
Sichos in English Classics 18

The Rebbe Gives Over His Yechida



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.

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INTRO

As we stand during the weeks leading up to Gimmel Tammuz we felt it appropriate to bring Sichos from the SIE set proceeding Together which documents the Sichos of the early years, soon after the Histalkus of the Previous Rebbe.

This set was published by SIE soon after Gimmel Tammuz 5754, and offered strength and guidance to Chassidim at that difficult time.

This week we bring excerpts from the Rebbe's Farbrengen on the 2nd of Iyar 5710.

Like that week, below we include excerpts from the overview to the "Proceeding Together" series:

TOGETHERNESS

The theme of togetherness, another major message of this book, calls to mind a critical moment in the life of the *Tzemach Tzedek* which the Rebbe highlighted more than once.

In 1843 the Czar convened a Rabbinical Commission with the intent of imposing religious and educational reforms on Russian Jewry. Fearlessly and repeatedly, the *Tzemach Tzedek* resisted the brutal intimidation of the Czar's ministers to the point of literally risking his life. One of his colleagues, the illustrious Reb Itzele of Volozhin, thereupon queried his conduct: After all, what would happen to the chassidic community if he were to have experienced actual self-sacrifice?

Replied the *Tzemach Tzedek*: "Following the style of the *Gemara*, I will give you one answer followed by an alternative answer. The first answer is: I have children. The alternative answer is: The togetherness of chassidim will lead them to greet *Mashiach*."

In times like these, then, we have a clear directive from the Rebbe: There is one consideration that overrides and overrules all

other considerations, even such considerations as who is supposedly right and who is supposedly wrong on any particular cosmic question. And that overriding consideration is, that *chassidim hold tightly together*.

A UNIQUE FORUM: THE FARBRENGEN

The above themes are only a few of the many seminal concepts, basic to the thinking of a chassid, that the Rebbe clarified and defined at the intense early *farbrengens* that resonate in this book. For the hundreds of thousands of chassidim and other earnest seekers who found their way to “770” over the years, these informal gatherings remain an unforgettable experience. For tireless hours on end, a series of talks on a mind-boggling range of subjects - Talmudic and philosophical, mystical and topical, abstruse and heartwarming - would be punctuated by *niggunim*, as eager listeners joined together in singing meditative or rousing chassidic melodies. After participating in a *farbrengen* and studying and digesting its lessons, their minds were no longer petty; their hearts were no longer weary; their souls were no longer dormant.

THE REBBE GIVES OVER HIS YECHIDA

4. Being Connected. In the customary wording of the *pidyon* in which people request the Rebbe [Rayatz] to arouse Divine compassion on their behalf, I would, if I could, delete the following words: “...from the Source of Mercy..., as in the prayer beginning *Machnisei Rachamim*,¹ as explained in the responsum of *Mahariv Zal*.² There are two reasons for this:

(a) The appended words (“as in... *Machnisei Rachamim*, as explained in the responsum of *Mahariv Zal*”) cite *why it is permissible* (when it might otherwise appear to involve an intermediary) to address a *pidyon* to a Rebbe; this is explained in the responsum of *Mahariv Zal* on the recitation of *Machnisei Rachamim*. These appended words are thus not appropriate in the wording of a *pidyon*, which is a *request for compassion* (as in its opening phrase, “I request that you arouse abundant mercies”), and not an exposition of why this is permissible.

(b) As to the phrase *miMekor HaRachamim* (“from the Source of Mercy”), there is no need to supply the Rebbe [Rayatz] with an address from which to arouse Divine compassion: he knows that himself.... In fact, he may wish to arouse Divine compassion from a level of Divinity which *transcends* the level known as *Mekor HaRachamim*.

It is true that the Rebbe [Rayatz] himself used to use this wording.³ That, however, was his own practice; it does not indicate that we, who do not understand Rebbe-things, should do likewise.

1. The prayer appears toward the end of the *Selichos* read in the days preceding Rosh HaShanah. The quoted phrase refers to the angels who “usher in [prayers for] compassion.”

