
Sichos in English Classics 22

**Tearing Down
the Iron Curtain**



12th Day of Tammuz, 5743



Sichos In English
788 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11213
www.sie.org

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.

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TEARING DOWN THE IRON CURTAIN

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12TH DAY OF TAMMUZ, 5743

1. Any time Jews gather together, there is a tremendous unifying effect. When the gathering takes place on the 12th of Tammuz, this effect is even stronger.

The reason for this is that the central thrust of the Previous Rebbe's life was to unite Jews into a single unit. This can be done only through Torah and mitzvos, since in other matters, such as occupation, personal habits, etc. each person is unique. Torah and mitzvos, on the other hand, apply equally to each and every Jew.

It was for this that the Previous Rebbe devoted himself, and actually placed his life on the line. This devotion led to his imprisonment, and eventually to his release, on the 12th of Tammuz.

The Torah teaches us that it is fitting to express gratitude to someone who has given you assistance. It is therefore proper to begin this gathering by thanking all those who helped achieve the release of the Previous Rebbe. The United States government played an important role, both regarding his release from prison and subsequent emigration, together with his family and belongings.

We therefore wish to express our thanks to the U.S. government, and the President, who, although was not in office at that time, nevertheless represents a continuation of that tradition, spreading righteousness and justice to this very day.

Everything we speak about must have practical application. In this case, a similar situation exists today in that same country, involving the millions of Jews behind the "Iron Curtain" who are forbidden to leave.

There are two ways to approach this situation: one is to make a

great tumult and public show of opposition. The other is to work quietly behind the scenes. When the original 12th of Tammuz came about, the U.S. government chose the second path of action, and that was the key to their success. So too now, this is the proper approach — quietly and pleasantly, but with strength.

It is not necessary to mix in any other considerations, such as religion, philosophy, perspectives on life, etc. Here we are dealing with a concept that everyone agrees with — the essential freedom of the individual to choose where he wants to live. This has been agreed upon and signed by the nations of the world, including Russia.

Therefore, there is no need for discussion on this point; they themselves have already agreed. This same idea was enunciated by the Previous Rebbe, when he declared that his release proved that his activities were permitted by Russian law.

Any individual who has influence in the relevant circles has a personal obligation to use it. As Mordechai said to Esther, “Who knows; perhaps you have reached royalty for such a time?” Although this influence could be used in other areas — for good purposes, of course — there could be nothing greater than helping millions of Jews, and through them, their descendants for all generations.

Time is of the essence here, and not even a moment should be wasted. An improper education is difficult to correct later on. Therefore, anyone who has influence should use it and not be ashamed to ask, “What has been accomplished in the last 24 hours?!”

Since there has been a recent change in leadership in that country, and the new ruler seems inclined towards leniency, this is a particularly opportune time for success. May we all merit to see the speedy release of our brethren, which will certainly come in a pleasant and agreeable manner.

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2. Every individual is a microcosm reflecting the entire world around him, as our Sages put it (Avos D’rav Nosson 31:3), “Everything G-d created in the universe, He also created in man.” Therefore, just as we see an “Iron Curtain” in the world, behind

which there are Jews awaiting release, so too we find something similar within the individual.

As explained in Tanya, every Jew has within a *yetzer tov*, which desires only good, and a *yetzer hora*, which wishes the opposite. They are in a constant state of battle, each trying to gain exclusive control over the person.

Since the *yetzer tov* is a G-dly existence, its nature cannot be changed. But, when the person acts according to the directives of the *yetzer hora*, he places his *yetzer tov* behind an “Iron Curtain.” This “Iron Curtain” prevents the *yetzer tov* from expressing its desire, i.e. from full devotion to Torah and mitzvos.

When the individual tears down this “Iron Curtain,” the *yetzer tov* is free to behave as it wishes — even more so, it transforms the *yetzer hora*, so that it should also be drawn towards Torah and mitzvos.

The difficulties in tearing down this “Iron Curtain” are obvious, especially in today’s world. By nature, people are created in a way that they are affected by their surroundings. This world around us becomes increasingly enveloped by spiritual darkness, especially in recent years.

One sees, for example, an unprecedented amount of squabbling among the nations of the world. Regarding the United Nations, for example, the United States representative to the UN summarized the situation as follows: the UN, which was established to “unite” the “nations,” has become the opposite — a podium for hatred and disagreement.

