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**Sichos in English Classics 27**

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**Learning from  
Reb Levi Yitzchok**



**20th Day of Menachem Av, 5741 (1981)**



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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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# LEARNING FROM REB LEVI YITZCHOK

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**20th Day of Menachem Av, 5741 (1981)**

1. The last three days of the week — Wednesday, Thursday and Friday — are especially connected to the subsequent Shabbos. They are called the days of *Maalei Shabatoh* — “the days before Shabbos.” Even within these three days, the link of *Thursday* is special since it previews the coming Shabbos’s Torah reading. In view of all this, the special link of Chof Av — the *yahrzeit* of Reb Levi Yitzchok (the Rebbe Shlita’s father) — which falls on Thursday, is apparent.

Eikev — our sedra — opens with the words “And it shall come to pass (*vehoyoh*), if (*eikev*) you will hearken (*tishmo’un*).” The Torah then enumerates all the blessings which G-d will bestow on us if we will hearken to His commandments. The word *eikev* can also be translated “heel,” — the lowest part, or the “end” of the body. With this in mind, the Tzemach Tzedek (*Or Hatorah* beginning of Eikev) interprets the verse thus: “And it shall come to pass at the end of generations just prior to Moshiach’s coming *tishmo’un*, you will certainly hearken, for (in the words of the Sage Hillel) ‘if not now, then when?’ ” In other words, since we are now in the generation just prior to Moshiach, we are assured that we will fulfill the mitzvos.

The verse continues: “...hearken to these judgments and keep and do them, then the L-rd your G-d will keep unto you the covenant and the kindness which He swore to your fathers...” The three words hearken (*tishmo’un*), keep

(*ushmartem*), and do (*va'asisem*), refer to fulfilling the mitzvos in all ways, in thought (“hearken” meaning understanding), speech (“*ushmartem*”) and deed (“and do”). If we carry this out properly, G-d will surely respond, also in three ways — in deed (“the covenant”), thought (“the kindness” — which is an inner feeling) and speech (“which he swore”). The Tzemach Tzedek goes on to explain why the order of G-d’s response — deed, thought and speech — is somewhat different to that of man’s.

The following saying of our Sages is also relevant: “The word *Vehoyoh* (and it shall come to pass) can only be used in a situation of *simchah* (joy).” And how joyous it is when we, after having served G-d in all the areas of thought, speech and deed in an overt manner, can expect G-d to respond by bestowing his bountiful blessing, which are always there potentially, *upon us in* a revealed way. We can then experience true joy, which manifests itself only when there is something tangible and revealed to be joyous about. [This is opposed to *ta’anug* — “delight” — which, as Chassidus explains, can result from the knowledge that something good exists, albeit hidden.]

To return to our original theme, the connection of the *yahrzeit* of Reb Levi Yitzchok to our *sedra* can be explained thus: The Alter Rebbe in Tanya (*Iggeres HaKodesh* ch. 27,28) explains that all the deeds that a person accomplished in this world are revealed and radiated to the world on the day of his passing to the extent that they “effect salvation in the midst of the earth.” And as Rashi explains the words “midst of the earth”: “Although My presence is in the heavens, My decree extends to the nethermost world.” In other words, the “midst of the earth” refers to the lowest level even of this world. Even there, the decree, or influence, of G-d is to be found. And the effect on the “midst of the earth” is not a simple one — it is a *salvation*, something which brings about radical

changes. Again the same point emerges — that of causing changes in an overt manner, leading to a situation of tremendous joy, as stated above.

As it is well known, Reb Levi Yitzchok was exiled by the communist regime and he passed away there. His exile was surely in the “midst of the earth,” for it was an “exile within exile” — a personal exile within the Jewish People’s exile. Our Sages tell us that the purpose of exile is to reach a loftier level than before the descent into exile. It is therefore understood that the more severe the exile, the higher the subsequent ascent. Reb Levi Yitzchok’s “exile within exile” certainly resulted in immediate and tangible results — he saw the fruits of his labors: he saw that his work of disseminating Torah and mitzvos continued after him.

