



# Likkutei Sichos

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Translated by Rabbi Mendel Marcus

**General Editor:** Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | **Editor:** Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

**Content Editor:** Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

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## 1.

### DISGRACE OR PITY?

On the verse,<sup>1</sup> “They said to him... *chalilah* for your servants to do such a thing,” Rashi provides two explanations for the words “*chalilah* for your servants”:

It would be *chullin*<sup>2</sup> for us — an expression of disgrace. *Targum {Onkelos}* renders it: “חן, pity to your servants”; {meaning,} may the Holy One pity us {and spare us} from doing this. There are many {examples of the word חן} in the Gemara: “חם ושלום” {lit., “pity and peace,” meaning, “G-d forbid”}.

Earlier, in *parshas Vayeira*, Avraham pleads with Hashem:<sup>3</sup> “Will You destroy even the righteous with the wicked?” Avraham there uses similar wording as used here:<sup>4</sup> “*Chalilah* for You to do such a thing.” In his commentary on that verse, Rashi quotes the words, “*chalilah* for you” and explains: “It would be *chullin* for You. They will say, ‘Such is His craft...’”

We must clarify:

- a) In *parshas Vayeira*, where the word *chalilah* **first** appears, Rashi simply explains that it means “it would be *chullin* for You.” Yet, in our *parshah*, Rashi must add: “an expression of disgrace.” If the clause, “it would be *chullin* for You” requires further explanation, Rashi should have explained it this way the **first** time this word appears!
- b) Furthermore, Rashi doesn’t only add “an expression of disgrace,” he also introduces a **second** explanation — “*Targum...*” Why was the explanation “it would be *chullin* for You” adequate in *parshas Vayeira*, but here, Rashi felt a need for an additional explanation?

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<sup>1</sup> *Bereishis* 44:7.

<sup>2</sup> {The word *chullin* denotes something mundane — the opposite of something holy or sanctified, e.g., sacrifices are called *kodashim*, a construct of the root word *kodesh*, holy; regular meat is called *chullin*, etymologically related to the word *challal*, meaning (empty) space — something devoid of sanctity.}

<sup>3</sup> *Bereishis* 18:23.

<sup>4</sup> *Bereishis* 18:25.

## 2.

### TWO DEFINITIONS OF *CHULLIN*

The explanation:

In *parshas Vayeira*, the word “*chalilah*” is used about **Hashem**, who is **totally** removed from “*chullin*” and mundane matters. Therefore, saying “to do such a thing” is “*chullin* for You” suffices. This point alone clarifies that such an action {destroying the righteous with the wicked} would be entirely out of the question for Hashem.

However, our *parshah* concerns people who *were* involved with “*chullin*” — mundane matters. Concerning **them**, “it would be ***chullin*** for us” wouldn’t be reason enough for them not “to do such a thing” (taking the silver goblet). What would be scandalous about {ordinary} people doing something mundane?

Therefore, **here** Rashi must add that “it would be ***chullin*** for us” is “an expression of disgrace.” The term “*chullin*” here is (not limited to just meaning mundane; rather, it is also) a word that indicates something disgraceful and, therefore, something out of the question.

## 3.

### THE NEED FOR TWO EXPLANATIONS

However, this explanation is not smooth. The response “it would be ***chullin*** for us” is only “an expression of **disgrace**” for the person who, due to his stature and importance, has no connection with mundane matters. Therefore, when **he** describes something as “*chullin*,” it is obviously “an expression of disgrace.” Since, for him, the thing is mundane, it is disgraceful.

[Furthermore, by using this wording {“*chullin*”}, a person expresses his rejection of this behavior far **more** than when using more direct wording, as this

wording indicates that something unbecoming his stature — something “*chullin*” — is so out of the question, that it is no less disgraceful in his eyes than a really disgraceful action (such as stealing, or the like)].

However, in our context, Yosef’s brothers were trying to negate the claim that they had stolen {the goblet}. It is difficult to say that “it would be *chullin* for us” was the proper rebuttal, for it “makes that which was taught dependent upon that which was not taught”<sup>5</sup> — implying that they wouldn’t steal because even “*chullin*” matters are considered disgraceful to them. This seems all the more difficult when trying to convince a **Gentile** (Yosef’s messenger), and moreover, a Gentile originating from Egypt — an **indecent** and immoral land, where “*chullin*” matters were definitely not seen as disgraceful.

