself, "Maybe he put this on to make me feel comfortable". I came into his beautiful villa on the ocean shore, and I noticed a lot of interesting changes. There was a very beautiful מזוזה on the door, ספרים in the house, and I got more and more amazed when I came into his living room and I saw a לאכטער. Shabbos candlesticks, חומשים, סידורים, all of the aspects of יידישקייט that we're used to, but he was not. I could not control myself. I said to him, "My dear cousin, I see something has changed in your life. You're behaving in a different manner. I see all the wonderful things that you have here. Tell me what caused this amazing change in your life." He told me that this is what happened.

"Last ראש השנה, I was sitting on my porch and I looked out to the sea and I see all of a sudden, I looked down and saw hordes of people starting to walk towards the ocean. Even though I was very far away from יהדות, and for years and years I did not go to shul, I remembered that we had in the minhag of תשליך, where we go down to the ים and daven there to Hashem. My father used to take me when I was a little kid. And I said, "You know what? I'm going to with these people. I'm going to go down and join them to go to the shore. And I went. I was standing in this group of Yidden, everybody was holding their machzorim and davening. A gentleman came over to me, gave he gave me a siddur, and showed me what paragraph to say. I said the psukim of תשליך with intense concentration, and then תשליך was over. I turned to go back to my house. Then I noticed that someone standing by my side. I turned around and I saw a tall, handsome, chashuv Yid. He smiled at me with a radiance on his face and asked, "Tell me my friend, have you heard תקיעת שופר today?" I replied that no, I had not. He took out from his pocket a little small שופר. He told me to listen carefully and to have כוונה to be יוצא, and he blew for me 30 קולות. When he finished, he said to me, "My name is Moshe Katz", and he went on his way.

I came back home and I was sort of astonished. I told my wife exactly what happened at תשליך. I described to her the man who spoke to me. I told her, "I don't know why the man mentioned to me before he left that his name was Moshe Katz." As soon as my wife heard the name, she burst into tears. Through her wailing and sobbing, she told me to repeat exactly what I saw, to describe him precisely, his face, appearance, and height. I did that for her, and she said that Moshe Katz was the name of her father. Her maiden name was Katz. He was a תלמיד חכם, he knew how to blow שופר in the city of Pressburg in Hungary. He was killed in the war and that's why I never knew him. I met my wife after he was killed. Since my wife changed her family name, I did not know that her original name was Katz.

My cousin said to me, "At that moment, my life changed. I was a different person. I did תשובה and started to do things differently. And here I am today."



So Rav Zilberstein said, "I told this story over to R' Chaim Kanievsky, and he said that without a doubt this was a גילוי משמים to this couple so that they should do תשובה. And we see that these things are mentioned in חז"ל many times.

This story has always remained with me since I first read it a number of years ago, and I said what a beautiful story, a classic story of R' Chaim which is למעלה מן הטבע. To me the moral of the story is he took one step in the direction of doing something for himself. He went to תשליך and the rest of the story followed through. We all should learn a lesson, try to do whatever we can to help ourselves, be it small. No matter what ever we do, it should be successful.

