

OPENCHASSIDUS • RESHIMU EDITIONS

Standing as One, Taking Your Own Measure

שיחת ש"פ נצבים, כ"ז אלול, ה'שי"ת

Sichas Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5710
One sicha, nine sections

27 ELUL 5710 • SHABBOS, 9 SEPTEMBER 1950
LIKKUTEI SICHOS VOL. 2, P. 398 FF. (YIDDISH, EDITED)
TORAS MENACHEM 5710, PP. 205-218 (HEBREW WITNESS)

FULL ELUCIDATED EDITION — ENGLISH ELUCIDATION WITH YIDDISH AND HEBREW ANCHOR TEXT
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METHOD: RESHIMU • ATZMUT OS • TEXT-FIDELITY METHODOLOGY

ABOUT THIS EDITION

On the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah 5710, the Rebbe delivered a sicha in nine sections on *Atem nitzavim*. He later edited it himself, in Yiddish, and it was printed in **Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 398 ff.** The Hebrew rendering in **Toras Menachem** (5710, pp. 205–218) carries the same nine sections with added source references and a few details drawn from the unedited transcript. This edition works from both witnesses at once.

HOW TO READ THE PAGE

Left column **Bold** renders what the sicha itself states. *Lighter italic* is editorial elucidation — the connective reasoning, the implied step, the unstated premise. The two are always typographically distinct.

Right column The anchor rail. Hebrew from the Toras Menachem witness in serif; Yiddish from the edited Likkutei Sichos text in sans; a small Latin gloss under each anchor names it.

Deep dives Indigo boxes, placed at the point where the concept first does work — not parked in a glossary.

Summary Closes each section in one paragraph you can carry to the table.

Apparatus Back matter only. Textual notes, witness comparison, and citation status. Nothing inline.

WHAT THIS EDITION IS — AND IS NOT

This is an **elucidated study edition**: the English is written fresh for this edition, and the right-hand rail carries short anchor phrases from the two witnesses rather than a running reproduction of either text. It is **not** a full bilingual reprint of the Kehot Likkutei Sichos text. Readers wanting the complete Yiddish should read it at the source: mayanos.org — Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2, Nitzavim, Sicha 1.

The shape of the sicha

It is worth seeing the architecture before entering it, because the sicha is built as a single argument and the last section answers the fourth. Sections 1–3 establish what Rosh Hashanah asks for: not tolerance among Jews but mutual completion, held **with truth** — which means you genuinely cannot know whether you are the head or the foot. Section 4 shows why that is impossible by ordinary means, through a halachic problem in Arachin and a story in which the Alter Rebbe answers a question by naming who is asking it. Sections 5–6 supply the mechanism: what you give was never yours. Sections 7–8 are the Tzemach Tzedek's own account of a revelation earned by setting down his tallis. Section 9 turns the whole thing into an instruction, and closes by answering the longing that section 7 opened.



SECTION 1

Why this parshah, this week

BEFORE WE READ

The sicha opens on a calendar fact rather than a concept: Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. The move that follows — from a fixed reading cycle to what the day demands of you — is the engine of the whole sicha. Watch the word *hayom*, "today," relocate from the verse to the Day of Judgment.

It is stated in Likkutei Torah — and it appears also in the Rebbe Rayatz's reshimah for Nitzavim 5707 — that this parshah is always read before Rosh Hashanah. *The rule holds regardless of how the calendar falls: some years Nitzavim is read together with Vayeilech, some years on its own, but never after the New Year.*

The reason rests on a known principle: every Shabbos is bound up with, and contains, the days of the week it opens onto. *A Shabbos is not merely adjacent to the coming week; it holds it in advance. So the parshah read on that Shabbos is the parshah that belongs to Rosh Hashanah.*

"Atem nitzavim hayom" — "today" refers to Rosh Hashanah, the day of the great judgment. *The verse's "today" is read as a date, not a rhetorical present. And when that day arrives, there must be "atem nitzavim... kulchem" — all the souls must take their stand together before Hashem your God.*

This standing is identical in all souls: from "your heads, your tribes" down to "the hewer of your wood and the drawer of your water." *Rashi identifies the wood-bewers as Canaanites who came to convert in Moshe's days, as the Gibeonites did in Yehoshua's — and they were accepted only because of the oath. Even so, they too go up before Hashem together with the rest of Israel, in the manner of "kulchem," "la'achadim k'echad."*

