

Likkutei Sichos

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Legacy of Deed

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Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation while maintaining its clarity. However, as in all translations, inadvertent errors may occur.

Your feedback is appreciated — please send it to info@projectlikkuteisichos.org

¹ {Note that this *sichah* is a continuation of *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 21, “*Vaera — sichah 3*,” and the sections in this *sichah* are numbered accordingly.}

THE ALTER REBBE'S EPISTLE

Earlier (in Sections 8-9), the wording of the verse,² “(for the) **act he performed**” was examined. We said that the nuanced wording intimates that the Essential Will for mitzvos is connected (not so much with one’s devotional thoughts when performing the mitzvos, but rather) with the deeds themselves. On this basis, we can also say that there is a hint in the *haftorah* to the Alter Rebbe’s *hilula*³ (*Chaf-Dalet Teves*), which in most years falls during the week of *parshas Vaera*:

Among the holy epistles included in the *Book of Tanya* by “the Rabbis, sons of the *gaon*,⁴ the author, may his soul rest in peace,”⁵ is an epistle of consolation⁶ (along with a passage that elucidates this epistle) which the Alter Rebbe wrote after the passing of Reb Mendel Horadoker, who was (not only a *tzaddik* but) a *nassi*.⁷

This epistle (and its elucidation) conveys the message that after the passing of a *tzaddik*, a ray of “his deeds, Torah, and *avodah*⁸ of his whole life”⁹ is drawn to his disciples, etc. We find a wondrous matter in the epistle:¹⁰ The Alter Rebbe borrows language from this week’s *haftorah*: “(He leaves over the life of his spirit) **the acts he performed.**”

Generally, when **reading** this epistle cursorily (and especially before reading the elucidation), we might think that the Alter Rebbe employs the wording of Scripture, alliterations, etc., merely for the sake of rhetoric (as was common practice, especially in those days), similar to what scriptural commentators say regarding **many** verses in Scripture. However, upon examining the **elucidation** of the epistle (which the Alter Rebbe himself composed), we see that every word is precise and encapsulates an entire subject {warranting deeper analysis}.

This is bewildering (as we noted previously): Why does the Alter Rebbe specifically use this wording, which is said regarding Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon?

² {*Yechezkel* 29:20.}

³ {The *yahrzeit* (anniversary of passing) of a *tzaddik*; the term *hilula* originates from Aramaic, literally means “celebration” or “wedding.” This term is employed because it signifies the elevation of the *tzaddik*’s soul to higher spiritual realms.}

⁴ {Lit., “genius”; an honorific acknowledging the Alter Rebbe’s exceptional status.}

⁵ Language used in the approbation to *Tanya*.

⁶ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” ch. 27; printed (with supplements) in “*Iggros Kodesh*” (*Kehos* 5740) sec. 11 (p. 25).

⁷ {A Rebbe.} See *Beis Rebbi*, vol. 1, end of ch. 4 ff; see *Likkutei Dibburim*, vol. 1, 30a; vol. 2, 276a ff; et al.

⁸ {Divine service.}

⁹ Alter Rebbe’s wording, *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” in the elucidation (147a).

¹⁰ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” ch. 27, 146a.

This is even more perplexing: The “elucidation” does not mention “the acts he performed.” On the contrary, the elucidation¹¹ emphasizes (that they receive from the tzaddik) “through **his speech and thoughts**” and not his “acts” (deeds).

However, based on what was explained previously — that “the acts” allude to the excellency of deeds (in the realm of holiness) — we can posit that this is why the Alter Rebbe uses this wording in his epistle. This aspect is central to a tzaddik’s *avodah*, as explained below.

13.

A DEED’S SIGNIFICANCE

Let us preface with a fundamental distinction between the epistle and its elucidation:

The epistle emphasizes mainly the **tzaddik’s** legacy — “He has left life for all the living.” The tzaddik imbues “life” (also after his passing) into the *avodah* of “every person commensurate with the degree of the person’s bond {to the tzaddik},” and also “in worldly matters..., for the righteous protect the world.”

Conversely, the main emphasis in the “elucidation” is on the **disciple receiving** — how disciples continue to benefit from the tzaddik’s *avodah* even after their mentor dies. (Moreover, not only do they enjoy a ray {of the tzaddik’s spirit} but they partake “from the essence of their master’s spirit”).

On this basis, we can proffer a possible difference between the epistle and the elucidation mentioned above:

The word “act” {פעולה} connotes that the energy expended through “acting” and invested in the “act” is now **detached** from the person who performed the act. (We can posit that the degree of detachment {between the energy and the person} is more profound than {when a person’s energy is expended} in a “deed.”) Therefore, it makes sense that the identity of the person who performed the act is indiscernible in the act itself.

Accordingly, when discussing the **disciples receiving**, the wording employed is “his speech and thoughts” (through which the tzaddik’s emotional attributes — his love, fear, and faith — radiate openly).

¹¹ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” ch. 27, 146b.

In contrast, when the Alter Rebbe wants to demonstrate the greatness of the **tzaddik** and what **he** accomplishes, the Alter Rebbe emphasizes that the tzaddik's primary virtue lies in “**the act he performed.**” This is because the tzaddik's essence is expressed (not so much in the aspects and effects of his *avodah* in which the virtue of his *avodah* is discerned, but rather) specifically in his (external) **acts.**

(This is **similar** to what was discussed earlier regarding mitzvos, where the Essential Will of mitzvos is expressed primarily in the actual mitzvah deed.)

14.

THE AVODAH OF OUR REBBES

This also sheds light on what we find concerning our Rebbeim, our leaders,¹² beginning with the Baal Shem Tov: Their first act to benefit others was to perform a **material** favor for another Jew.¹³

— As my father-in-law, the {Previous} Rebbe,¹⁴ recounted in many talks and notes, the Baal Shem Tov and his colleagues (the hidden tzaddikim) would travel among Jews and seek ways to help them with their material needs. Only afterward did they try to help with their spiritual needs. —

When a tzaddik performs **material** favors, it is not so recognizable that the favors are attributable to the tzaddik (and to the superior level of his *avodah*). Seemingly, the same favor could have been performed by someone who is not at the rank of the tzaddik. Yet, specifically, this {material-focused} *avodah* **spearheaded** their involvement with the Jewish people because this sort of *avodah* was expressive of the essence of the Jewish people.¹⁵

— From a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Vaera*, 5732 (1972)

¹² {In the Hebrew original, “נְשִׂימָיִן”; lit., “our princes.”}

¹³ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 261.

¹⁴ See “*HaTamim*,” vol. 2, p. 44 [138]; **et al.**

¹⁵ Note, also, what the Alter Rebbe wrote close to his passing (*Iggeres Hakodesh*, ch. 20 [“He and His life-giving emanations are one”], “the lowly soul”) expatiating about the virtue of deed and physicality (see, at length, *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, the *sichah* published on the occasion of *Chaf-Dalet Teves*).