

ד' ניסן, תשס"ט

Dear Friends,

You recently received an email from Project Chizuk, explaining the various programs that have been developed to help those seeking employment, and outlining the accomplishments and successes that have been achieved thus far. While the presentation is impressive, it is only half of the picture. The other half is a view that you might not be privy to, and at the risk of being *מוגלה סוד*, revealing a secret, I find it important to describe it to you.

Project Chizuk was the brainchild and initiative of a group of individuals just like you and me. While talented and skilled, their accomplishments are primarily due to an uncommon sense of *אחריות* for the *ציבור* and an uncomplicated and inspiring sense of *אהבת ישראל*. Motivated by concern for those who have lost their source of livelihood, they have dedicated themselves with a passion and zeal to do everything possible to help our neighbors and friends. They have carved out considerable time from full schedules to strategize, plan, and implement the various components of Project Chizuk. To a large degree, their lives now revolve around this all-encompassing commitment.

No greater praise could be given than the brief description of the email and telephone communications between the board members this past Erev Shabbos. Upon learning of the individual, described in their email, who attained employment through the resources of Project Chizuk, a sense of excitement, bordering on euphoria, took over. They exchanged *Mazal Tov's* and *Thank You's* and *Yasher Koach's*; one had a sense that they all experienced this as a personal *Simcha*. Project Chizuk had, with effort and perseverance, facilitated the employment of another Jew! The professional JFS staff, similarly driven by *אהבת ישראל*, were full participants in this "family" *Simcha*. In conversations, the sense of joy was palpable.

Not surprisingly, they then refocused on their greatest priority: What else can be done to help members of the community? If their structure and resources achieved this goal, why can't it be duplicated, over and over? If this model is effective, by utilizing and leveraging the talents and contacts within our community, why shouldn't they be able to improve further, to provide even more opportunities and more effective assistance to those seeking employment?

*מפרשים* tell us that the word *נסיון*, test, is derived from the word *נם*, uplifted, because a trial can uplift the individual or community undergoing the trial. From the time of the *אבות*, during the *שעבוד* of *מצרים*, and throughout Jewish history, hardships and difficulties have brought forth the special and unique qualities of *כלל ישראל*. Project Chizuk is such an example, and it is an uplifting model of *אהבת חסד* and the *אהבת הנם* which is so lacking today.

*ב"ה*, they are not alone. Other *חסד* organizations, such as Hand in Hand, Somaich Achim, and the Ahavas Chesed Maos Chitim Fund, are comprised of those who feel the pain of other Jews and utilize every available resource to extend help with care and sensitivity. They, too, engage in *חסד* out of the public spotlight, with a sense of *הצנע לכת*.

In the *זכות* of those involved in this *עבודת הקודש*, may we be *זוכה* to *ליגאל* *עתידין ובניסן נגאלו*!

בברכה,

Rabbi Cohen