איתא בלקוטי תורה

TM — "it is stated in Likkutei Torah"

שכל שבת שייכת וכוללת

את ימי השבוע שלאח"ז

TM — every Shabbos is bound to and contains the days of the week following

אתם נצבים היום

יומא דדינא רבא

Devarim 29:9 • "the day of the great judgment"

אלע נשמות דארפן זיך צושטעלן

LS — all souls must take their stand

מ"ראשיכם שבטיכם" ועד

ל"חוטב עציך ושואב מימך"

from the heads of the tribes down to the hewer of wood and drawer of water

לאחדים כאחד

"as ones, as one"

DEEP DIVE • AT POINT OF USE

Why the Gibeonites are the test case

The Gibeonites entered the covenant by a technicality. In Yehoshua ch. 9 they secure their place by deception and are held only by the oath the princes swore — an accepted status that no one would call earned. *The sicha needs precisely that: a party whose inclusion cannot be attributed to merit.*

If *kulchem* meant "everyone according to his standing," the Gibeonites would stand at the far edge of the line. The sicha's claim is stronger — גם הם עולים לפני הוי"ה, they too go up, *together with* the rest, in the same act. Section 3 will show that this is not a concession to them but a statement about the structure of the whole.

The content of "kulchem," "la'achadim k'echad," is not merely that each bears with his fellow — that one tolerates the other despite knowing himself to be a head and the other a simple man; toleration is a hierarchy that has agreed to be polite. It is more than that: they receive from one another, and they complete one another.

As in the human body, where the head and the foot complete each other, and neither one — not the head and not the foot — has wholeness without the other.

And so that this avodah should be possible on "hayom," we read the parshah in advance on the Shabbos before, because the reading in the Torah itself supplies the power to bring the matter into actuality. *This is the same logic Chassidus gives for saying the verses of Malchiyos, Zichronos and Shofros on Rosh Hashanah: by bringing a proof from Torah that the Holy One must be King and must remember — and with what, with a shofar — one effects that it be so in fact.*

ניט נאר וואס זיי זיינען

סובל איינער דעם אנדערן

LS – not merely that they bear with one another

מקבלים זה מזה,

ומשלמים זה את זה

they receive from one another and complete one another

ראש ורגל

head and foot

הקריאה בתורה מהווה

נתינת־כח

the Torah reading constitutes an empowerment

מלכיות זכרונות ושופרות

the three sets of Rosh Hashanah verses

SUMMARY • SECTION 1

A Shabbos holds the week it opens onto, so *Atem nitzavim hayom* lands on the Day of Judgment. What the day requires is a unity in which every soul stands identically — heads of tribes and wood-hewers in one act — and that unity is not forbearance but mutual completion: head and foot each incomplete without the other. Reading the parshah beforehand is not commemoration; it is the supply of power to do it.

SECTION 2

What a covenant is for

BEFORE WE READ

The verse continues past *kulchem* to *le'ovrecha bivris* — "to bring you into the covenant." The sicha reads that sequence as cause and effect: the standing of section 1 is the *preparation* for a covenant. To explain what a covenant is *for*, it turns to an ordinary human case and asks why two people who already love each other would need one.

After "atem nitzavim... from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water," the verse continues, "to bring you into the covenant of Hashem your God" — meaning that the avodah of "atem nitzavim... kulchem" constitutes the preparation for that covenant, for the cutting of a covenant between the Holy One and Israel on the day of Rosh Hashanah.

The content of cutting a covenant, as we see it in material terms: two faithful lovers cut a covenant between them so that their love should not cease. *Note what motivates it. Their love rests on a reason — either because one recognizes the other's virtues, or because he loves him so that he will be loved in return and something good will come of it.*

So when he sees some deficiency in himself and fears his friend will sense it, and that this will cause a slackening in their love — *and all the more so when the deficiency is in essential matters, which could void the love entirely or even turn it into its opposite* — the remedy is this: while their love is still at strength, they cut a covenant between them, that the love should endure forever.

Because the cutting of a covenant is above reason and knowledge — that is, one sets the intellect aside — and they cut a covenant for an essential bond, such that nothing in the world will weaken the love, and it will endure forever and for all time.

