
Sichos in English Classics 3

THE LAST SICHA



FUSION OF TWO HALF ENTITIES



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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.

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27 YEARS AGO

The intro to the original translation of the Sicha in 1992

Rephrasing slightly our Sages' words,¹ a Torah sage can be compared to "a walking Torah scroll." Similarly, *chassidim* would always refer to the teachings of their Rebbeim as *divrei Elokim chayim*, "the words of the living G-d," for "every new Torah concept developed by an experienced Sage was already given to Moshe on Mount Sinai."² In previous generations — and likewise in the present day — *chassidim* would make an effort to "live with" the words of their Rebbeim, to internalize them and apply them in their lives.

In recent years, we have merited a veritable effulgence of teachings from the Rebbe *Shlita*: talks of scholarship and inspiration delivered on every *Shabbos*, and at times, several times on weekdays as well — until the eve of 28th of *Adar Alef*. ***May we be soon privileged once again to hear Torah from his mouth with ever-increasing vigor and joy.***

Now, the Rebbe's condition is, ה"ב, improving and his doctors are hoping for a speedy and complete recovery. In the interim, however, the talks he delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel*, just two days prior to the eve of the 28th of Adar, take on a unique significance. They serve as a veritable spiritual treasure trove, containing lessons relevant in regard to our own individual divine service, the manner in which we relate to others, and the means by which we can hasten the coming of the ultimate Redemption.

We have already published an adaptation of these talks in a form more accessible to the general public in the essay entitled "Togetherness — Between Individuals, and Within Individuals." To do justice to the wider range of ideas presented by the Rebbe,

¹ *Kiddushin* 33b.

² *Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah* 2:4.

however, we also feel it necessary to present them in a form far more representative of the style in which they were originally delivered.

May our efforts to live with the Rebbe's talks, to internalize them and apply them in our lives, generate divine blessing that will enable him to again deliver such talks in the most immediate future. And may we all together merit an ever-increasing sequence of blessings, including the ultimate blessing — the coming of the Redemption.

FULFILLMENT — THE FUSION OF TWO HALF-ENTITIES

Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 25th Day of Adar I, 5752

Generally, the *parshiyos*, *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* are read together. As explained on previous occasions, when two *parshiyos* are combined, they form a single entity. Thus, when these two *parshiyos* are combined, the intent is not that there are certain aspects of the reading that are relevant to *Parshas Vayakhel* and others to *Parshas Pekudei*, but rather, that every element of the Torah reading has a combined message *Vayakhel-Pekudei*.

Herein lies a fundamental lesson in our service of G-d, for the totality of the mission with which we are charged to fulfill in this world is crystallized in the two thrusts *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*.³

To explain: *Vayakhel*, “And you shall gather,” points to the unification of all the entities in this diverse world, uniting them within the domain of holiness. *Pekudei*, by contrast, means “counting,” and highlights how every entity possesses its own unique importance. For every creation was given a unique nature with which it can serve G-d.

Although the sequence of the two *parshiyos* indicates that *Vayakhel* prepares one for *Pekudei*, *Vayakhel* represents an independent service in its own right. This concept receives greater emphasis this year, when *Vayakhel* is read and studied as a separate *parshah*.

³ In a larger sense, this mission involves, not only humans but the totality of creation. In regard to men, our Sages teach, “I was created solely to serve my Creator.” And similarly, the creation at large exists for a single purpose to express G-d’s will.

In particular, the message of *Vayakhel* applies to the Jewish people and alludes to their being gathered together to form a single collective entity in the spirit of the *mitzvah*, “Love your fellow man as yourself.” This is possible, because all Jews share a single essence; all are “truly a part of G-d from above.”

The importance of this service is emphasized by the fact that the Alter Rebbe placed the declaration, “Behold I accept upon myself the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, ‘Love your fellowman as yourself,’” at the very beginning of the prayer service,⁴ making it the foundation of one’s daily activities.

In simple terms, this command means that when a person sees another Jew, he should try to unite with him, for in truth they share a fundamental commonality. This applies, not only to the Jews in one’s immediate community, but to all Jews, even those far removed, indeed, even those in a distant corner of the world. Needless to say, the manner in which these feelings of unity are expressed will differ in terms of the practical means of expression available, but the feelings of oneness are universal in nature.

Even when the distance is also spiritual in nature, i.e., when another Jew does not share one’s level of Jewish observance, one should focus on the connection shared and not on the differences. In regard to one’s personal conduct, one must emphasize two modes of serving G-d — striving both to, “Turn away from evil and do good.” When, however, one relates to another individual, one must channel one’s energies solely in the path of “Do good.”

