

SICHOS IN ENGLISH CLASSICS #2

LEAP YEAR



SUN, MOON AND MAN



In Place of an Introduction

At the Shloshim of R' Yonah Avtzon A"H, Director of Sichos in English, a resolution was taken to reprint the original weekly Sichos in English publications.

To fulfill this, a weekly booklet including a translation of a *fabrengen* as it was first published will be distributed. Our intention is to reprint the entire set in the near future.

Following the Sichos we will include an addendum with pictures, notes, and insights into the process of its publication.

These weekly publications can be sponsored to honor a loved one, a Yortzeit or a simcha by contacting us at **sichosinenglish@gmail.com**. If you would like to receive this weekly publication to your email, then please use the above email address as well.

To partner with us, so that we can continue to publish original Sichos in English content as well as behind the scenes stories and documents, please make a contribution at: sie.org/partner

Essays

A Revolution in the Dissemination of Chassidus

In the early 80's SIE was focused on translating the Sichos of the Rebbe. The English translation was quite literal and when discussing lofty concepts, SIE remained loyal to the vernacular and style that only someone with a basic education in Chassidic thought and lingo would be comfortable with.

At some stage it became obvious to the SIE team that if the goal was to spread the Rebbe's teachings into the 'Chutza' as well, then they needed a more flexible approach to the translation; where liberty was given to adjust the structure and style of the Rebbe's talk (or combination of talks) into a treatise that could be understood by anyone, Jew and non-Jew alike.

Hence, they started preparing essays. They would choose a topic which the Rebbe had discussed, that they felt had wide appeal and then prepare an essay on that topic. The essay was firmly based on the Rebbe's words but not adhering to the prose and style that the Rebbe shared them in.

This did not go down well by a few Chassidim. They felt that this was a deviant approach in spreading Chassidus and was a step too far.

Rabbi Yonah Avtzon and his team, who had been tasked with the great responsibility of being the translators of the Rebbe's Torah to English, had a strong belief that this was a positive innovation, and they continued preparing and spreading the essays. It was only when the Rebbe was seen walking with one of the essays in his hand that the opposition rested their case.

The Rebbe was clearly pleased with this approach to Hafotzas Hamoyonos. Indeed, the Rebbe edited a few of these essays over the years, giving even more legitimacy to this approach in spreading the wellsprings outward.

In our new weekly booklet of **SIE classics**, we endeavor to give the readers a taste of the variety of teachings and styles within the “Sichos in English” set. Some weeks we will share the more literal translation style Sicha, and some weeks we will opt for the essay format.

As this year is a Shana Meuberet – Leap Year, we chose to share with you an essay that was prepared, based on a Sicha of the Rebbe, that explains what such a year has to teach us. The year that this essay was prepared was 5744 (1983/84) which was an *Iber Yar*. Over that year the Rebbe discussed this topic many times, offering many lessons and insights that we ought to learn from it. This essay is just one of many Sichos from that year discussing this topic.

The reason we chose this essay is because it touches on various points that seem to be in the communal discussions these days. Here are three examples that by many people, when choosing a point of view, they go for the either-or attitude, where the choice must be black or white, with no subtlety and nuance.

Being an original thinker yet staying true to the axioms.

Chinuch – conformity yet individuality.

Nationalism vs. globalism.

These topics seem to be modern dilemmas but, as we see in this Sicha from 35 years ago, it was current then as well. By delving into the Rebbe’s thoughts on this matter we can gain clarity and perspective on how to approach these thorny issues today with a bird’s eye view, rather than the natural approach of going to our base and point of view.

Sun, Moon and Man

6th of Tishrei, 5744¹

The sun and moon symbolize constancy and change respectively, which two elements are paralleled in man and in mankind. A leap year, when the solar and lunar years are reconciled, teaches that both elements must function simultaneously.

The Jewish calendar is essentially a lunar one, yet the festivals are fixed according to the seasons²— the solar year. Because the solar year is longer than the lunar year, a month³ is added every few years to reconcile the two, thus ensuring that the festivals fall out in their proper season. The year which contains this extra month is called a leap year.

Constancy & Change

The principal difference between the sun and moon lies in their function, which, in the words of Scripture⁴ is “to give light to the earth.” The sun emits a constant amount of light day after day. The moon, in contrast, waxes and wanes. The sun thus symbolizes constancy, permanency; the moon change and renewal. The two are inherent opposites: but in a leap year they are reconciled and come together.

¹ Originally published in Sichos in English volume 18

² Pesach, for example, must be in the spring, and Sukkos in the fall.

³ A second Adar

⁴ Bereishis 1:15

Man is a microcosm of the world,⁵ and all phenomena found therein are reflected in man's life. The different natures of the sun and moon thus exist within man the individual, and within mankind at large. And, consonant to the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that everything can provide lessons for man's service to G-d, the idea of a leap year – when sun and moon come together – teaches that these two very different natures within man can and should be reconciled.

One of man's most important faculties is his intellect, that he is a thinker. Two opposite types of mind exist, eloquently described by the Mishnah in Avos:⁶ "A cemented cistern which does not lose a drop" and "a fountain which flows with ever-increasing strength." The latter depicts a person whose nature is always to originate, to learn new things, to discover fresh insights. He is a "moon" person. The former describes one who is not so interested in learning new things as in ensuring that he "does not lose a drop" of the knowledge he already possesses. He is a "sun" person.

The above two types of thinkers are paralleled by the thinking process itself. Every discipline is based on axioms, unchanging assumptions that form the basis for further study – the "sun" aspect in thinking. The second aspect in study – "moon" – is when one builds on these basics, and through dialectic reasoning, develops new insights.