This, then, is the lesson from the *yahrzeit* of Reb Levi Yitzchok: We must intensify our efforts in the dissemination of Torah and Mitzvos in the manner shown to us by Reb Levi Yitzchok. This lesson is especially highlighted by the *sedra* of *Eikev*: Nothing must remain on the plane of the theoretical; everything must be translated into thought, speech and especially deed. And all this must be permeated with tremendous joy, which has the power to shatter all barriers. Since we are now in the last generation before *Moshiach*, we have the assurance that “you are certain to hearken,” — strengthening our resolve to take our efforts beyond any limitation. If we fulfill Torah in this way, G-d will certainly respond in kind and He will “keep the covenant and the kindness which he swore,” “effecting salvation in the midst of the earth” which, ultimately means the coming of our righteous *Moshiach* who will usher in the true, complete and final redemption.

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2. It is now the appropriate time to reiterate the importance of the institutions — those devoted to Torah Study and also

the charitable institutions — named for Reb Levi Yitzchok. As regards to the study of Torah, an institute was recently established for senior citizens. It has been given the name *Kollel Tiferes Zekeinim* (the beauty of elders) — Levi Yitzchok. Here again the opening words of our sedra are relevant: “*Vehoyoh* (And it shall come to pass) *eikev* (at the end) *tishmo’un* (“you are certain to hearken). In the later years of one’s life, the assurance is there from G-d, that we are certain to fulfill His commandments.

There are those who argue, that as people age, so do they lose their responsibility. The old people have no worth, they insist. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Tanach (Job 32:7) state emphatically: “A multitude of years should teach wisdom.” And as our Sages point out (Shabbos 152a): “The older the students of the wise become, the more wisdom they acquire.” All of us may be considered “students of the wise” as it is stated (Isaiah 54:13): “And *all* your children shall be learners of the L-rd.” All of us who are considered “students of the wise” — G-d Himself — will acquire more and more wisdom as we grow older and abandonment should not be the lot of the elderly. It is to this end that “Kollel Tiferes Zekeinim — Levi Yitzchok” has been established to foster Torah Study among our senior citizens.

Another point which should be mentioned: The “Keren Levi Yitzchok” which has been established for the furtherance of Torah Study. The great worth of Tzedakah is explained by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya (Iggeres HaKodesh ch. 37), where he mentions that Tzedakah is termed simply “mitzvah” in the Jerusalem Talmud, for it is of central importance; “Tzedakah endures forever” (Psalms 111:3), because, as the AriZal explains, the effect of Tzedakah is everlasting, unlike all other mitzvos whose effect lasts only for a relatively shorter while.

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3. It is now the fitting time to speak of the new settlement of *Kiryas Gan Yisrael*. In the work *Erchei Hakinu'im*, the author explains that a *kiryah* denotes a settlement with a large population — a metropolis. He cites the verse dealing with the cities of refuge (Numbers 35:11): “Then you shall appoint (*vehikrisem*) for you cities to be of refuge.” The word *vehikrisem* is etymologically related to the word *kiryah*. In other words, the cities of refuge must have the status of a *kiryah*. He then cites the Rambam (Hilchos Rotzeach ch. 8 para. 8) who rules that a city of refuge must have a large population; if it drops, more people must be brought in from elsewhere.

From the Written Torah we see that *kiryah* has a special quality over other types of settlements like *ir* (city) or *kfar* (village). We are told in the Torah, with regard to the conquest of the lands of Sichon (Deut. 2:34,36): “And we took all his cities (*orim*) at that time... there was not a *kiryah* too strong for us.” The style the Torah adopts indicates that not only the *orim* (plural of *ir*) were conquered, but also every *kiryah*, implying that *kiryah* is higher in level than *ir*. [Another possible explanation is refuted by the Torah itself: Perhaps *kiryah* means a fortified *ir*? However the Torah uses the word *ir* both in the fortified and the unfortified case.]