Consequently, it would (at any rate) seem more fitting for the brothers to express how absurd it would be for them to steal (not by saying “it would be *chullin* for us,” but rather) by using words clearly meaning disgraceful.

For this reason, Rashi brings the *Targum*’s interpretation that “*chalilah* for your servants” means “חַס, **pity** to your servants’; may the Holy One pity...”: They said: “חַס וְשָׁלוֹם, G-d forbid” that we have any connection with stealing. (Moreover) “May the **Holy One** pity us {and spare us} from doing this....” — Hashem has mercy upon us, and makes it impossible for us to slip (even accidentally) into such behavior.<sup>6</sup>

However, since throughout Scripture, the word “*chalilah*” is never translated as “pity” (a fact that Rashi must address by pointing out that **many** such instances can be found throughout the Gemara), Rashi brings this interpretation as his *second* explanation, while his first and primary explanation is that “*chalilah*” means “it would be *chullin* for us.”

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<sup>5</sup> *Shabbos* 22a.

<sup>6</sup> *Re'em* and *Gur Aryeh* on Rashi, *Bereishis* 44:7.

## 4.

### UPLIFTING THE MUNDANE

The lesson regarding our service of Hashem based on Rashi's explanation:

In *Torah Or*,<sup>7</sup> the Alter Rebbe explains that “the attributes of the *Avos*<sup>8</sup> are necessarily found within every Jew,” “but other attributes... for example, those of Yaakov's sons... some people do not possess these attributes or qualities at all.” Put differently, not every Jew necessarily possesses **every** attribute or **unique** quality by which one tribe was distinguished from the other. But the general attributes and characteristics found in **all** the tribes (by dint of being the progeny of the **Avos**) must be found in **every** Jew.

Similarly, in our context, since the declaration “it would be *chullin* for us — an expression of disgrace” — didn't come from any specific brother but from the brothers collectively, it is understood that the concept, “it would be *chullin* for us” is germane to every Jew:

A Jew must know that his **entire identity and being** is holiness — he and “*chullin*” (physicality) constitute two distinct worlds, to the extent that relating with physicality in a “***chullin*** {mundane}” manner is a “disgrace” for him. It must be completely out of the question.

This feeling must not be felt solely in a Jew's inner self but externally as well. Even the nations of the world should be able to discern that “*chullin*” is alien to the Jew. As discussed earlier, it was self-evident to Yosef's brothers that responding “it would be *chullin* for us” would be enough proof for an **Egyptian Gentile** that such an action was **unimaginable**. Even a Gentile could recognize and understand that the brothers rejected “*chullin*” **precisely** like others would reject stealing.

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<sup>7</sup> *Torah Or*, beg. of parshas *Va'eira*.

<sup>8</sup> {The three Patriarchs: Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.}

And although **Torah** commands a Jew,<sup>9</sup> “Six days you shall labor, and do all of your work” — that during the week, a Jew *must* be involved with “*chullin*” — the intent {of the verse} is not that he should **lower** himself to the “*chullin*”; on the contrary, it is incumbent upon him to **elevate** “*chullin*” to the level of<sup>10</sup> “(*chullin* prepared according to the level of) **purity required for sacrifices.**” This elevation is achieved through the *avodah*<sup>11</sup> of “all of your actions should be for the sake of Heaven,”<sup>12</sup> and moreover,<sup>13</sup> “in all of your ways you shall know Him.”<sup>14</sup> This process continues until the Jew literally consecrates mundane matters. They become *kodashim kalim*,<sup>15</sup> and even higher, *kodshei kodashim*.<sup>16</sup>

## 5.

### STAYING ABOVE

The idea that a Jew can reach a level on which he is engaged (in a halachically permissible way) with “*chullin*, mundane matters,” yet remains completely separate from them, to the extent that he considers them (being mundane, to be) altogether disgraceful —

— comes as a result of a similar dynamic, so to speak, exhibited by Hashem. Even the {limited} G-dly light<sup>17</sup> **relational** to the lower worlds isn’t enmeshed, G-d forbid, in those lower worlds. Even this G-dly light cannot possibly connect with “*chullin*.”

