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**Sichos in English Classics 24**

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# **Illuminating the Nine Days**



**Eve of Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av,  
5740 (1980)**



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## IN PLACE OF AN INTRODUCTION

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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

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On Erev Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av 5740, the Rebbe went to the Ohel. Upon returning and after davening mincha, the Rebbe announced that he would be delivering a sicha after maariv.

After maariv, the Rebbe sat down at his place in the small zal and began speaking for approximately a half hour. The Rebbe later asked for this sicha to be transcribed and submitted to him for editing, after which it was printed in Yiddish in Likkutei Sichos vol. 24 pages 263 ff.

In a unique instance, this edited sicha was subsequently translated into English by Sichos In English and submitted to the Rebbe, who then edited it separately. The following is this edited sicha.

May we merit seeing the transformation of these days to days of joy and celebration with the imminent coming of Moshiach.

# ILLUMINATING THE NINE DAYS



**Eve of Rosh Chodesh  
Menachem Av, 5740 (1980)**

*(Free Translation)*

## I

“With the arrival of Av we diminish [joy]” — the opposite of regular behavior. ordinary behavior for Jews is, “Serve the L-rd with joy,” and since His service must be with perfection, thus the joy must also be full and perfect. When we are to “diminish joy,” that is the opposite of ordinary behavior.

There is a familiar statement, “Descent is for the purpose of ascent.” It is obvious then that “diminishing joy” — which is a radical descent (since it is the opposite of regular conduct) is for the purpose of leading to a radical ascent.

## II

Exile in general is descent, and in the first instance of exile we find that “we have descended and descended” was for the end that, “I shall take you up and *up*.” The fulfillment of “I shall take you up” happened at the Exodus and the promise “and (go) up” will be at the impending redemption.

Even if we are, G-d forbid, in a state of “not meriting” and can only await “in its time,” the Talmud assures us that “all the predestined dates (for redemption] have ended.” It follows that it is certainly past “its time.”

Beyond every doubt the time of “the end has come” has already passed, and G-d will not detain us for the blink of an eye. This has been said about the Exodus from Egypt and applies as well to the coming redemption, for it shall be “like the days when I took you from Egypt.”

Similarly, the descent of diminishing joy with the coming of Av, which is a consequence of the descent of exile, is for the ascent that the month will be transformed into joy.

### III

This concept is emphasized more clearly and in salient words in Yalkut Shimoni on Yirmiya, (a book that “discusses the Destruction”) and in Yirmiya proper at the very beginning. The words at the start, “in the fifth month” (the month we “diminish joy”) —

— “the Lion (Ari) rose [meaning Nevuchadnezar]

— in the *mazal* of the Lion (Ari) [ the fifth month

— and destroyed Ariel [referring to Jerusalem, and/or the Sanctuary in general, or to the altar in the Sanctuary]

— and this was “*so that* the Lion [the Holy One of Whom it is said, “The Lion roars, Who is not frightened?” should come

— during the *mazal* of Ari and

— reconstruct Ariel.”

Yalkut Shimoni goes on to explain that “the Lion will come during the *mazal* of Ari” and bring about that “I will *transform* their grief to happiness.” The fact that “the Lion rose during the *mazal* of Ari, and destroyed Ariel” is for a *specified purpose*, the reconstruction. We learn from this that the process of “diminishing joy with the coming of Av” was originally *intended* with a purpose, that there may be the “transformation of grief to happiness.”

### IV

For whatever Heaven endows us, we are to make appropriate vessels. These “vessels” are Torah and Mitzvos, so they are not only vessels to receive what He endows, but they also elicit the endowment and bring the endowment sooner.

In this context: we are to create vessels to call forth and bring forth more swiftly the fulfillment of “Ari will come in the *mazal* of Ari and construct Ariel.”

## V

“The definition of the “appropriate vessels” in this case is found at the close of the Haftarah of Shabbos Chazon, [the beginning of this Shabbos, like the beginning of any Shabbos, is the “first day of *the Shabbos* (week).” At this moment, the eve of the second day is the close and end of the first day.]

“Zion will be redeemed with Mishpat, and those who return to her — with Tzedakah. “ The Alter Rebbe explains: *Mishpat* means Halachos; Tzedakah means simply Tzedakah [charity].

[Though Tzedakah also means “Mitzvos in general that are called Tzedaka,” still the simple meaning is retained literal Tzedakah (charity). In a parallel manner, though “Mishpat” means Torah in general, still here the Halachah element is primary in importance.]