The move is precise and easy to miss. A covenant does not argue the intellect out of its assessment. It relocates the bond off the faculty that made the assessment in the first place. Whatever the intellect concludes tomorrow about the deficiency it detects is now simply not where the relationship is held.

לעברך כברית

הוי אלקיך

Devarim 29:11 – to bring you into the covenant

צווי אוהבים נאמנים

LS – two faithful lovers

אהבה מצד הטעם

a love that rests on a reason

רפיון באהבתם

a slackening in their love

בשעת זייער אהבה איז

נאך שטארק

LS – while their love is still strong

למעלה מטעם ודעת

above reason and knowledge

מען לייגט אוועק דעם שכל

אן א זייט

LS – one lays the intellect aside

התקשרות עצמית

an essential bond

DEEP DIVE · AT POINT OF USE

למעלה מטעם ודעת — above reason, not against it

The phrase is often heard as a licence to stop thinking. In this sicha it does something narrower and more interesting: it identifies *where a bond is anchored*.

A love grounded in a reason is only as durable as the reason. It is therefore vulnerable in a specific way — not to argument, but to *evidence*. The moment a flaw becomes visible, the ground that supported the love now undermines it, and the more essential the flaw, the faster. A covenant answers this not by denying the flaw but by moving the anchor: מניחים את השכל על הצד, the intellect is set to one side, and the bond is placed in something the intellect neither built nor can dismantle.

This is why section 3 will insist the unity be held "with truth." A covenant that were merely a decision to overlook what you still believe would be a reason-based love in disguise — and would fail the same way.

The same holds for the love between the Holy One and Israel. When Rosh Hashanah comes, the love is at great strength — since one stands after the avodah of the month of Elul, which removes the sins that conceal the love — and at that point the covenant is cut: Israel bind themselves to the Holy One in an essential bond above reason and knowledge, such that nothing in the world will be capable of weakening it.

And in order to arouse the Holy One, as it were, to bind Himself with the souls of Israel above reason and knowledge, this is accomplished through the avodah of "kulchem," "la'achadim k'echad" — because that is the self-surrender that is above reason and knowledge. *By intellect there is no relation or connection between "your heads" and "the drawer of your water"; a head and a water-carrier have nothing in common that reason can name. To stand with him as one is therefore already an act above reason — and it is what draws the same from Above.*

This is on the model of what is explained regarding "b'chol me'odecha": through your own "me'od," limited though it is to being yours alone, one draws down the essential "me'od."

חטאים המעלימים

על האהבה

the sins that conceal the love

אן "אוועקגעב"

שלמעלה מטעם ודעת

LS — a giving-away above reason and knowledge

אין קשר ושׂיכות בין

”ראשיכם” ל”שואב מימך”

by intellect: no relation between the head and the water-drawer

בכל מאדך · המ”אד”

העצמי

Devarim 6:5 · the essential "me'od"

SUMMARY · SECTION 2

Love that rests on a reason is undone by evidence, not by argument — the first visible flaw turns its own ground against it. A covenant is cut while the love is strong precisely to move the anchor off the assessing faculty. Elul strips the concealments; Rosh Hashanah cuts the covenant. And the way to draw an above-reason bond from Above is to perform one below: to stand as one with a man to whom reason assigns you no relation at all.



SECTION 3

The foot's advantage

BEFORE WE READ

Here the sicha turns on the reader. Everything so far could be performed as a posture. This section closes that exit with a single word — *emes* — and then gives two independent reasons why the ranking you are quietly running is unreliable. The second reason is the one that carries the rest of the sicha.

However — the matter of "kulchem," "la'achadim k'echad," must be with truth. A person has to know that this is in fact how it stands.

For although he thinks himself one of "your heads" and the other a simple man: first, it is not possible to know who is the head and who is the foot, since as a rule a person assesses his fellow at a level lower than he truly is, and himself at a level higher than he truly is. *The error is not random noise around a true value. It is directional, and it runs the same direction every time — which is exactly what makes it invisible from the inside.*

And second, apart from that — even if the reality is indeed such that he is the head, there is an advantage in the foot over the head, in that the wholeness of the head comes about only through the foot.