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<sup>9</sup> *Shemos* 20:9. Our sages state that “this is a positive commandment” (*Mechilta* on this verse, et al).

<sup>10</sup> *Chagigah* 19b. This concept is elucidated in *Torah Or*, 13a; *Siddur im Dach*, 145d ff; *Derech Mitzvosecha*, 8a; et al.

<sup>11</sup> {Divine service.}

<sup>12</sup> *Pirkei Avos*, ch. 2, par. 12; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Deos*,” end of ch. 3; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 231.

<sup>13</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 3, pp. 907, 932; vol. 18, p. 104 {where it elaborates on the advantage of the following *avodah* over the previous one}.

<sup>14</sup> *Mishlei* 3:6; *Mishneh Torah* and *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*; *Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 156, par. 2.

<sup>15</sup> {Lit., “light holies,” referring to the grade of sacrifices that are less holy than *kodshei kodashim*.}

<sup>16</sup> {Lit., “holy of holies,” referring to the holiest grade of sacrifices.} See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Matos*,” 83b, et al.

<sup>17</sup> “Light,” as used in Chassidus, connotes Divine revelation and manifestation. For an elucidation of this term, see *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism* (by Rabbi Immanuel Schochet) p. 41 ff.

[On this basis, we can understand the emphasis and repetition of the words:<sup>18</sup> “(*Chalilah* to **You** to do such a thing {to bring death upon righteous with wicked}...) *Chalilah* to **You!** Shall the Judge of all the earth...?”]:

Seemingly, even if it would be possible, G-d forbid, to say that Hashem *didn't* have the integrity and righteousness to be considered “the Judge of all the earth,” it would still be entirely unreasonable “to bring death upon righteous with wicked.” What is added by the clause, “*Chalilah* to You! Shall the Judge of all the earth...?”

{By adding these words,} Avraham was emphasizing that even the level of “the Judge of all the **earth**” — a level of G-dliness where the behavior of the lowest beings are of significance to Him, and a level from where they are **judged**, and rewarded or punished<sup>19</sup> — even **there**, G-dliness remains completely disconnected from “*chullin*.”]

Therefore, the same is true concerning a Jew, who is “a literal part of Hashem above.”<sup>20</sup> Even when involved in “*chullin*” matters, he does not get consumed by them, and internally, he remains “removed” from them to the extent that their materiality is abhorrent to him.

Internally, a Jew is completely above “*chullin*.” Consequently, he can transform the mundane to the degree that they become “(*chullin* prepared according to) the level of **purity required for sacrifices**.”

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<sup>18</sup> {*Bereishis* 18:25.}

<sup>19</sup> See *Torah Or*, s.v. “*erda na*”; *Toras Chaim*, s.v. “*VaYomer Hashem... Erda Na*.”

<sup>20</sup> *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 2.

## 6.

### A PHYSICAL EXILE

The lesson mentioned above also relates to the general content of our *parshah*, which speaks about the *keitz*<sup>21</sup> and the final causes and events that led to the (actual) descent of Yaakov and his sons into Egypt and their subsequent exile there, which was the beginning of all future exiles:<sup>22</sup>

There is a well-known adage from our Rebbeim, that “our bodies alone were consigned to exile and subjugation by the nations of the world, but our souls have not been. Nor can the nations of the world subjugate our souls.”<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, exile can only exercise control over a Jew when he considers his body and physical affairs of import. However, when he considers them inconsequential (and on the contrary, in his eyes, they are “*chullin*... an expression of **disgrace**”) because his soul is revealed and shines forth, and it has no connection to anything “*chullin*” — then, exile has no sway over him.

