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**Sichos in English Classics 40**

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**The “Gate”  
of Yud Kislev**

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**10th Day of Kislev, 5744 (1983)**



**Sichos In English**  
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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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# THE “GATE” OF YUD KISLEV

10th Day of Kislev, 5744 (1983)

**REMEMBER. THEN CELEBRATE.**

1. Although the story of Yud Kislev is well-known, it is customary to narrate it — or at least the main events — every year. This custom has its roots in the liberation of the Alter Rebbe on Yud Tes Kislev. The Rebbeim related that the Alter Rebbe delivered a Chassidic discourse on Yud-Tes Kislev, 5560, the first anniversary of his liberation in which he said: “Blessed be He who performed miracles for our fathers — the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid, on those days — Chanukah and Purim, at this time — Yud Tes Kislev.”

From the above passage we see that the Rebbeim compared the liberation of Yud-Tes Kislev to Chanukah and Purim. Every Jew knows of the events of Chanukah and Purim. Indeed, our Sages assured us that even when the other festivals will cease, Chanukah and Purim will endure. Yet we are obligated to narrate and publicize the miracles that happened then every year. In the words of the Megillah (9:28): “These days are remembered and kept” — through remembering the events (narrating its story), they are repeated and “kept” anew. If the former is missing, the latter is also deficient. Because the Rebbeim compared the liberation of Yud-Tes Kislev to Chanukah and Purim, it follows that we must also narrate its miracles every year — and the same applies to Yud Kislev.

On Yud Kislev the Mittler Rebbe was liberated from imprisonment. He had been arrested by the Czarist government, the most powerful in the world at that time. Yet this self-same government was forced to free the Mittler Rebbe — a tremendous miracle.

Parenthetically, Russia was the most powerful country at that time because the majority of Jews — quantitatively and qualitatively — lived there. When Jews are exiled to a country, the Midrash states

(Mechilta Beshallach 14:5), the country rises to world power “for the sake of Israel’s honor.”

After the exile of the Jews in Russia came to an end, the majority of Jews settled in the U.S.A. And although Jews are “all beloved, all pure, all mighty, all holy” — and therefore it is impossible to say that one group of Jews are greater than another — nevertheless, because quantity and quality are interrelated in regard to Jews, the fact that the Jews in the U.S.A. are quantitatively greater, indicates that they are qualitatively greater. And as a result, the U.S.A. has become a superpower.

To return to our main point. Yud Kislev marks the date the Mittlerer Rebbe was freed from Czarist imprisonment. And “these days are remembered and kept,” meaning that through remembering Yud Kislev the original events are repeated and “kept.” The circumstances in which we live — both the times and the country — are, it is true, completely different from the original Yud Kislev. But Jews, through their bond with Torah — which has mastery over the temporal-spatial dimensions of the world — can transcend these differences.

### TO PICTURE WITHOUT A PICTURE

Because it is through the agency of Torah that Jews can transcend the temporal-spatial limits of the world, it is by our study of the Mittlerer Rebbe’s Torah particularly that we relive the events of Yud Kislev. Such a “reliving” becomes much more vivid when we picture the Mittlerer Rebbe standing opposite us when we learn his Torah — as our Sages say (Talmud Yerushalmi 1:2), “Whoever repeats a saying ... should picture its author as if he stands opposite him.”

There is a problem, however, in picturing the Mittlerer Rebbe. A portrait or picture of every Rebbe exists — except of the Mittlerer Rebbe! How, then, when learning the Mittlerer Rebbe’s Torah, is one to fulfill the directive to “picture the author as if he stands opposite him?”

When learning Torah, a Jew “grasps” G-d — “You are taking Me.” For, says G-d, “I have placed My soul in writing,” meaning that

G-d placed His very essence into the Torah. When one learns Torah, he therefore grasps G-d's essence.

“The righteous are similar to their Creator,” and the righteous also place their souls in their writings. When one learns a righteous person's Torah, he grasps the author. Thus, although no portrait of the Mittlerer Rebbe exists, the idea of “the author stands opposite him” is effected through learning the Mittlerer Rebbe's Torah — just as one grasps G-d although He has no body and no form.

Because “deed is paramount,” we must derive a practical lesson from the above. Every Jew on this day of Yud Kislev should learn the Mittlerer Rebbe's Torah, each according to his abilities. Such study should be with a view to delving into the depths of the Torah, to understand it — not just an intellectual comprehension, but a visual comprehension (i.e. to understand the core of the subject so well that one sees it — obviously a more profound and true understanding than merely understanding it intellectually). One thereby attains the goal of study in the manner of “as if the author stands opposite him.”

But this is only the first step. Not only should we study “as if the author stands opposite him,” but one eventually reaches the level of the Mittlerer Rebbe actually standing opposite him. We find this two-step approach in Torah study in general. One first learns such that “every day it should be as new in your eyes;” then one rises to the higher level of Torah actually being new to the one who studies it.

