
Sichos in English Classics 12

**Education
and
Knowledge**

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Sichos In English
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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 *farbrengen* 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, or you can sign up to receive it on WhatsApp at 917-868-6509.

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

INTRO

In light of the recent horrifying attack that took place this past Shabbos at Chabad of Poway California, we felt that it was appropriate to print a Sicha where the Rebbe discusses the ills of a G-dless society and how we must bring morality and conscience back into the schools and public discourse.

The context of the sicha is that on March 30, 1981, fewer than 100 days into President Ronald Reagan's first year in office, John Hinckley Jr. attempted to assassinate the president outside the Washington Hilton Hotel. Reagan was injured by a single bullet, and spent two weeks in the hospital and then slowly returned back to work. This high profile act of violence touched a nerve in the nation, and a conversation about how to eradicate these acts of senseless violence was taking place.

The Rebbe sent personal wishes of recovery to the president and also addressed the topic of education and morality.

This publication is the merit of the Chabad of Poway community and its rabbi, Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, and in the memory of the Kedosha Lori (Leah) Gilbert-Kaye, may G-d avenge her blood. With his incredible perseverance, Rabbi Goldstein has taken this horrendous episode and channelled it into a countrywide conversation about ethics, morals and a Moment of Silence which the Rebbe addressed in following Farbrengens.

EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Gratitude, the acknowledgement of good, the Torah tells us, is an important obligation, whether to G-d or man. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation are extended to all those who have sent their best wishes on this occasion. Special recognition must be paid to the President of the United States of America, who, notwithstanding his present state of health, has written to convey his congratulations and best wishes. The elected leader of a country is the instrument wherewith the Divine works to do good. As such, the President deserves, and has, my deep gratitude for his kind thoughts and sentiments, and my blessings for a full and speedy recovery.

The President has a mission and task, entrusted to him by G-d, to work for the good of America and of all Americans. Rest assured that the responsibilities given to the holder of this office, and indeed of any office, are matched by the capabilities given by G-d to the holder; he need only have the determination to use those capabilities. This “trust in G-d,” a trust strong and full (which must also reach the recipients of the President’s efforts), will undoubtedly lead to his full recovery, and help him achieve the immense tasks and goals that lie ahead.

Let us reflect upon the assassination attempt which, thank G-d, failed; an analysis of the cause of what, by all decent people, must be regarded as a shocking and incomprehensible act. It is fashionable to espouse the theory that the root cause of most, if not all crimes, is poverty, and its resultant feelings of bitterness, deprivation, and thirst for revenge. The validity of this theory is somewhat — dubious, for poverty is often the impetus to rise higher, the desire to overcome deprivation leading to greater strength and positive action. But in this case, this theory is clearly not true, for the assailant came from a wealthy family and lacked

nothing. Clearly, poverty was not the cause; the explanation must be sought elsewhere.

We need not look too far. Unfortunately, the source of the trouble is not confined to only this particular individual, but to all too many people. The blame can be laid squarely on the education he, and many other children have received, and continue to receive. An education which imparts only knowledge, and gives no direction as to how that knowledge is to be applied usefully and constructively, is not worthy of the name education. Technical skills are essential instruments for later life; but when unaccompanied by education in ethics and morality to form character, to learn right from wrong, they are dangerous tools. Although they **may** be used for good, they can also destroy. The failure to instill in children an awareness of G-d, an omnipresent real G-d Who sees and judges, has inevitably produced the selfish, egocentric lifestyles so prevalent today — the “Me” generation.

The desistance of parents and schools from “intrusion” into a child’s life, replaced by blanket permission to run free of any moral restraints or limits, has seen its tragic results. It has created an entire generation of unbridled passions, the inevitable offspring of an amoral, value-free education. Rather than inculcating children with the knowledge that the foundation and aim of their learning is to equip them to be decent and productive citizens, schools propagate the pathetically inadequate warning to refrain from crime solely to avoid punishment. The inevitable result is the belief that one need not necessarily refrain from wrongdoing, but only be “smart” enough to avoid being caught and punished.

Status is measured not in terms of achievement, but in the amount of daring and brazenness one can bring to any illicit adventure. The greater the crime — and hence the greater the emphasis on personal “fulfillment” as opposed to social obligations — the greater the egoistical thrill derived. Indeed, the premise that only the individual matters leads such people to express their ego, their “individuality,” in precisely those actions that will damage and hurt others, specifically to assert that all others mean less than nothing. For after all, is he not the only one who counts?

The assumption of parents, whether rooted in sheer ignorance or criminal indifference, that a child be permitted to give free rein to his or her natural appetites, has resulted in children who have grown up wild and unrestrained, bereft of any cognizance that the world was not created solely for their exclusive benefit. The tragicomedy of “liberalism” gone wild, of the indifference or even fear of attempting to shape children’s characters, has aroused the spectra of a generation so remote from all accepted values as to make such acts as the assassination attempt foreseeably commonplace. A grim picture indeed, but to remain silent would be a sin far greater. The seeds so blithely planted have sprouted, and their crop is bitter indeed. Young people are not fools — the pupils were apt, and the unspoken word sunk in. And the not so unspoken. Whether told outright or given tacit consent, this generation has been allowed to assume that they can do and have whatever they desire.