The *yetzer hora* points to such uncivilized behavior, telling the person that he too should behave as if he lives in a “jungle.” The individual must oppose this “Iron Curtain” and release his *yetzer tov* from captivity.

This action of the individual has its effect on the larger “Iron Curtain,” since, as we mentioned, the person is a microcosm of the entire world.

In addition, there are more direct effects: when G-d sees the person behaving as he should, He adds in His blessings, granting him success in his endeavors to bring freedom to the world. So too,

when people see the person acting as a living example of “freedom,” this helps guide them in the proper mode of behavior. Finally, when the world’s rulers see the individual behaving justly and righteously, they are more likely to accept and implement his advice.

A person might feel that he is insignificant, and unable to affect the entire world. This is the lesson of the 12th of Tammuz, the time when the Previous Rebbe, as an individual, successfully stood up against a mighty nation.

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3. We mentioned above the present state of the world at large — that people behave as if they are in a “jungle,” without controlling their behavior. It is essential that this situation be remedied, and there is only one way to accomplish this: through implanting within all inhabitants of the world faith in the Creator.

This does not mean that they must accept the Jewish religion, or any religion at all; rather that they recognize that the universe has a Source, a Source which constantly renews the world’s existence. This is not a matter of “religion,” and a person cannot escape this conclusion by saying that he “isn’t religious.” Refusal to recognize that the universe has a Source is simply fooling oneself.

It is impossible to bring about proper behavior in any other way. Threat of punishment is unsuccessful, since the youngster might think that a “smart boy” like himself can always outsmart the police! Even if caught, he can always bribe his way out! Even if the parents watch him closely to ensure proper behavior, how can they be sure he will continue in that path when they aren’t watching? The only solution is to make him aware of “the Eye that sees, and the Ear that hears” everything he does, constantly.

It is ironic that the only place one is forbidden from mentioning this is in the place where it is most important: in the public schools. In the Senate and House of Representatives, the sessions begin with a prayer to the Master of the universe. On the money which the child uses, it is written, “In G-d We Trust.” In the schools, however, which are responsible for molding the children into responsible adults, an “Iron Curtain” has been erected making such mention impossible.

Previously, such guidance was provided in the home. Today, for whatever reason, overall responsibility for the child's conduct lies in the hands of the school system.

As for the argument that mentioning the Creator in the schools violates the Constitution — even a superficial glance at history shows its fallacy. The people who originally came to this country did so in order to be able to worship as they pleased, without having a specific belief forced upon them. [Today, people have different motivations, as the saying goes, they come, “to make a dollar.”]

How could one imagine that they intended to forbid mention of the Creator, when their whole purpose was to establish a country which would *not interfere with their worship in any way!*

Picture it: the child goes to the store to buy a candy, using money on which it is written, “In G-d We Trust.” One asks the child what this phrase means, and he answers, “How should I know? They never teach us anything about what is written on money!”

In addition, even if the Constitution would forbid this, the framers of the Constitution wrote it, “By the people, for the people,” and therefore subject to amendment. In view of the rapidly rising crime rate among the youth, and general deterioration of societal values, the only rational plan of action would be to revise and amend the Constitution. How much more so when the Constitution itself allows it.

It must be mentioned, however, that there is always a risk that the teacher will try to impose a particular religion on the students. For this reason, it is proper to establish a “moment of silence” at the beginning of the day, during which the child should *think* about the Creator. As far as what to think about, this should be the job of the parent — just as they send along a sandwich to nourish their child's body, so too they must send along “food for thought” for the child's spiritual well-being.

The same applies to universities, as well as yeshivas in which the children pray before coming to school. There too, the day should begin with a prayer or moment of silent meditation, in order to help the child develop a love and awe of G-d.

In this way, the children will bring pride and joy to their parents, their school, and to the entire generation.

Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe

*whose teachings and example are a
never-ending source of life for all mankind.
May we continue in his paths, and complete
the mission with which he has charged us:
to make the world conscious of the imminent
Redemption and to prepare an environment
where this ideal can be realized.*



& In Memory of

Aryeh Leib ben Avraham Yaakov ע"ה Fein

who passed away 8 Tammuz



dedicated by

Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey שיחיו Kimball



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