2. See sec. 275. (*Mahariv* is an acronym for R. Yitzchak [ben Avraham] Wanneh, a Yemenite kabbalist.)

3. See the *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. X, p. 432, and Vol. XI, p. 4. See also the *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rashab, Vol. IV, p. 145.

A few days ago a young man walked in and told me excitedly that my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], had once told him that by being bound to him, he would thereby be bound to Him to Whom he (the Rebbe himself) was bound....

I did not want to cool his ardor, but the truth is, that to Whom the Rebbe is bound is not our concern. We are bound to *him*, and we have nothing higher than that.

By way of analogy: It could legitimately be said that a particular organ derives its vitality from the liver, or (higher) from the heart, or (yet higher) from the brain; it could not be said (or thought) that any organ derives its vitality from the brain of a different body. A living organ that desires to survive and not to wither, G-d forbid, has to derive its vitality from its own brain.

The same principle applies to *hiskashrus*, to one's bond with the Rebbe, who is the head (the brain, so to speak) and the transcendent crown (the *Keser*) of our generation.

5. Receiving Essence, Repaying with Essence. Receiving spiritual benefits from the *Nasi* of the generation obliges one to repay, just as a borrower obligates himself to repay a loan. This does not mean that once he has repaid he simply crosses off the debt; rather, on receiving his repayment, the creditor gives him a further sum on credit.⁴ Likewise in the analog, the individual beneficiary is endowed with further spiritual energy, which in turn he is obligated to repay, and so on.

[At this point the Rebbe turned to the *temimim*, the students of the Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch Yeshivah, and said:]

Each one of you should know that he is obligated to make his repayment to my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], with the innermost and essential faculties⁵ of his soul — his *Chayah-Yechidah*.

Firstly, all the various benefits that my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], directs [to you] — delivering *maamarim*, an-

4. As explained in *Kuntreis Chai Elul 5709 [1949]*, reprinted in *Sefer HaMaamarim 5709 [1949]*, p. 216ff.

5. In the original, *kochos atzmi'im*.

swering queries and so on, and including even the granting of stipends and the like — share a common characteristic: they spring from *his* innermost and essential soul-faculties, from his *Chayah-Yechidah*.

* * *

By the way:⁶ I was recently asked, in what way was the greatness of the Rebbe [Rayatz] expressed by comparison with other great figures. I answered that each of the *gedolei Yisrael* had a particular field in which he engaged and in which his greatness found expression; the Rebbe [Rayatz], by contrast, engaged in *all fields*, from the loftiest to the most prosaic. (In the idiom of our Sages,⁷ “What is meant by ‘a great subject’? — the Celestial Chariot [in the vision of Yechezkel]; what is meant by ‘a lesser subject’? — the legal debates of Abbaye and Rava.”) These fields ranged from the uncovering of the most hidden mysteries in the teachings of *Chassidus*, to a concern that fellow Jews should put on *tefillin* and observe *Shabbos*, to utterly material matters such as organizing financial support for the needy. And in every one of these fields he dedicated himself with his entire essence, with his *Chayah-Yechidah*.

(The above question was asked by two young men — both ordained with Rabbinical *semichah*, no less — and when they heard the above reply they took out a notebook, wrote it down, and commented, “Now we know what the Rebbe is.” So you see, now they’ve got the Rebbe down on paper....)

* * *

As we were saying: The above-mentioned common characteristic — that all the benefits spring from *Chayah-Yechidah* — relates to the giver, to the *mashpia*. However, with relation to the *hashpaah* itself, that is, to the downflow of spiritual energy, and likewise, with relation to its recipients, there is a variety of levels.

6. This interpolation (of two paragraphs) appears in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. II, pp. 508-9.

7. *Sukkah* 28a.

In this respect the *yeshivah* students have a distinctive advantage: they receive the Rebbe's *Chayah-Yechidah*, and are therefore obligated to repay with their own *Chayah-Yechidah*.