חייב להיות באמת

TM – it must be with truth

דארף זיין מיט אן אמת

LS – must be with truth

מערריך אדם את הזולת
בדרגה פחותה ממה שהוא
באמת, ואילו את עצמו...
נעלית

one assesses the other lower than he
truly is, and himself higher

שלימות הראש באה

אך ורק ע"י הרגל

the head's wholeness comes only
through the foot

DEEP DIVE • AT POINT OF USE

Two arguments, not one

It is worth separating them, because they do different work and only the second is load-bearing.

The epistemic argument — you cannot know who is the head — would leave the hierarchy intact and merely unknown. On that reading, humility is a hedge against measurement error: you defer because you might be wrong.

The structural argument is stronger. Grant the ranking. Suppose you really are the head. The foot still holds an advantage, **שלימות המעלה טמונה ברגל דוקא** — because a head that cannot stand is not a whole head. The advantage is not distributed evenly, and it is not in your favour.

This is the inversion the sicha is built on: the lower tier is not the residue left after the higher tier is served. It is the condition on which the higher tier is anything at all.

On this basis one can explain why it was specifically the Gibeonites who were made hewers of wood for the Mishkan and the Mikdash.

Not all Israel were in the Mikdash, and not all lived in Jerusalem. There were only the *anshei ma'amad* there, the delegates of all Israel. Whereas the *avodah* of the Gibeonites was in the Mikdash. *Read the asymmetry carefully: ordinary Jews were present by proxy; the Gibeonites were present in person.* And the reason: because the true wholeness of the advantage lies specifically in the foot.

This also explains the connection to the oath — the oath that was in force at the time the Gibeonites were accepted — since an oath is above reason and knowledge, and reaches the essence of the soul; and the essence of the soul expresses itself specifically in the foot.

חוטבי עצים למשכן

ולמקדש

hewers of wood for the Mishkan and
Mikdash

אנשי מעמד,

שלוחי כל ישראל

the delegates standing for all Israel

אמיתיות שלימות המעלה

טמונה ברגל דוקא

the true wholeness of the advantage
lies in the foot specifically

שבועה... מגיעה

לעצם הנפש

an oath reaches the essence of the
soul

DEEP DIVE · AT POINT OF USE

Why the essence of the soul shows up in the foot

The claim looks backwards until you ask what a faculty *is*. Intellect, emotion, speech — each is a defined capacity, which means each is a *limit*: it can express what falls within its range and nothing else. The essence of the soul is not a faculty and has no range, so it cannot be expressed by any of them without being narrowed into something it is not.

The foot expresses nothing. It has no content of its own to contribute — which is exactly why what moves through it arrives unaltered. *Where a faculty translates, the foot transmits.*

That is why the oath belongs here. An oath is not a persuasion; it operates above reason and therefore touches the level no faculty can carry — and that level surfaces where no faculty is doing the carrying. The Gibeonites in the Mikdash and the oath that admitted them are one point, not two. ועצם הנפש מתבטא ברגל דוקא.

SUMMARY · SECTION 3

The unity has to be held with truth, not performed. Two reasons: you misjudge in a fixed direction — others lower, yourself higher — and even granting that you are the head, the head's wholeness arrives only through the foot. Hence the Gibeonites served *in* the Mikdash while most of Israel were represented by delegates, and hence the oath, which works above reason, is the instrument that admitted them: it reaches the soul's essence, and the essence surfaces in the foot.

SECTION 4

On what standing do we ask?

BEFORE WE READ

The longest section, and the hinge. It begins with a problem about prayer — by what right does a creature make a request of Atzmus — and answers it not with a reason but with a redirection: assess yourself, and the standing to rank anyone else is gone. Then comes the Reb Hillel story, and then a halachic reading of it in Maseches Arachin that turns the story from a marvel into an instruction.

When a Jew contemplates, before the tekios of Rosh Hashanah, that he is about to ask "yivchar lanu es nachalaseinu, es ge'on Yaakov asher ahev selah" — where "yivchar lanu" means "thus and not otherwise" — and contemplates that the matter of choice comes from Atzmus itself, since only He, His Essence, is above all measures, above all limitations, free;

and contemplates further the "ein aroch": that beyond the way Asiyah is incommensurate with Atzilus, and Atzilus with the Infinite, no relation of "ein aroch" that could be described constitutes a parable at all for the "ein aroch" between the Creator and the created — how does one make bold to ask of His very Essence, "yivchar lanu"?!