May it be G-d's will that from such a mode of study we “shall walk in the right way that he has shown us of his ways, and we will walk in his path” — i.e. the Mittlerer Rebbe's “ways” and “paths” become our paths and our ways.

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## WHICH IS THE GREATEST HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR?

2. Of the two festivals of liberation in this month, Yud Kislev and Yud-Tes Kislev, the latter preceded the former chronologically. Yud Kislev (10th of Kislev), however, precedes Yud-Tes Kislev (the 19th of Kislev) in the order of their appearance in the month — for it

serves as a preparation to the proper celebration of Yud-Tes Kislev. [See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeitze, 5742, for an elaborate analysis of this.]

On the other hand, Yud-Kislev, in addition to serving as a preparation to Yud-Tes Kislev (and therefore seemingly inferior to it), also possesses aspects loftier than Yud-Tes Kislev. This paradox is found in all the festivals. In their Chassidic discourses delivered during a particular festival, the Rebbeim would explain the distinction peculiar to that festival as compared to the other festivals. On Pesach, for example, they would explain the greatness of Pesach compared to the other festivals, while on Shavuos they would concentrate on its greatness compared to the other festivals.

This seems to be a paradox: All the Chassidic discourses are part of the “one Torah” which is the “Torah of truth.” How, then, are the different discourses to be reconciled? If, for example, Pesach is the loftier festival (as would be explained on Pesach), how could the Rebbeim say on Shavuos that Shavuos is the loftiest?

There are two different types of concepts in Torah and mitzvos. Some, such as love and fear of G-d, are a constant obligation; others are tied to the particular time and place. In the sphere of Torah study for example, it is a particular obligation to study the laws of a festival on the actual festival itself; in the sphere of mitzvos, certain sacrifices must be brought in their proper time, and “when the time has passed, the sacrifice is void.”

At a particular time of the year, then, which contains special concepts in the spheres of both Torah and mitzvos (e.g. Pesach, with the study of its laws and the offering of its sacrifices), those concepts are the “gate” through which the rest of Torah and mitzvos pass. All matters of Torah and mitzvos remain in force at all times and in all places; the difference is through which “gate” they ascend. And the “gate” depends on the season of the year.

No contradiction exists, therefore, between the different Chassidic discourses which elaborate on the lofty qualities of each festival. All matters of Torah and mitzvos pass through the “gate” of a particular festival at the time of that festival — and thus the discourse delivered then emphasizes the greatness of that festival.

## THE GATE OF 10 KISLEV

So too in our case: On Yud Kislev, the concepts of this festival serve as the “gate” through which everything else, including Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah, passes. It is therefore fitting to discuss the distinction of Yud Kislev vis à vis Yud-Tes Kislev.

A liberation in general is the idea of “He has redeemed my soul in peace,” which is emphasized on both Yud Kislev and Yud-Tes Kislev. These words are found in Tehillim (55:18). It is a custom to recite a portion of Tehillim every day, and the book of Tehillim is accordingly divided into daily portions. This can be in two ways. 1) As is usual, into 30 parts, one part to be recited each day of the month; 2) more rarely, into 7 parts, one to be recited each day of the week. The Alter Rebbe was notified of his release as he was reciting these words as part of the portion for the day of the week — Tuesday. The Mitteler Rebbe was released as he was reciting these words as part of the portion for the day of the month — the tenth of Kislev.

The above difference expresses the distinction of Yud Kislev vis à vis Yud-Tes Kislev. The verse “He has redeemed my soul in peace” is closely related to Yud Kislev, as part of the portion of Tehillim recited on this day, in two ways: 1) Because it is part of the portion recited on the tenth of the month, it is said on the 10th of Kislev every year; 2) It is the usual custom to recite Tehillim as divided into the days of month (as the previous Rebbe instructed).

The relationship between this verse and Yud Tes Kislev, as part of the portion of Tehillim recited on this day, is more tenuous however. This, again, is because of two reasons: 1) It is part of the portion of Tehillim only when Yud-Tes Kislev falls on Tuesday, which does not happen every year; 2) Even when Yud-Tes Kislev is on a Tuesday, it is recited as part of the day’s portion not because it is the regular custom to do so but because one wishes to recite a lot of Tehillim — which is done at special times when the recital of many verses of tehillim is necessary.

## THE MITTELER REBBE'S CHASSIDUS — TRUE PEACE

The words “He has redeemed my soul in peace” is, it is true, associated with Yud-Tes Kislev in any case, even when Yud-Tes Kislev does not fall on a Tuesday. Redemption “in peace” is connected with the esoteric aspect of Torah specifically, as opposed to the exoteric. The Zohar states that the esoteric portion of Torah is “the tree of life, in which there are no questions... and no arguments.” The exoteric portion, on the other hand, is full of dialectics, questions and answers, disputes.