One might argue that the repayment which they make with *their* soul-levels of *Chayah-Yechidah* cannot be compared with the *Chayah-Yechidah* of my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]. This objection can be answered by considering the following point made in the teachings of *Chassidus*.⁸ When the Torah commands a Jew,⁹ "You shall love the L-rd your G-d... with all your might," it is true that this involves no more than "all *your* might." Nevertheless, this very endeavor empowers the finite individual to draw on G-d's true might, which in essence is infinite. An analogous principle applies to the repayment which the *temimim* make with *their* soul-levels of *Chayah-Yechidah*, in response to the spiritual input invested in them from the *Chayah-Yechidah* of my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz].

8. Networking. Getting down to practicalities — for with my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], what mattered most was actual, practical *avodah* — I would like to propose that every one of the students present undertake two things:

(a) With regard to himself, an activity by means of which his *hiskashrus* with my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], will be strengthened;

(b) With regard to others, an endeavor to bring at least one fellow Jew — whether a single student or a married adult — close to the Rebbe [Rayatz] and to the spiritual lifestyle of *Chassidus*, so that he will delve deeply into its teachings and meditate upon them at length as he engages in the *avodah* of prayer.¹⁰

8. See *Torah Or, Parshas Mikeitz*, p. 39c ff.; *Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 122b ff.

9. *Devarim* 6:5; in the original, בכל מאודך.

10. This task is required not only with respect to those who are distant (spatially, and even more so in a spiritual sense). Even with respect to those who are nearby, and even within the Yeshivah itself, students should make a point of lending each other help and support.

The above note is taken from the unauthenticated record which one of those present made of a statement by the Rebbe.

9. Mere Miracles. When one sets out to bring a fellow Jew close to the Rebbe [Rayatz] and to the spiritual lifestyle of *Chassidus*, one can begin in many ways, including the recounting of miracles, and the like. The ultimate aim, however, should be to bring him close to the study of the teachings of *Chassidus*, for this is the *essential* aspect¹¹ — the *Chayah-Yechidah* — of the Rebbe, whereas miracle-working is merely an outward reflection¹² of the Rebbe.¹³

Hiskashrus, one's bond with the Rebbe, is basically unconnected to miracles and the like. Indeed, *hiskashrus* neither needs miracles nor is benefited by them — in both directions: seeing miracles adds nothing to one's *hiskashrus*, and not seeing a miracle (for a day, or a week, or a month) detracts nothing from one's *hiskashrus*. The fact is, that if one were so to desire, he could see that my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], related to him even in his natural affairs in a manner that involved miracles day-by-day — but there is no need for this [awareness] at all, nor should one be overawed by it.

* * *

By way of illustration: An¹⁴ *agunah*, a deserted wife, accompanied by her son, who was dumb, once set out to request the blessing of the *Tzemach Tzedek*. Try as she might, however, she was unable to gain admission to his study, even after having pleaded with the *rebbitzin* (as was the custom of the women visitors of the time). An enterprising chassid advised her to write out her request and give the note to her son. Then, when no one was in the room, he would hide under the table in the room where *yechidus* took place, and when the *Tzemach Tzedek* entered, he would hand it to him. And that is exactly what happened.

When the *Tzemach Tzedek* received the note, he said: “Go and tell your mother that your father is in such-and-such a place.” So

11. In the original, *inyano haatzmi*.

12. In the original, *hispahtus*.

13. Concerning the following passage, see also *HaTamim*, Vol. II, p. 56ff.; *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. II, p. 361ff.

14. See *Igros Kodesh*, *op. cit.*, p. 93ff.

both of them were helped — the boy began to talk, and his mother found her husband.

When chassidim came and excitedly told the *Tzemach Tzedek* that by relaying this message the boy had spoken for the first time, he replied: “But how was I to know that the boy was dumb?...”

When his *rebbitzin* heard this story — and she, like all the daughters of the Mittlerer Rebbe, was a woman of mellow understanding — she showed no signs of amazement. She simply quoted the words of her grandfather, the Alter Rebbe: “In Mezritch [at the court of the Maggid], miracles used to roll about under the table, but no one found the time to bend down and pick them up....”

* * *

Nevertheless, if there is a need, then as far as others are concerned, one may begin to bring them near by this means too — by recounting miracles. The ultimate aim, however, as explained above, should be to introduce them to the study of the teachings of *Chassidus*.