Although there may be times when another individual’s conduct warrants reproof, before speaking one should question whether he is fit to be the one to administer it. Furthermore, if

⁴ Prayer is essentially a person’s request for the fulfillment of his own needs. Thus, it relates to *Parshas Pekudei*, where the emphasis is on the importance of every individual particular. Before this service, the Alter Rebbe emphasized the importance of *Ahavas Yisrael*, the lesson of *Vayakhel*.

This sequence is reflected in the very beginning of the prayer service, the verse “How goodly are your tents O Yaakov.” Our Rabbis explain that this verse refers to the separation of the tents into tribes, i.e., each service standing out as a distinct entity.

reproof must be given, it should be offered gently, which will obviously enable it to be accepted more readily than harsh speech. Moreover, such words should be spoken only on select occasions.

These concepts are reflected in the verse, “One who withholds the rod hates his son,” which indicates that stiff rebuke may be given only when the relationship between two individuals is like a father and a son. There are two concepts implied by this verse: Firstly, that to give rebuke, one must love the other person just as a father loves his child. And also that the difference in level between the two people must be as radical as that between a father and a son. This is not true in most cases. Since all individuals share a fundamental equality, it is appropriate that they relate to each other as equals.

This is the message of *Parshas Vayakhel*, that one must seek to unite with every member of the Jewish people. This service receives greater emphasis at present, when we are sitting together in a *farbrengen*, when our feelings of *Ahavas Yisrael* are actually expressed. When we say, “Behold I accept upon myself the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, ‘Love your fellow man as yourself,’” this is a private statement.⁵ In contrast, the present gathering is an opportunity for these feelings to be actually expressed.

This approach, the thrust to unite with one’s fellow Jews, will lead to the ultimate fulfillment of *Vayakhel*, the ingathering of the Jewish people to *Eretz Yisrael*. And here, a significant lesson results from the fact that *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* are read as separate *parshiyos*. There is no need to wait for *Pekudei*, the census of the Jewish people, for the beginning of *Vayakhel*, the ingathering. On the contrary, the Jews will first gather together in *Eretz Yisrael*, and afterwards, there will be a census.⁶

⁵ For the preliminary stages of the prayer service are often recited at home, before one joins together with a community.

⁶ Taking the census of the Jewish people will take time, for a census must be carried out in an orderly manner. Therefore, first there will be the ingathering of the exiles, *Vayakhel*, and then afterwards, after we have left the exile, the census will be taken.

This is particularly relevant in the present year, a year of “wonders in all things,” for a foretaste of this ingathering is being experienced at present with the *aliyah* of Jews from many different countries to *Eretz Yisrael*. Throughout the centuries, there were always Jews who made *aliyah*. At present, however, there are far more Jews gathering in *Eretz Yisrael* than ever before and indeed, this has attracted the attention of the entire world.

In this context, it is worthy to note an enigmatic phenomenon. Although Rav Mendel of Horadok and several other Rebbeim settled in *Eretz Yisrael*, none of the *nesi'im*, from the Baal Shem Tov to the Previous Rebbe ever made *aliyah*. Furthermore, with the exception of the Previous Rebbe, none ever even visited *Eretz Yisrael*. And in the Previous Rebbe’s case, he explained the reason for his visit: as a substitute for the visit to the graves of the Rebbeim in Lubavitch and Rostov.

The above concepts also relate to the special Torah reading of the present week, *Parshas Shekalim*. We find that the Torah explicitly commands that “the rich shall not give more... than a half-*shekel*.” On the surface, this is difficult to understand: All the offerings in the *Beis HaMikdash* were required to be perfect and complete. Why in this instance were we required to give no more than a half-*shekel*? Also, since the Torah requires us to give only a half-*shekel*, why does it mention that an entire *shekel* is twenty *gerah*? Seemingly, all that concerns us is the ten *gerah* of the half-*shekel*.

In resolution: This command clarifies that a Jew cannot become a complete entity a “holy *shekel*, unless he joins together with another Jew. Each Jew himself is ten *gerah*, a half⁷ -*shekel*. When, however, he joins together with another Jew, they reach twenty⁸ *gerah*, a complete entity.

⁷ The concept of being a half relates to the service of having “a broken, and crushed heart,” which makes one worthy of the assurance that “G-d will not scorn.”

⁸ In Kabbalistic terms, twenty is associated with the *Sefirah* of *Kesser*, a perfect level which leads one to “lift up one’s heart in the ways of G-d.”

Parshas Vayakhel and *Parshas Shekalim* also emphasize the need for establishing unity within one's own self. Indeed, the establishment of such unity makes possible the establishment of bonds of unity with other Jews.