The eventual clarification of the halachah out of the welter of arguments and disputes is analogous to a redemption from the exile of concealment. But because this “redemption” resulted from dialectic analysis, by “fighting” against the concealments of the myriad questions and difficulties, it is not a “redemption in peace” but a “redemption in battle.”

The situation is totally different in regard to the esoteric portion of Torah. There may be concealments necessitating redemption — when its exponents (Alter Rebbe and Mitteler Rebbe for example) are imprisoned — but that redemption is “in peace.” Thus Yud Kislev and Yud-Tes Kislev, because they celebrate the liberation of the esoteric aspect of Torah, are both related to the idea of “He has redeemed my soul in peace.”

This relationship nevertheless receives more emphasis on Yud Kislev than on Yud-Tes Kislev, for, as noted above, these words as part of the daily portion of Tehillim have a closer association with Yud Kislev. Of the three fathers of Chassidus — the Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek — the Mitteler Rebbe revealed and elaborated on the teachings of Chassidus in a much broader fashion than the other two. And since the idea of redemption in peace is associated with the revelation of the esoteric, it is the liberation of the Mitteler Rebbe on Yud Kislev which emphasizes this concept more than that of the Alter Rebbe on Yud-Tes Kislev.

Because “deed is paramount,” we must draw practical lessons from the above. Torah in general, and the dissemination thereof, is associated with peace, as the Rambam rules, “the entire Torah was given to make peace in the world.” This is especially true of the

dissemination of Chassidus (the esoteric portion of Torah), for through it the idea of “He has redeemed my soul in peace” is effected (as explained above).

If this is true of the whole year, it certainly applies on Yud Kislev, when, as noted earlier, the idea of “He has redeemed my soul in peace” is expressed in two aspects: 1) in a constant fashion, every year; 2) in the usual fashion (the portion of Tehillim recited as divided into days of the month). Thus, when we learn the Mittlerer Rebbe’s Torah on the day of his liberation, we also experience the idea of liberation — for “the body follows the head.” It is an auspicious time to resolve to increase in the dissemination of Torah and Chassidus, a resolve which, when undertaken as a congregation, assures special force commensurate to the lofty merit of a congregation.

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### OUT OF PRINT?

3. We previously mentioned that when one learns, “he should picture the author as if he stands opposite him.” We explained that, in regard to the Mittlerer Rebbe of whom no portrait exists, one can “picture” him through profound study and contemplation of his Torah — to the extent of visual comprehension. Indeed, greater efforts were made to publish the Mittlerer Rebbe’s work in his lifetime than in the case of the other Rebbeim.

This is one of the reasons that efforts have recently been made to publish one of his works that had “gone from the market” (i.e. out of print) — the sefer “Sha’arei Teshuvah.” This project has been successful with G-d’s help, and it has been reprinted, enabling one to learn it on the day of his liberation.

There is a lesson to be derived from the expression “gone from the market” — consonant with the Baal Shem Tov’s dictum that everything can provide for service to G-d.

A “market” is a public place, and a Jew’s task is to illuminate the “market” with the “mitzvah which is a lamp and Torah which is light.” The same idea is paralleled in the Chanukah lights, which are lit “at the entrance of his house on the outside” and must remain lit “until the feet of the Tarmudoi (merchants) have ceased from the

market.” In other words, a Jew illuminates the “market” with Torah and mitzvos to the extent that the “market” ceases to have any self-existence.

The expression “gone from the market” thus means that this service of rectifying and refining the “market” has already been achieved through this particular sefer. But, everyday there is a new “market” which needs to be rectified on that day (for “every day has its own service”) — and therefore the sefer must be reprinted to disseminate it once again in the market.

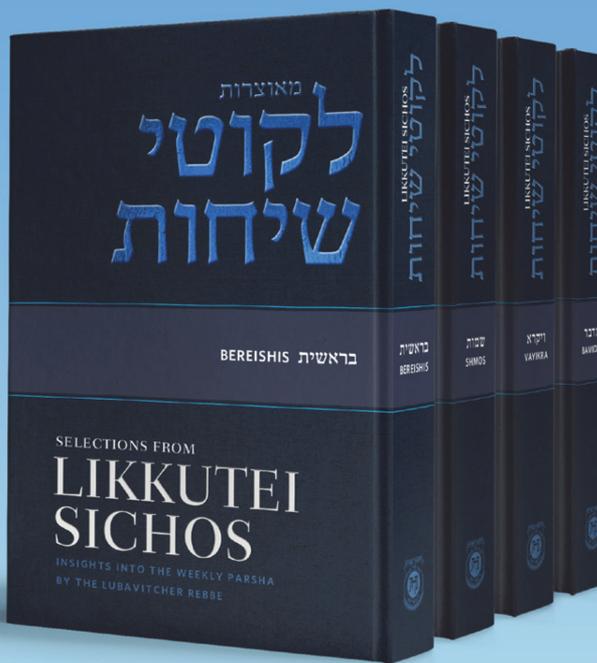


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