Should children receive some smattering of knowledge about G-d (and we can imagine just how sincerely this was taught), haste is made to point out that in the United States there is the concept of separation of religion and state; education — the knowledge which will assure them success in life — is separate from belief in G-d. Separation? A bitter farce! Separation implies, at the very least, that there are **two** subjects which are taught separately — e.g. separate hours for religion and secular instruction. But instead, no time at all is allocated for prayer in schools, and no finances are given for religious instruction. So entrenched is this bias that tax rebates are refused to parents whose children attend religious schools, and even support for **non-religious** components of schooling — e.g. travel, health, secular subjects etc., is withheld from religious schools.

To add insult to injury, the above is wrapped in an aura of sanctity, holding high the banner of tradition. What a twisted, perverted mockery of history! The founding fathers of this country were refugees from religious persecution, and fled to and founded this country precisely so that they might **practice** their religion, seeking to ensure freedom of religious belief for all. And after fleeing such persecution, they certainly had no intention of

preventing the mention of G-d in classrooms. A tragic irony indeed that their intentions of **separation** of religion and state in education would come to be perverted to mean **exclusion** of religion from education.

The results are clearly evident: the lawlessness, the chaos, the non-productive, useless lives. But instead of attending to the causes, only the symptoms are being treated. Why wait for the patient to become critically ill to treat him — when one can act to prevent the sickness in the first place?! And make no mistake, this is a disease which infects all, rich as well as poor — indeed the rich are even more susceptible. As was evidenced by the assassination attempt — the assailant had no financial problems in acquiring weapons, and his spoiled indulged childhood had left him free of inhibitions in seeking to gratify his unrestrained desires.

But if his education had been based upon a belief in an omnipresent, omniscient G-d, he would never have contemplated such an attempt, just as surely as if he knew that the Secret Service was scrutinizing his every move.

The implementation of such a program of education is too vital and urgent to be left to the usual snarl of legislative red tape of committees, votes, and referendums. It demands immediate action. The resolution and decision to do so was made thousands of years ago. In the Bible it states that G-d is the Creator of all, and that He has commanded respect for parents, and enjoined us against robbery, murder, and even covetousness. An education grounded on these principles will ensure a life lived fully and productively, benefitting both the individual and society.

It is this very point which the President stresses in his letter of greeting, praising the intense efforts made on behalf of education — an education aimed at making children into decent and productive citizens. The importance of a proper education cannot be too highly emphasized; and indeed, a special Education Day has been enacted to stress this. An education which provides not only knowledge, but also the moral training to make possible the proper use of that knowledge.

This education must start from the very early years, when those vital first impressions are made. Because many parents today unfortunately do not or cannot provide such an education, the responsibility to do so devolves on the public school system. A simple, brief, **non-denominational** prayer by children at the beginning of each day, affirming their belief and trust in G-d, is the best and most effective first step. Sincere, honest words, spoken from the heart by people who stand as living examples of those who believe and trust in G-d, will go far in inspiring children to live up to the standards set by the Bible.

The implementation of these suggestions will do much to assure the peace of mind and peace of body so essential to the well-being of society. The resultant peace between people and nations will make this a world truly fit for G-d's presence, the preparation for the final redemption through our righteous Redeemer, when "I will convert the people to a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the L-rd, to serve Him with one consent."

ADDENDUM

Behind the Scenes of Sichos in English

The above Sicha (together with another essay which addressed American isolationism) was later condensed and sent over to Washington and entered into the congressional record. Here are the Rebbe's edits on that essay.

The ~~frightening assassination~~ attempt, which thank G-d failed, gives us food for thought. The assailant came from a wealthy family, and no excuses of poverty or hardship can be offered; the cause must be sought elsewhere. The fault lies in the education he received as ~~a~~ ~~child~~. And this applies not just

in his case, but to ~~all~~ children. The failure to instill in children an awareness of G-d causes the egocentric, self-centered life style of today's youth - the "me" generation. Unfortunately, ~~parents~~ today do not or cannot provide such an education; the responsibility to do so must devolve on the public school system. I have stressed this on many occasions, and indeed, a special Education Day has been enacted to emphasize the importance of education. An education that provides not just knowledge, but that trains ~~our~~ ^{the} children to be decent and productive citizens.

The best way to begin such a program is the institution of a simple, non-denominational declaration by children at the beginning of each day, affirming their belief and trust in G-d. This in no way contradicts the notion of separation of religion and state, for the intention of the founding fathers in instituting this principle was solely the elimination of religious persecution such as they had suffered. A simple non-denominational prayer can in no way be construed as religious intolerance.

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In Memory of

הקדושה ללאה בת ראובן הי"ד

Lori Gilbert-Kaye

May G-d Avenge her Blood
Who was cruelly taken from us last Shabbos,
Acharon Shel Pesach,
In the horrific attack at Chabad of Poway

And in the merit of a speedy recovery
for those who were injured

Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein – ישראל בן חנה פריזון

Noya Dahan – נוי'ה בת עדן

Almog Peretz – אלמוג בן רוהי

May their families and the entire Poway Jewish community
find consolation, healing and strength

And may Hashem send our righteous Moshiach speedily,
at which time *"they shall neither harm nor destroy on all My
holy mount, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the
L-rd as the waters cover the sea bed"*
(haftorah of Acharon Shel Pesach).



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