So that Mishpat and Tzedakah be properly performed and ascend properly, they must be joined to the third “line,” worship or Tefillah. Tefillah is the “ladder standing on earth and its top reaching to the Heavens.” Through Tefillah all of man’s service, his Torah and charity, ascend to Heaven. There is another quality inherent in Tefillah. In Tefillah we pray — and effectively — that we be granted G-d’s help and blessing that the “Mishpat” and “Tzedakah” be effective in all their details, in regard to the two proper, in regard to their ascent, and also in regard to their later elicitation and effectiveness here below.

## VI

In practical terms: during each of the Nine Days every one is to make additions in each of the three lines of Torah, Avodah (Tefillah) and Gemilus Chassadim.

In Torah: in each of the Nine Days add to your regular studies, particularly in Halacha, and also in the study of the Book of Zohar. In reference to Zohar, Moshe (called Raya Mehemna, the faithful Shepherd) declared, “with this volume of yours, which is the Zohar ... [Jews] will go forth from their exile with mercies.” Ideally, so that the study “give sustenance,” also study an interpretation of the Zohar (or some independent subject) in Chassidus Chabad. Chabad brings the “Secrets of Torah” and of Zohar into reason and

comprehension. It need not be added that on Tisha BeAv the additional Torah study be in subjects that may be studied that day. These also include Halachos (Mishpat) like the laws of Tisha BeAv etc.

In Tefillah: In each of these days make some addition in Tefillah, in quality. This addition in quality can be on the day of Tisha BeAv itself as well. And an addition in quantity — in Tehillim, at least one added Psalm.

This has a particular relevance to our subject, for “Dovid King of Israel,” the Sweet Singer of Israel, continues to “live and exist” and also as “King of Israel.” Rambam states that “A King will arise from the *House Of Dovid*, conversant in Torah and occupied with Mitzvos like *Dovid his father*,” and will fight the wars of G-d victoriously, and will build the Sanctuary in its place and will gather in the dispersed of Israel.

In Tzedakah: Besides the daily Tzedakah before the davening, a practice standard for all the weekdays of the year, noted in Talmud and quoted in Shulchan Aruch as a *law*, during every one of these days there should be an addition. Preferably, the addition should be twice a day — before Shacharis and before Mincha.

This is especially relevant to our subject. “Eliyahu was answered only at the Mincha Tefilla.” Eliyahu is he one designated to proclaim in the immediate future the tidings of the redemption. In regard to Shabbos: Since on Shabbos Tzedakah must be in a manner different from the daily (by giving the poor some food and the like) , and this is not always easy to fill, therefore, give “double” on Friday, for Friday and Shabbos.

## VII

It is of course obvious that all this applies to the women and daughters of Israel as well.

In regard to Torah: there is a clear ruling in Hilchos Talmud Torah, and at length in the Alter Rebbe’s Hilchos Talmud Torah at the end of the first Chapter, that women are required to study “the laws pertaining to them.”

In regard to Tefillah: The Talmud notes that “women certainly also need life” and need “mercies,” (attained by) prayer.

And in regard to Tzedakah: The effects of charity performed by women are even greater than those of men. A woman's charity, for theirs can be enjoyed at once. Since it is effective quicker than men's, it is more quickly effective. Above as well, for “By the measure man uses he is measured.”

## VIII

Ahavas Yisrael, love of a fellow-Jew, is operative here. Ahavas Yisrael binds all Israel together and therefore also strengthens the bond between Israel and G-d. The Alter Rebbe's formulation is familiar: “Love your fellow like yourself” and “Love Hashem your G-d” are “identical.” Hence, every Jewish man and woman should make every possible effort to make these observances accessible to all his (her) friends, wherever he (she) possibly can.

Ahavas Yisrael is directly associated with the abovementioned “transforming grief into joy,” for when “we are all as one” is strengthened then “Bless us, our Father” is strengthened. This is particularly true for the blessing “May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy” that each Jew and all Jews pray every day, and for the blessing “who builds Jerusalem” that we pray every weekday.

## IX

Another basic element in all this:

The Medrash states that Jerusalem had 480 shuls and every shul had a school and House of Talmud where children were instructed. The Rebbe Tzemach Tzedek discusses the figure 480:

The Name of G-d of four letters, *Havayah*, can form twelve combinations (since one letter, Hay, appears twice in the Name). Every combination has four letters, a total of 48 letters. Since every “state” comprises ten, the total is 480.

In simple terms: Torah instruction of the children of Jerusalem was the sort that bound them to G-d's Name, *Havayah*, that is so far superior to the Name Elokim (numerically *hateva*, nature) that it

(*Havayah*) is called the Ineffable Name, the specific Name, the Essence Name.

## X

As noted earlier, with the coming of Av we are to call forth that “Ari come during the *mazal* of Ari and construct Ariel” including the construction of Jerusalem, as the Yalkut observes, “and will build Ariel — ‘G-d builds Jerusalem.’” We must connect this to the 480 shuls of Jerusalem.