This endeavor is illustrated in a renowned chassidic story: Rav Zalman Aharon, the elder son of the Rebbe Maharash, once asked his uncle, Rav Yosef Yitzchak, if he recited his prayers *betzibbur*, "with the community." Rav Yosef Yitzchak answered in the affirmative. The very next day, however, Rav Zalman Aharon noticed that his uncle prolonged his prayers, lingering far longer than any congregation would.

"You told me you prayed *betzibbur*?" he asked.

"I do," his uncle replied. "*Betzibbur* literally means 'with the collective.' After I marshal together the ten components of my soul, I pray."

Similarly, in regard to *Parshas Shekalim*, another explanation of the reason why only a half-*shekel* was given was to emphasize that a Jew's second half comes from above. Thus, the Maggid of Mezritch interprets the expression *shnai chatzotzros*, (lit. "two trumpets") as *shnai chatzi tzuros*, "two half-entities," for a Jew and G-d are both "half-entities" until a union is established between them.⁹

In this context, we can understand why a Jew's day begins with the declaration *Modeh Ani*. Even before a person says, "Behold I accept upon myself..." as soon as he arises from sleep, he declares *Modeh Ani*.¹⁰

What is the core of this declaration? That a person gather together his entire being and devote it to G-d.

⁹ Here again there is a connection to the number twenty, for this is the sum reached when a Jew's ten faculties are combined with the ten *Sefiros* from above.

¹⁰ The declaration "Behold, I accept upon myself..." begins the prayer service, but well before a Jew is able to make such a declaration, he begins his day with *Modeh Ani*.

To explain: Seemingly, before a person is able to make such a declaration, he should consciously perceive G-d's presence. This in turn would appear to require that he contemplate the world around him until he comes to the realization that "the entire earth is filled with His glory." Only then, would he be able to make an all-encompassing commitment to G-d.

We, however, do not need such preparation, for our connection with G-dliness is intrinsic and constant, shaping our thinking processes even when we sleep. Indeed, a person's bond with G-d may be even greater when he sleeps than when he is awake, for then his conscious, intellectual faculties do not control his thoughts. In their absence, his essence can surface. And the essence of every soul is connected with G-d at all times.¹¹

When a person arises from sleep,¹² however, he becomes conscious of himself as an individual entity, and indeed, as a powerful entity.¹³ Nevertheless, as soon as he feels his own existence, he gives himself over to G-d with thankful acknowledgement.¹⁴ And this enables him to perceive how "great is Your faithfulness," i.e., how every entity in the world reflects

¹¹ Note the *Rambam's* statements in *Hilchos Gerushin* 2:20 that every Jew desires to fulfill G-d's will at all times.

¹² Since a Jew's essence is connected with G-d at all times, he does not sleep because of his own individual desire, but only as a response to G-d's command, "And you shall show very careful concern for your lives."

¹³ A Jew's existence is *kevua*, "fixed and permanent." And our Sages teach that the existence of an entity which is *kevua* cannot be nullified even when mixed together with a quantity one thousand times greater than itself. Moreover, the Hebrew word for one thousand *elef* (אלף) also relates to one of the terms used to describe G-d, *Alufo* (אלופו) *shel olam*, "L-rd of the world." A Jew's existence cannot be nullified even in the face of *Alufo shel olam*. For *Alufo shel olam* refers to G-d as He descends and limits Himself in order to allow for the possibility of worldly existence. A Jew, however, is one with G-d at a level which transcends worldly existence entirely.

¹⁴ In the *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4, the *Rambam* speaks of "those who slumber in the vanities of worldly existence." The fundamental unity all men share with G-d affects these individuals despite their "sleep." Accordingly, their "slumber" will surely be only temporary. Ultimately, they too will "wake up" and develop a conscious relationship with G-d.

G-d's gracious kindness. In this manner, he is able to collect every entity in the world at large under the all-encompassing banner of G-d's service.

To summarize: a Jew's service begins with gathering together the different aspects of his own being. Afterwards, he gathers together with the entire Jewish people, and then, gathers together every element of the world and shows how their entire existence is intended to carry out G-d's will.¹⁵ In this manner, every moment of a Jew's life should be one in which he "wakes up from sleep," and begins with *Modeh Ani*. And then his entire day is healthy in both a spiritual and a material sense.¹⁶

And this will lead to the ultimate process of ingathering, the ingathering of the dispersed Jewish people. G-d will "sound the great shofar... and bring us together from the four corners of the earth into our land." "A great congregation (— all the Jews of the present generation and all those of the previous generations —) will return here."