10. Holy Excuses. Let no one be perturbed by the argument (for example) that if, in addition to his own spiritual tasks, he undertakes responsibility to help his fellow, the lost time will weaken his own *avodah*.

First of all: A man who sees his friend drowning in the sea doesn’t pause to make calculations; he makes every effort humanly possible to save him. The same applies to spiritual outreach: when a man has to be saved, there’s no time for any calculations whatever.

Secondly: Not only is one’s own *avodah* not affected adversely by activities for the benefit of one’s fellow; quite the contrary, these activities actually enhance one’s own efforts at self-improvement. This is stated explicitly by the Sages¹⁵ in their exposition of the verse,¹⁶ “G-d illumines the eyes of them both”: G-d grants

15. *Temurah* 16a.

16. *Mishlei* 29:13.

enlightenment not only to the Torah student, but to his teacher too.

Besides: Exerting oneself for the sake of another is extolled by the Sages in these terms:¹⁷ “Whoever teaches Torah to another’s son is regarded by Scripture as having brought him into the world.”

Both directions have to be pursued — on the one hand, studying *Chassidus* and laboring at self-refinement, and on the other hand, working at outreach.

I once told a learned young man who came to see me that we have to extinguish the conflagration that is running wild in the streets. The learned young man replied that this was a fit occupation for businessmen and diamond dealers; as for himself, he ought to engage only in the study of the Torah. After fifteen years of industrious study he would be “a famed *posek* among Jews,” and then Lubavitch would have whom to be proud of....

In response I told him that when a fire is raging, you don’t stop to make calculations. As to his concern that our community should also be graced by eminent scholars,¹⁸ the Alter Rebbe’s blessing will certainly be fulfilled — that “it is in the chassidic community that eminent scholars will be found.” This can be proved by a *kal vachomer* argument, *a fortiori*: The Alter Rebbe did *not* want impudent folk among his chassidim, and yet they are present; how much more is it certain that eminent scholars, whom the Alter Rebbe *did* want among his chassidim, will be present....

11. To Make One More Jew. My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], once told me a story about the Alter Rebbe¹⁹ which is most instructive on the subject of exerting oneself for the sake of another’s spiritual advancement.

One Yom Kippur, after *Shacharis*, the Alter Rebbe took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, walked to the edge of town, chopped wood, and cooked some soup for a woman who had just given birth. (When

17. *Sanhedrin* 19b.

18. In the original Heb./Yid., *lomdim*.

19. See also *Sefer HaMaamarim — Melukat*, Vol. I, p. 7.

he was asked why he had to do this himself when he could have sent along someone else, he replied that when a life has to be saved²⁰ by an apparent desecration of *Shabbos* or *Yom-Tov*, the law stipulates that the *mitzvah* devolves upon the person of highest stature²¹ — and he found no one more eligible.)

The Rebbe [Rayatz] concluded by commenting that this story was not always spoken of [by the preceding Rebbeim] — sometimes yes and sometimes no, but they certainly had no desire to publish it.

He nevertheless told me this story, knowing full well that I would not succeed in withholding it from other Jews, together with some explanation of its message.

In terms, of *avodah*, then, this story may be understood as follows:

The level at which the Alter Rebbe functioned while garbed in his *tallis* and *kittel* (resembling an angel²²) on Yom Kippur, after the morning prayers, can only be guessed at. Despite this, he took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, and made his way to the last cottage at the edge of the town, near the fields. Fields are an allusion to the lowest level within the realm of holiness, a level which neighbors the *kelipah*, as in the verse,²³ “Esau... was a man of the fields.” And why did the Alter Rebbe go through all this? — In order to help a woman in confinement and her infant; in other words, *to make one more Jew*.²⁴

From this episode everyone in the chassidic community can learn the crucial and indispensable importance of working with others. Let every individual therefore resolve to intensify his endeavors — both with regard to himself, and with regard to introducing others too to the teachings of *Chassidus*.²⁵

20. In the original, *pikuach nefesh*.

21. In the original, *mitzvah begadol*. Cf. *Yoma* 84b; the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 328:13.

22. The Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 610:9; 619:9.

23. *Bereishis* 25:27.