Our sages tell us that Jerusalem is destined to expand over all the Land of Israel and the Land is destined to expand over all lands. So wherever Jewish children may be learning Torah, it must be in the spirit of the 480 shuls of Jerusalem.

## XI

It follows quite naturally then that in the additions during the Nine Days in the three lines of Torah, Tefillah and Tzedakah, every effort must be exercised to involve every Jewish child younger than Bar or Bas Mitzvah.

Particularly, in those places that many youngsters assemble, for example overnight camps and day camps, another dimension of merit is added. The merit of community, numbers. By all means gather up all children together and perform the three Mitzvos. This will add to G-d’s blessing in everything needed in the camps. This is in addition to the primary blessing — bringing the true and full redemption at once.

It is understood that these children are to influence other children who are in other places, boys influencing boys and girls influencing girls, to perform these three Mitzvos on each of the Nine Days.

## XII

In addition to all this, in Eretz Israel, there are to be assemblies of children, of boys and girls separately, at the Kosel and at the Me’aras Hamachpeila where Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivkah and Leah are buried, and also at Rochel’s tomb, the fourth of the mothers, the completion of the four “legs” of the Merkava.

It would be most proper that the assemblies in those places take place at least twice during the Nine Days, and three times would be excellent.

### XIII

Everything said above, whether the individual's personal addition in the three lines during these days, whether inducing others to do so, is important to every Jew and within every Jew's capacities. This includes "your heads, your tribal chiefs" extending all the way to "your hewers of wood and those who draw water, and those between, including "your children (boys and girls) and your women."

May it be His will that the additions in the three lines that every man and women will offer be effective in bringing about a swift and full redemption, particularly since "all the predestined dates have come and everything depends solely on repentance."

All three lines are associated with repentance:

Torah and Tefillah are associated with Teshuvah (repentance), particularly with *Teshuvah Ilala*, the superior Teshuvah. Charity is associated with Teshuvah (also meaning "return") — "returning the sparks" to their source and root. Returning the sparks of his soul and "his portion of the world" is accomplished through charity.

Besides Tzedakah is associated with Teshuvah in the simple sense — "Redeem your sin with charity." Though "your people are all righteous" and "all Israel are in the status of Kashrus," there is also another meaning to the word *chet* — it means sin and also means lack, deficiency. The statement "Redeem your *chet* with charity" refers to this sort of *chet* as well. Charity corrects the deficiency. Charity brings man to wholeness, to perfect wholeness.

We may be certain that additions in the three lines, all sharing the characteristic of Teshuvah, will bring the redemption all the more swiftly.

### XIV

A prologue to all this is the close of the daily portion of Chumash of Rosh Chodesh Av this year — "See that G-d has given

you the land. Go up and inherit it... do not fear, do not be shaken.” Jews must be firmly determined that they must “go up and inherit.”

Since “G-d has given you the land” and the sages note: it does not say “will give” for He has already given Jews the Land. Therefore “do not fear or be shaken.” There is nothing to fear; they will not be able to carry out their plots, G-d forbid. All that is needed is “Go up and inherit,” and we may then be confident that those who wish to deter will become null — and all this by ways of pleasantness and peace.

This will be brought about by performing and adding in the three lines. We have the promise, “If you go by My statutes and keep My Mitzvos and perform them.” This refers to studying Torah and performing Mitzvos, and Tzedakah is one of these. Tefillah is included, and through Tefillah the others — Torah, Mitzvos and Tzedakah — ascend.

Then the promise: “I will give your rains in their seasons ...I will give peace in the land. You will rest and none will frighten you,” and all the blessings listed there, culminating with — “I will lead you upright.” And all this while we are still in the (last moments of) exile.

This will bring about even more quickly that “I will transform your grief to joy” — a promise by G-d, particularly when we will fulfill His will in the “three-fold cord” of Torah — Avodah — Gemilus Chassadim. And especially when we perform them with joy and happy hearts.

Then G-d will fulfill His promise, “You will be gathered one by one.” G-d Himself will take each Jew separately from the inward Golus and from literal exile.

And G-d will go out of exile together with every individual Jew, for as long as Jews are in exile, He Himself is in exile too as it were.

In the immediate future G-d will go with every single Jew to welcome the Mashiach, may he come and redeem us and lead us upright to our land, swiftly, in our days.

לעילוי נשמת

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בן ר' מרדכי שכנא ע"ה

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יותר מיובל שנים

במדינת טונים ומאנטרעאל קאנאדא

פעל הרבה ברכישת ספרים לספריית כ"ק

ובאסיפת כספים לפעולותיו

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