We can posit that this is also the deeper reason why the final event that led Yaakov and his sons down to Egypt was the discovery of the silver goblet among the belongings of Yaakov’s sons. Exile and **subjugation** by the nations of the world can only have dominion over the Jews when they have (at least) a minor deficiency in their attitude concerning “*chullin*... an expression of **disgrace**.” The fact that they slipped up and actually *had* the silver goblet, even though they were **unaware**, indicates a certain deficiency in their feeling of separateness from “*chullin*.” This is **similar** to the well-known idea that a Jew’s soul cannot transgress or commit a sin, even **unknowingly**.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> {Lit., “the end,” the term *keitz* refers to the prophesied end of exile.}

<sup>22</sup> “For all the nations are called after Egypt [*Mitzrayim*] because they distress [*metzirot*] Israel.” — *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 16, sec. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Likkutei Dibburim*, vol. 4, p. 1383.

<sup>24</sup> See *Tanya*, “*Iggeres Hakodesh*,” end of ch. 28.



## THE PURPOSE OF EXILE

Just as this holds true for a Jew — that the entire reality of exile is manifest only outwardly, concerning his body, however, his soul remains free and liberated — it also holds true concerning exile:

Hashem exiled the Jewish people only for the ensuing elevation and redemption. Meaning, it was only a superficial descent and exile, but the truth and **intent of** exile is a condition of elevation and redemption.

This also serves as a deeper explanation for the well-known saying of our Sages that immediately after the destruction of the Temple, the champion and redeemer of the Jews was born.<sup>25</sup> Meaning from the very beginning of exile, the redemption had already begun, for redemption is the inner constituent of exile.

The *avodah* of a Jew also has this purpose: By striving to improve his conduct to convey his true self — his soul, which transcends exile — he (also) reveals the truth and intent of exile — the ultimate revelation of the Redemption.

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<sup>25</sup> *Eichah Rabbah*, ch. 1, sec. 51.

## 8.

### AN UNPAVED ROAD

As we have mentioned many times, there are “wondrous ideas”<sup>26</sup> in Rashi’s commentary on the Torah, relating to all areas of Torah, including *remez*<sup>27</sup> and *sod*.<sup>28</sup>

In his commentary near the end of our *parshah*, Rashi hints at the concept mentioned above regarding exile and redemption:

On the words<sup>29</sup> “וַיִּצְטַדֵּק” How can we justify ourselves?,” Rashi explains: “This expresses ‘justice {צַדִּיק}.’ Similarly, regarding any word whose root begins with the letter צ, that comes to express the {reflexive} *mispael* or *hispael* form, one puts a ט in place of the ת, and does not put it {the ט} in front of the first letter of the word’s root, but rather among the letters of the root.” (Rashi then provides a few examples of this rule:) “... And a word that begins with ס or ש, when it appears in the *hispael* form, the ת separates the letters of the root...” [Subsequently, Rashi brings examples, first of words beginning with a *samech* (“סבל, סכל”), and then of words beginning with a *shin* (“שמר, שולל”); he then concludes with] “מִקְטוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי, oppressing My people”<sup>30</sup> — from the same root as “דֶּרֶךְ לֹא סְלוּלָה, an unpaved road.”<sup>31</sup>

We need to clarify:

- a) Based on the order of Rashi’s explanation, where he first brings examples of words that begin with a ס, and then words that begin with a ש, the example of “מִקְטוֹלֵל” (which begins with a ס) should have been brought: (a) together with the rest of the examples that begin with a ס; and (b) **before** the examples that begin with a ש.

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<sup>26</sup> *Shelah’s* wording in his “*Meseches Shavuot*” (181a).

<sup>27</sup> {*Remez* is a method of commentary based on hints and allusions in the text, sometimes based on the numerical value of letters.}

<sup>28</sup> {*Sod* focuses on the secrets and esoteric teachings of Torah based on Kabbalah.}

<sup>29</sup> *Bereishis* 44:16.

<sup>30</sup> *Shemos* 9:17.

<sup>31</sup> *Yirmiyahu* 18:15.

- b) Why does Rashi say that the word “מִסְתַּחֵלֵל” comes “from the same root as דָּרַךְ לֹא סְלִיחָה, an **unpaved** road,” which is different from the way he interprets the words “עוֹדָה מִסְתַּחֵלֵל, you are still oppressing” in its original place (in *parshas Vaeira*), that “מִסְתַּחֵלֵל, oppressing” comes “from the same root as “מְסָלָה, a **road**”?<sup>32</sup>
- c) Why does Rashi say, “from the same root as “דָּרַךְ לֹא סְלִיחָה, an unpaved road,” rather than saying it more concisely, “from the same root as “סְלִיחָה, unpaved” (similar to the wording used in *parshas Vaeira*: “from the same root as “מְסָלָה, a road”)?