What is the meaning of the difference between *kiryah* and *ir* in terms of man's service to G-d? The protection of an *ir*, even a fortified one, is the impregnable wall which surrounds it. The protection of a *kiryah* is from within; it stems from its large population. This can be compared to the twin method of serving G-d, embodied in a verse in tehillim (34:15) “Turn away from evil and do good.” The wall around the city is the negative aspect of protection. It allows no evil to enter. Nothing can penetrate. It is the protection of “Turn away from evil.” On the other hand we have the protection of building up one's own strength; of increasing the population;

of creating a metropolis so strong, that there is hardly any thought of attack. This is the *positive* aspect of protection, “do good.”

In Biblical times the inadvertent killer sought refuge in one of the cities of refuge. Here he was protected by the population against anyone who wanted to avenge the blood of the deceased. Even one who was guilty of a deliberate murder could escape to one of these cities until found guilty by a Beth Din. And since we have the principle that “A judge can rely only on the evidence,” no protestations of repentance could be accepted; the convicted murderer was executed. Nowadays our “city of refuge” is the potent power of *teshuvah* — repentance. Not only does it afford protection from the “avenger” and saves the penitent from divine retribution, but it also actually destroys the “avenger” — the very notion of revenge. This is because *teshuvah* can actually bring about a change *after* the *fact* to the extent that “deliberate transgressions are now counted as goods deeds!” Indeed, this is where the Baal Teshuvah is superior even to a tzaddik as often discussed. The latter’s good deeds are done according to a predetermined procedure, that is laid down by the Torah itself. But the deeds of the Baal Teshuvah are of a higher order in that they have been *transformed* from evil, adding to their strength. In fact the only time a tzaddik can attain something similar to the level of a baal teshuvah, is when he is “tested” by G-d and emerges successfully. The tzaddik cannot bring any travail upon himself. It is only when G-d chooses to bestow the merit of a “test” upon him, can he seize the opportunity of prevailing over the odds. It is then that his ability to protect himself and overcome all evil is revealed. Similarly with the concept of self-sacrifice in general: One is obligated to sacrifice one’s life only for three transgressions: Idolatry, adultery and murder. But there were those who sacrificed their very life for the entire Torah,



among them Rabbi Akiva and also Reb Levi Yitzchok himself. It is told of him that he put his very life in danger for the sake of the mitzvos of tefillin and Matzah etc.

On our level we can also learn from Reb Levi Yitzchok's exalted behavior. Anyone who serves G-d by breaking the mold of his own habits, is doing an act which is, in a small way, self-sacrifice — sacrificing his “self” — his set way of doing things.

To return to our theme — in Kiryas Gan Yisrael the children are protected from outside evil influences not only by a wall, but also by an inner strength — “do good” — imbued within them. The children especially have the ability to immerse themselves in a life of Torah study since they have no concerns of livelihood, which is amply provided by their parents.

May all the endeavors of Kiryas Gan Yisrael be blessed with bountiful success and may we merit the coming of Moshiach who will take us out of exile “with our young and old; with our sons and with our daughters,” speedily in our days.

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5. At the conclusion of the farbrengen, the Rebbe gave the following instructions:] 1) Busses should be provided for all those who wish to travel at the conclusion of Shabbos to participate in the “Yarchei Kallah” (Study Seminar) at Kiryas Gan Yisrael. Upon their arrival there should be a festive Melava Malkah. 2) A Tanya should be printed in Kiryas Gan Yisrael as quickly as possible. It should be sent in an envelope bearing the postmark of the new Kiryas Gan Yisrael Post Office, to all capital cities the world over. The recipient will immediately be able to see where it comes from, and especially when he opens the Tanya to the title page, he will see that it is printed in Kiryas Gan Yisrael. Of course the

main thing is that the Tanya should be implanted within the hearts of all the inhabitants of Kiryas Gan Yisrael itself.

May it indeed be the will of the A-mighty that all the endeavors of Kiryas Gan Yisrael be blessed with success and may the imprint of the times the children spend there remain with them for always.



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הרוצה בעילום שמו



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