

What We're All About

*Discovering Moshiach
in every detail of
the Rebbe's nesius*

Part 6: Rashi, Rambam, Pirkei Avos
& Likkutei Levi Yitzchok

The farbrengen was the Rebbe's primary platform for teaching Torah and leading *klal Yisroel*. During the thousands of hours of farbrengens, the Rebbe illuminated all areas of Torah in so many revolutionary ways, thereby transforming the Jewish world forever. Foundational themes now universally accepted and applied—such as the eternal and absolute relevance of Torah, the preciousness of a Yid, the importance of even one mitzvah and the imminence of *geula*—came to the world through the Torah the Rebbe taught at farbrengens and later disseminated through various mediums.

A thorough analysis of the Rebbe's Torah is impossible, and certainly comparing and contrasting it to the Torah of previous Rabbeim is beyond us; nevertheless we have chosen to focus on four permanent fixtures of the Rebbe's *sichos* at the Shabbos farbrengens: Rashi, Rambam, Pirkei Avos & Likkutei Levi Yitzchok.

Although all *Raboseinu Nesieinu* taught Torah and Chassidus publicly, never before had a Rebbe taught a revolutionary approach to entire elements of Torah in a routine fashion. Over the years a pattern emerged and (for many years) Chassidim would come to the Shabbos farbrengen knowing what to expect on a general level. After the *maamar*, there were always *sichos* with explanations on a Rashi, a *biur* from Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, and (in the summer) a Mishna in Pirkei Avos. After the Rebbe instituted the *takana* of *limmud haRambam*, there was an explanation on a *halacha* from the daily *shiur* as well.

Far from just being novel *chiddushei Torah*, these *sichos* introduced an entirely new dimension to the way we learn Rashi, Rambam and Pirkei Avos and made the groundbreaking Torah of Harav Levi Yitzchok accessible to all.

In this article we endeavor to discover how these four areas of *limmud haTorah* are connected to Moshiach and *geula*.

לזכות
החיילים בצבאות ה'

ישראל ארי' לייב
בן הרה"ת ר' מענדל יעקב
וזוגתו מרת רחל שיחיו טראקסלער
לרגל הולדתו ט"ו אייר ה'תשע"ח

לוי
בן הרה"ת ר' יהודה ארי'
וזוגתו מרת רבקה מרים שיחיו מאן
לרגל הולדתו ו' אלול ה'תשע"ח

אליהו
בן הרה"ת זלמן שמעון אברהם
וזוגתו מרת חנה שיחיו טראקסלער
לרגל הולדתו כ"ה כסלו יום א' דחנוכה ה'תשע"ט

נדפס ע"י זקניהם
הרה"ת ר' משה גדול
וזוגתו מרת שושנה שיחיו
טראקסלער





CIRCA EARLY 5720S*

Rashi

The Simple Meaning - פשוטו של מקרא

On Shabbos Parshas Noach 5725*, several weeks after the passing of the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe explained the first and last Rashi on the *parsha*. Thus began a new era of the Shabbos farbrengens and a new world opened in the study of Rashi. At every Shabbos farbrengen for the next 23 years, the Rebbe routinely explained a Rashi and charted out a new path in understanding this essential *pirush* that has been an inseparable part of Chumash learning for over 800 years.

Hundreds of commentaries have been written on Rashi over the years and yet the Rebbe's unique approach is unprecedented. Rashi describes the genre of his *pirush* in Parshas Bereishis "ואני לא באתי אלא - לפניו של מקרא - I have only come to explain the simple meaning of the *possuk* [as understood by the five year old starting to learn Chumash]."

The Rebbe takes this statement literally (more than any previous commentator on Rashi) and reveals how every word and nuance, every source or name quoted and even the *dibbur hamaschil* is integral to explaining the simple meaning of the *possuk* to a five year old child.

So groundbreaking is this approach to Rashi, that an entire *sefer* of *Klalei Rashi* - Principles of Rashi was compiled from these *sichos*.

In addition, based on the statement of the Alter Rebbe that *pirush Rashi* contains within it "ינה של תורה" - the secrets of Torah," the Rebbe revealed how through clarifying the "simple meaning of the *possuk*" one can uncover deep mystical ideas of Kabbalah and Chassidus in these *pirushim*. Discovering wondrous concepts

of *halacha* is also part and parcel of the Rebbe's phenomenal approach to Rashi.

The Rashi *sichos* are a breathtaking tapestry of basic Chumash understanding, fascinating halachic insights, deep explanations in Kabbalah and profound lessons in *avodas Hashem* - intertwined and inseparable - all stemming from the "simple meaning of the *possuk*."¹

Many wondered why the Rebbe started to *koch* so strongly in Rashi. After all, the purpose of Rashi is to explain the simple meaning of Chumash to beginners, and does not seem to be a topic worthy of such deep analysis.

On Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5725*, there was a *Pegisha*² in Crown Heights and all of the visiting students were present at the farbrengen. Since there was a "new crowd," (certainly unaccustomed to the idea of analyzing a Rashi - ed.) the Rebbe prefaced by explaining the purpose of learning Rashi with such focus and care.

In the current era of עקבתא דמשיחא there is a greater emphasis on discovering the common denominator in all reality. The fact that modern scientific research strives to uncover the unifying factor in numerous disparate particles is a reflection of the fact that we are on the threshold of *geula* when the oneness of Hashem and creation will be revealed.

The same is true with Torah. The vast sea of Torah scholarship in all of its diverse formats all originates in one essential point; hence, every layer of Torah can be derived from the most simple meaning of the original text, the Chumash.

Revealing the true simple meaning of a *possuk* and illustrating how every layer of Torah, even the deepest mystical secrets, can be derived from it, is a taste of *geula*, when *achdus Hashem* will be revealed in everything.³

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Rambam

It's About Halacha - הלכות הלכות

On Acharon Shel Pesach 5744* the Rebbe established the *takana* of *limmud haRambam*, calling upon all Yidden, men women and children to unite in learning Rambam in one of three cycles, primarily to learn three chapters of Mishneh Torah every day. (Much has been written about this *takana* and its relevance to Moshiach⁴.)

Since learning three chapters of Rambam every day requires one to suffice with understanding the *halachos* on a basic level, the Rebbe specifically suggested that everyone learn one *halacha* (at least one detail of a *halacha*) every day in greater depth.

From then on, at every farbrengen and in many *sichos* the Rebbe focused on one or more *halachos* in the daily Rambam, providing a novel approach to understanding the Rambam's style, the precision of every detail in the *sefer* and gleaning important lessons in *avodas Hashem* in all areas of life.

There are many elements to the Rebbe's *derech* in learning Rambam, but perhaps most unique about it is the fact that every word in the *sefer* must be relevant in *halacha*. In his introduction to Mishneh Torah the Rambam states that this is a "*sefer of halachos...* available to everyone, big and small." Taking these words literally, the Rebbe insisted that *everything* in Mishneh Torah (even the rare instances that the Rambam mentions history or other seemingly non-halachic related items) is *halacha*.

There are diverse areas of *limmud haTorah*, including many that have no practical application in our lives. *Halacha* is unique in the fact that its entire purpose is to ensure that every detail of our



THE REBBE ENTERS FOR A FARBRENGEN, CIRCA 5730S*.

physical world functions in accordance with the will of Hashem in a practical way. This goal will be realized in its entirety only in the era of *geula*, when the entire universe will reflect *Elokus* in every way. Therefore the Rambam in Mishneh Torah - the only halachic work which encompasses *all of halacha* - concludes with a detailed description of the times of Moshiach, since it is the epitome of the purpose of *halacha*.

Pirkei Avos

Being a Chossid - מילי דחסידותא

It is customary for all of *klal Yisroel* to learn Pirkei Avos after Mincha on the Shabbosim between Pesach and Shavuos. Even though the Alter Rebbe writes in the *siddur* that there are those who continue to do so until Rosh Hashanah, for generations it was not the prevailing *minhag* in Chabad. On the Shabbos following Shavuos of 5738*, following Mincha, the Rebbe sat down at his place and started learning Pirkei Avos in public, thus confirming Chabad *minhag* to learn Pirkei Avos throughout the summer.

In 5712*, the Rebbe started explaining a Mishna of the weekly Pirkei Avos at the Shabbos farbrengens during that time of year, and in 5734* the Rebbe started to do so on the Shabbosim throughout the summer (even though *minhag Chabad* was still unclear, as described above). Many of these *sichos* were edited by the Rebbe and published as weekly *likkutim* (published later in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 4 and 17).

These *sichos* were not merely novel explanations to difficult *mishnayos*. They provided a fresh new outlook on Pirkei Avos in general. The main element of the Rebbe's unique approach to Pirkei Avos is based on the statement of Chazal "לקיים... למהוי חסידא... לקיים" - "מילי דאבות" - One who wants to be a Chossid... should observe the teachings of Meseches Avos.

This statement reveals that (a) all of the lessons in Avos are not *halacha*, rather behaviors in the category of לפנים משורת הדין - beyond the letter of the law, and (b) every single word in Avos is a lesson in *midas Chassidus*. Even stories, such as the order of the tradition of Torah described in the first Mishna, is a lesson in how a Yid must serve Hashem in a way that transcends his halachic obligations. And since every Yid is obligated to learn Pirkei Avos several times a year, its lessons of *midas Chassidus* apply to everyone, regardless of their current level in *avodas Hashem*.