The parallel goes further. Without the sun the moon cannot shine, for the moon's light is a reflection of the sun's. Without the basic axioms, dialectics and intellectual debate are impossible, for the latter proceeds from the former. Moreover, the new moon follows the total eclipse of the old. In intellectual study, a totally original thesis is possible only when the previous one has been demolished. If the two are even somewhat similar, it is

⁵ Avos D'R. Nossou, ch. 31

⁶ 2:9

possible to build on the first. But when one wishes to propound a new hypothesis, the former must first be discarded.

A leap year, when the lunar year and solar year are reconciled, teaches that man must also reconcile these two contradictory elements in his nature. An original thinker, a developer of fresh ideas (a “moon” person), must simultaneously ensure that his previous knowledge remains intact. Conversely, a “sun” person, one who concentrates on retaining what he already possesses, cannot stagnate but must also make efforts to progress further.

The Educational Dichotomy

These two kinds of thinking and thinkers translate into the way knowledge is transmitted – the educational process. There too we find the two opposite streams symbolized by the sun and moon.

On the one hand, a parent or educator endeavors to implant in a child unchanging, enduring values and truths (“sun”), principles of justice and righteousness. More specifically, in the case of a Jew, unwavering, unshakeable belief in G-d and his Torah.

On the other hand, one tries to instill in a child the will to always progress, to grow, to constantly learn new things (“moon”). A leap year, when sun and moon are brought together, teaches that while a child must be given a firm basis in life, taught to behave in consonance with the eternal truths of Torah, he must simultaneously be encouraged to constantly grow, mature, reach new plateaus of achievement.

“Sun” and “Moon” in Mankind

The same dichotomy in man, the microcosm, applies to the macrocosm. On the one hand, every country has the desire to become wealthier, more powerful, to grow (“moon”). On the other hand, for it to remain a stable, productive society, not wracked by upheaval and chaos, it must have as its underpinnings those values which are unchanging and unchangeable: justice and righteousness (“sun”). In general, these are the Seven Noachide Laws.⁷ A society based on foundations contrary to G-d’s commandments cannot develop into a decent, productive country. Conversely, a country which is self-complacent and elects to vegetate, will eventually decay and become unstable.

Growth of a state must also be based on the eternal truths given by G-d, the Creator and Master of the world. An end does not justify the means. Unjust or unrighteous conduct cannot be justified by the end, no matter, how noble or honorable that end is supposed by its architects.

A further point, particularly applicable to our times. The nature of every living organism is to grow, not to contract and withdraw into isolation. A country must not cut itself off from the rest of the world and grow only within and for itself. An isolationist attitude, besides being practically impossible to put into effect, not only damages others, but in the end boomerangs on the country which practices it. Friends will not only be lost, but enemies will be made.

Thus, although other countries may not have progressed as far as this one, and their ethico-moral standards leave much to be desired, no good will come from severing ties. Indeed, such a state of affairs serves as good reason to maintain relations and to extend help – to allow them to achieve their full potential in creating a decent society. Influence in this

⁷The Seven Noachide Laws consist of six prohibitions against murder, robbery, idolatry, adultery, blasphemy, cruelty to animals; and one positive command, to establish a judicial system.

direction may at times be benign, sometimes more severe measures are required; either way contact is necessary.

The best way to exert influence is to be an example of the righteous and ethical conduct demanded of other countries. Any other way simply won't work. Truth will out, and efforts at hoodwinking other nations regarding one's own imperfections are doomed to fail. Gains achieved through political chicanery are temporary at best. Enduring success results from adherence to enduring values — upon which foundations only, a society worthy of the name will grow and prosper.

Addendum

Behind the Scenes of Sichos in English

As mentioned last week SIE under Rabbi Yonah Avtzon merited to hear the words, גרם נחת רוח רב from the Rebbe many times.

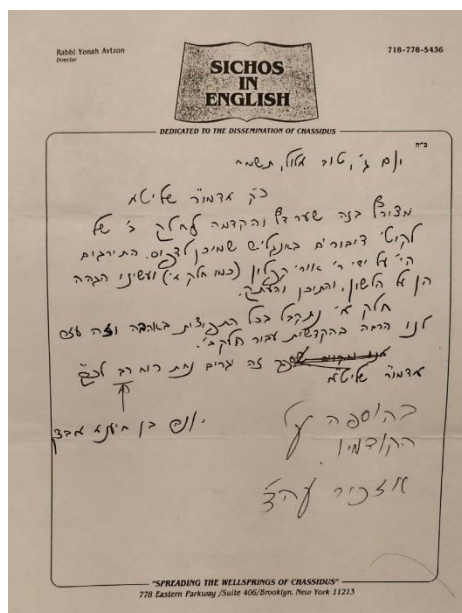
Here is an interesting example.

SIE published the Likutei Diburim in English. This letter was sent to the Rebbe before the publishing of volume 2. In it they write “... *Volume 1 was accepted across the world with love, and this helped a lot with dedications for volume 2.*”

“We hope that this book will bring lots of Nachas Ruach to the Rebbe Shlita.”

On this last paragraph the Rebbe crossed out the words ‘we hope that this book’, and underlined and arrowed the words ‘lots’ which now reads *“it brings lots of Nachas Ruach...”*

Then the Rebbe added the words, *“in addition to the previous volumes”, “I will mention it at the Tzion”.*



לעילוי נשמת הרב יצחק בן הרב אליעזר צבי זאב ע"ה צירקינד
נפטר ח"י אדר תשע"ב

לעילוי נשמת הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יונה

בן הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' מאיר ע"ה

אבן

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שבהמשך פעולותיו בהפצת המעיינות

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