## 9.

### AN UNPAVED ROAD

The explanation (based on the *remez* dimension of Rashi):

The difference between our *parshah* and *parshas Vaeira* is as follows: *Parshas Mikeitz*, as we discussed earlier, speaks about (the end of) the phase of preparation for **exile** into Egypt. In contrast, *parshas Vaeira* speaks about the first plagues Hashem brought upon the Egyptians — the beginning of the **redemption**, especially in light of the teaching of our Rabbis that (already) on Rosh Hashanah, the forced labor of our forefathers in Egypt was lifted.<sup>33</sup>

Based on this explanation, we can understand why in *parshas Vaeira*, at the very start of the redemption, Rashi explains that “מִסְתַּחֵלֵל, oppressing” comes “from the same root as “מְסָלָה, road”: Although Pharaoh was “still oppressing My people, **not** to send them out,” this was only because **he** had not yet understood that the redemption had already begun. But in truth, it is “from the same root as “מְסָלָה, **road**” — there was already a well-trodden path to the redemption. The fact that Pharaoh was “still oppressing My people, not to send them out” was

<sup>32</sup> *Yeshayahu* 11:16.

<sup>33</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 11a.

only “to show you My power and so that My Name may be declared throughout the world”<sup>34</sup> and “to increase My wonders in the land of Egypt.”<sup>35</sup>

In our *parshah*, however, which speaks about the (beginning of) exile, “מִסְתוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי, oppressing My people” is used to connote “דֶּרֶךְ לֹא סְלִיָּה, **an unpaved road**”; in our *parshah*, it appears as if this was truly an **exile**.

Nevertheless, since both interpretations of Rashi — “from the same root as “דֶּרֶךְ לֹא סְלִיָּה, an unpaved road,” and “מִסְלָה, a road” — explain the same word, it is self-evident that they must have a shared meaning that binds them together:<sup>36</sup> Even “an **unpaved road**” is a “road” — “a road” (“מִסְלָה”) leading to redemption<sup>37</sup> — only at the beginning of exile it is “**an unpaved road**,” not a **well-trodden** path. For at first glance, it seems to be a real exile. In truth, however, the “דֶּרֶךְ (of) לֹא, the road (of) **not** — is paved”; exile itself is an entity that is a “road for the remnant of his people.” It is the “**road**” to the redemption because the purpose and core reason of the exile was the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah.

Therefore, Rashi brings the example of “מִסְתוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי, oppressing My people” in our *parshah*, which speaks about the groundwork and beginning of the **exile**, because from the very beginning of the exile, the element of redemption was already extant in the purpose and nucleus of the exile. (As explained earlier, the phrase מִסְתוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי was said in conjunction with the plagues, which signaled the beginning of **redemption**.)

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<sup>34</sup> *Shemos* 9:16.

<sup>35</sup> *Shemos* 11:9.

<sup>36</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 3, p. 782; et al.

<sup>37</sup> *Biurei HaZohar*, beg. of *parshas Vayishlach*.

## 10.

### REDEMPTION

In light of the above, we now also understand why Rashi places the example of “מִסְתוֹלֵל, oppressing” at the end of his explanation: Rashi is alluding to the fact that the conclusion and purpose of the events discussed in the *parshiyos* of *Vayeishev* and *Mikeitz* leading up to the Egyptian exile are *already* intertwined with the redemption. Within the nucleus of exile, redemption is already present.

The same applies to this final exile. When a Jew perceives that the whole construct of exile is only something superficial, but in reality, he transcends the exile; and when he understands that the nucleus of exile, to be revealed in the future, is already present — this itself evinces the nucleus of exile out of its concealment into revelation, with the coming of the true and complete Redemption, through our righteous Moshiach. May this actually happen very soon.

— From a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Mikeitz*, 5725 (1964)