An example of this approach is clearly evident in the Rebbe's explanation⁵ to this *Mishna*:

גלות בא לעולם על עבודה זרה, ועל גלוי עריות, ועל שפיכות דמים, ועל שמיטת הארץ.⁶

How does this statement, enumerating four severe sins that cause *galus*, fit into the genre of *midas Chassidus*? Clearly the Mishna is referring to the fact that these four sins represent four elements of the coarseness of *olam hazeh*, which at their most radical level translate into the severe sins of *avoda zara* and the like, but are expressed in more refined ways as well.

Chassidus explains that the root of *avoda zara* is the feeling of self sufficiency and that success is the result of one's own hard work. Such an attitude can cause one to make a business phone call before going to shul and davening and learning. While certainly not a blatant violation of halacha, if one were permeated with the idea of *achdus Hashem* - the opposite of *avoda zara* - such a behavior would be unthinkable and downright silly.

Living our lives in a way that fits this high bar of *middas Chassidus* is the antidote to *galus*.

In a more general sense, Pirkei Avos is connected to *geula* in three ways.⁷

We begin learning Pirkei Avos in the month of Nissan which is the month of *geula*, and the chapters we learn for those six Shabbosim are a preparation for *matan Torah*. This represents the refinement of the six *middos*, making us worthy of attaining the level of *mochin* we will merit in the era of *geula*.

Pirkei Avos begins with Moshe Rabbeinu, the first redeemer of *am Yisroel*, who is connected to the ultimate redeemer, Moshiach: הוא גואל אחרון.

Many of the *mishnayos* in Pirkei Avos are composed in three stanzas, and even when a Mishna contains more ideas, the ideas can regularly be defined in three categories (as the Rebbe explains on numerous occasions). This emphasizes the connection to the imminent *geula* when we will merit the *third* Beis Hamikdash.

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Likkutei Levi Yitzchok

Mesiras Nefesh Torah - תורה מתוך מסירות נפש

When Harav Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe's father was exiled by the vile Communists to the remote region of Chile, Kazakhstan, his wife, Rebbetzin Chana joined him for much of the time. She brought along a Tanya, a Zohar and a Midrash Rabba, and when she saw his great thirst to express his deep *chiddushim*, she resolved to do something about it.

With great *mesiras nefesh* she gathered herbs and grasses and produced ink, enabling her husband to write his *chiddushim* on the margins of the few *sefarim* she had brought. After the *histalkus* of Harav Levi Yitzchok, Rebbetzin Chana exerted superhuman efforts to preserve the *sefarim*, entrusting them for safekeeping with Chassidim in Russia with the hope that one day they will be delivered to the Rebbe.

Over the years and through the courageous efforts of many individuals, these *sefarim* reached the Rebbe during the 5720s* and on Rosh Chodesh Menachem



Av 5730* two volumes entitled Likkutei Levi Yitzchok were published.

Since Harav Levi Yitzchok wrote these lofty *chiddushim* on the margins of *sefarim* with a shortage of ink, they were in shorthand and very difficult to understand, even for outstanding *lamdanim*. On Shabbos Parshas Eikev of that year, the Rebbe started to explain his father's notes on Iggeres Hateshuva and from Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5731*, at every Shabbos farbrengen the Rebbe would explain an entry of Likkutei Levi Yitzchok on Zohar connected to the *parsha*.

Contemplating the context in which these *chiddushei Torah* were written and became available for *klal Yisroel* to learn, it is amazing how Rebbetzin Chana overextended herself in so many ways to procure the



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ink. She had no background in the vocation and it was very difficult under the circumstances, which certainly entailed great *mesiras nefesh*.

Not only did she voluntarily join her husband in *galus* to support him and enable his continued Torah learning, she felt the need to ensure his *chiddushim* and *biurim* in *pnimius haTorah* reached *klal Yisroel* because this will be a major step in הפצת המעיינות חוצה - the ultimate way to bring Moshiach!⁸

Thousands of pages of Harav Levi Yitzchok's writings were left behind the Iron Curtain and have yet to be discovered. From the few volumes we have from his notes on the margins of *sefarim* we understand the immense treasure of Torah the lost writings contain. *Yehi ratzon*, we should imminently experience the realization of the Novi Yeshaya "ובאו האובדים בארץ אשור"

with the coming of Moshiach, when we will merit to the ultimate *chiddushim* in *pnimius haTorah* - and certainly the discovery of the *chiddushim* that have been written already.⁹ **i**

1. For a thorough description of the Rashi *sichos* see "Revolution in Rashi," Derher Shevat 5775.
2. See "The Weekend that Changed Lives," Derher Adar II 5779.
3. *Sichos Kodesh* 5725 vol. 1 page 262. *Toras Menachem* vol. 42 page 107.
4. See "Every Yid. Every Halacha. Every Day." Derher Tishrei 5777.
5. *Hisvaaduyos* 5744 vol. 3, p. 2112.
6. *Pirkei Avos* 5:9
7. *Hisvaaduyos* 5746 vol. 3, p. 202.
8. *Hisvaaduyos* 5746 vol. 1, p. 66.
9. *Ibid* 5750 page 64.