And this will happen in the very near future.¹⁷ And then we will proceed "with our youth and with our elders... with our sons and with our daughters" to *Eretz Yisrael*, to Jerusalem, and to the Third (and threefold¹⁸) *Beis HaMikdash*. May this take place in the immediate future.

Increasing our gifts to tzedakah; giving of "our selves"

The practical directive to be taken from the above involves an increase of our donations to *tzedakah*. In this context, we can

¹⁵ This reflects the connection between the ten utterances of creation and the Ten Commandments.

¹⁶ Indeed, the material and the spiritual are fused together into a single entity. For *Modeh Ani* reflects a oneness with G-d's essence and at that level, there is no difference between material and spiritual existence.

¹⁷ Indeed, it is possible that the prophet Elyahu has already come to Tiberias and announced the coming of *Mashiach*.

¹⁸ I.e., inclusive of the different advantages possessed by both the First and Second *Batei HaMikdash*.

derive a lesson from the fact that the half-*shekalim* were given in connection with the sacrifices offered in the *Beis HaMikdash*.

In regard to those sacrifices, it is written, “A person who shall bring from you....” The Alter Rebbe notes that seemingly it would have been more proper to say, “A person of you who shall bring....” The transposition of the order of the words in the verse indicates that the offering must be “from you,” of the person’s self. The Hebrew word for offering *korban* relates to the Hebrew word *kerov* meaning “close.” The only way a Jew can come close to G-d is by giving of himself.

Similarly, in regard to our gifts to *tzedakah*; we must give of ourselves. There are different graduations in our obligation to give *tzedakah*: The basic obligation of *tzedakah* is *maaser*, one tenth of one’s resources. A person who desires to fulfill the *mitzvah*, *min hamuvchar* (“in the choicest manner possible”), should give a fifth of his resources. Over and above that, however, there is a deeper motivation to give, to borrow an expression, “everything a person owns he will give for the sake of his soul.” For the realization of the fundamental unity we share with others will prompt us to give generously. For the other person is one’s other half as it were. Giving to him fulfills one’s own self, and therefore, there will be no limits to one’s gifts.

Furthermore, one’s giving must be in a manner of *vayakhel*, i.e., permeated with the efforts to gather together with all other Jews. This means that our thoughts must be preoccupied with *Ahavas Yisrael*, the love of our fellow Jews. We must make statements that reflect this feeling including the declaration instituted at the beginning of the prayer service mentioned above. And primarily, our actual gifts must reflect this commitment. Thus they will be substantial, as mentioned above, “everything a person owns he will give for the sake of his soul.”

Moreover, our gifts to *tzedakah* should constantly be increased. Every moment, the creation as a whole is being renewed and is receiving additional blessings through G-d’s benevolence. Therefore, at every moment, we should renew and increase our

commitment to *tzedakah*, amplifying the manner in which we help others.

And these efforts to gather together, both the different dimensions of our spiritual being and to gather together with other Jews will hasten the ultimate ingathering of the Jewish people when together with the entire Jewish people, we will proceed to *Eretz Yisrael* where we merit the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* and the actual offering of the sacrifices. May this take place in the immediate future.

ADDENDUM

Behind the Scenes of Sichos in English

On Shabbos Parshas Tazria Metzorah (6th of Iyar) 5751 the Rebbe spoke that learning about Moshiach and redemption is the correct and right path to usher in the coming of Moshiach.

A few weeks later, on the 24th of Iyar, this letter was written by Rabbi Yonah Avtzon to the Rebbe.

“In accordance with the rebbe’s instruction to learn in Chassidus topics that are connected to Moshiach and Geulah, and according to the rebbe’s instruction given over to us through rabbi Yehuda Krinsky to publish the book that was prepared by Rabbi Eliyahu Friedman of Tzfas, we hereby present to the Rebbe the first section in Loshon Hakodesh (which will include 5 sections eventually). We are currently working on the translation to English by Rabbi Uri Kaploun.

“We hope that this Sefer will cause the Rebbe nachas ruach, and that its spreading should usher in the redemption through Moshiach Tzidkeinu.”

On that last paragraph the Rebbe crossed out the word “*should cause nachas*” and the Rebbe wrote “*it has caused*” and then he added the word “*lots*” that this publication has caused lots of nachas ruach to the Rebbe.

לעילוי נשמת הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יונה

בן הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' מאיר ע"ה

אבצן

מנהל ועד שיחות באנגלית למעלה מארבעים שנה



לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יונה

בן הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' מאיר ע"ה

אבצן

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