24. At this point the Rebbe went on to expound additional components of the story likewise in terms of *avodah* — chopping the wood, cooking the soup — but no record of this continued exposition is extant.

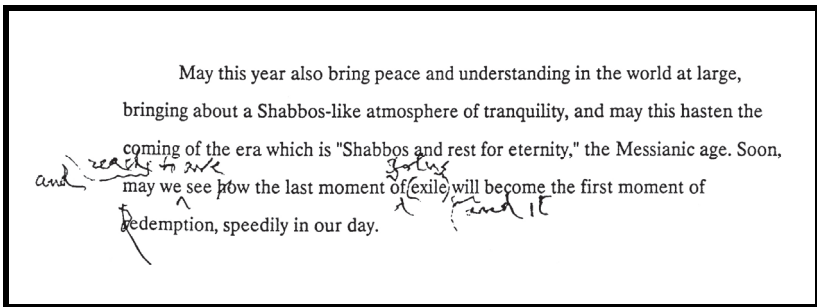
25. According to an unauthenticated note made by one of those present, the Rebbe concluded the above talk by saying: “The truth is, that people should be going out into

ADDENDUM

Behind the Scenes of Sichos in English

Below are excerpts from two different sichos (4 Tishrei 5750 and 26 Adar 5751) to Machne Yisroel donors that the Rebbe edited. In each, the Rebbe corrected the word “redemption” to be written with a capital “R”, similar to other words considered holy and important even when written in English, such as G-d, Jew, Holy Land and others.

In the 1st sicha, the Rebbe edited the last paragraph as follows:



May this year also bring peace and understanding in the world at large, bringing about a Shabbos-like atmosphere of tranquility, and may this hasten the coming of the era which is “Shabbos and rest for eternity,” the Messianic age. Soon, may we (*here the Rebbe added: “reach and ??”*) see (*the Rebbe deleted “how”*) the last moment of (*the Rebbe added: “Golus” and put “exile” into parentheses*) (*the Rebbe added “, and it”*) will become the first moment of Redemption, speedily in our day.

the streets and crying out, ‘Gevald, Yidden! For heaven’s sake, fellow Jews! There exists something called the teachings of Chassidus, which G-d wants Jews to study so that Mashiach will come!’ ”

In the 2nd sicha, the Rebbe changed “meeting” to “coming together”, giving a more accurate description of Achdus.

Thanking Him for the good He has granted us now, within the limits of exile, brings us ever closer to the greater and immeasurable good that will come in the era of redemption. Then we will proceed “on the clouds of heaven,”¹² and we will be able to continue our meeting in *Eretz Yisrael*, in Jerusalem, and in the *Beit HaMikdash*.

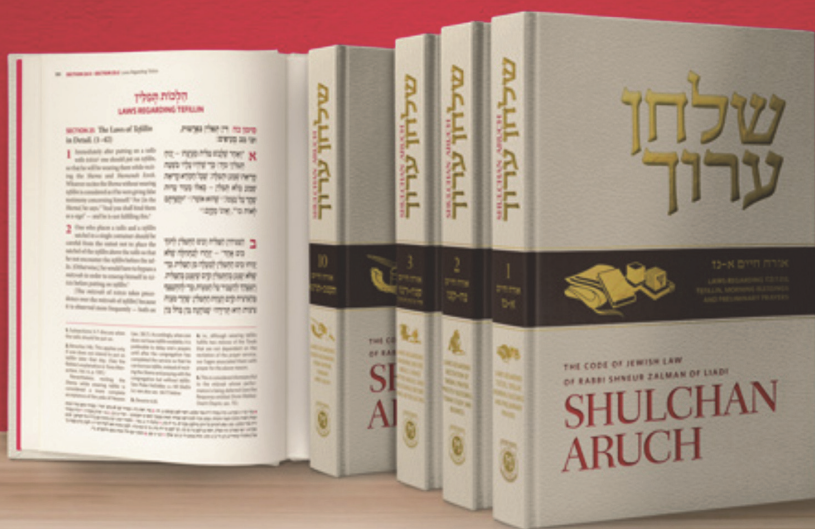
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