When a person contemplates this and takes his own measure, no leisure will remain to him to take the measure of the other. *Not: he will nobly refrain from judging. There will be no time and no vantage point left from which to do it.*

יבחר לנו את נחלתנו
את גאון יעקב

Tehillim 47:5

אזוי און ניט אנדערש

LS – thus and not otherwise

הבחירה... מעצמותו ית'
דוקא

choice comes from Atzmus specifically

אין ערוך
אינו מהווה משל כלל

the incommensurable – no parable holds

לא ישאר לו פנאי
להעריך את השני

no leisure will remain to assess the other

DEEP DIVE • AT POINT OF USE

The ladder of **אין ערוך**, and why it does not reach

Chassidus supplies a graded series of incommensurabilities. Asiyah stands in no ratio to Atzilus; Atzilus stands in no ratio to the Infinite. Each gap is already unbridgeable by any factor you could name.

The sicha's move is to stack them and then discard the whole stack. Take the widest gap you can construct out of these and it still **אינו מהווה משל כלל** — is not a parable *at all* — for the gap between Creator and created. The argument is not that the distance is enormous. It is that distance is the wrong category: there is no scale on which both terms appear.

Which sharpens the question rather than answering it. If nothing you can imagine models the gap, the request "choose for us" has no standing whatsoever. That is the state the section wants you in before it introduces Reb Hillel.

Reb Hillel of Paritch longed to see the Alter Rebbe. But every time he arrived in a town where the Alter Rebbe had appeared, he did not meet him, because the Alter Rebbe had already left.

It occurred to him to move faster and arrive first, and when he heard that the Alter Rebbe was to reach a certain place, he travelled there before the Alter Rebbe came. Nor was he content with that: seeing that obstacles to seeing the Alter Rebbe's face always arose, he feared that this time too he would not be let in, so he outwitted the problem, came to the lodging where the Alter Rebbe was to stay, and hid under the bed.

Reb Hillel had prepared a difficulty in Maseches Arachin, in order to discuss it in learning with the Alter Rebbe. The moment the Alter Rebbe entered the room, before Reb Hillel managed to come out of hiding, he heard the Alter Rebbe saying, in the known niggun:

"When a young man has a difficulty in Arachin — he must first take his own measure."

Reb Hillel fainted on the spot. By the time they found him and revived him from his faint, the Alter Rebbe had already left.

The sicha then adds, in brackets: [Reb Hillel never again managed to be by the Alter Rebbe. He travelled to the Mittlerer Rebbe and to the Tzemach Tzedek, but by the Alter Rebbe this was the single time he was there — and even then he did not see him.]

And the meaning of the story in avodas Hashem, as it bears on us, is to be explained:

רבי הלל מפאריטש

השתוקק לראות את

אדמו"ר הזקן

TM — Reb Hillel of Paritch longed to see the Alter Rebbe

האט ער זיך מתחכם געווען

LS — he outwitted it

והתחבא תחת המטה

and hid under the bed

קושיא במסכת ערכין

a difficulty in Maseches Arachin

"כשיש לאברך קושיא

בערכין — עליו להעריך

עצמו תחלה"

TM, b'niguno hayadua — in the known niggun

ומיד התעלף רבי הלל

and Reb Hillel fainted at once

ערכין — הוי"ע שאינו

מבוסס על השכל

Arachin — a matter not founded on intellect

Arachin is a matter not founded on intellect — for the law in Arachin is that a person's value is fixed by his age, and not by human merits. All people of the same age have equal value.

This is the fulcrum. Everything turns on the fact that the tractate the young man was studying is the one place in Torah where a person is priced and merit is not an input.

שערך האדם נקבע ע"פ
גילו, ולא ע"פ מעלות
בני האדם

a person's value is fixed by age, not
by merits

כל האנשים שבאותו גיל
יש להם ערך שווה

all of the same age have equal value

DEEP DIVE · AT POINT OF USE

What Arachin actually legislates

The *erech* of Vayikra 27 is a fixed schedule. One who vows a person's *erech* to the Sanctuary pays a set sum determined by age bracket and sex — nothing else enters the calculation. A scholar and an ignoramus of the same age owe the identical amount.

Two things follow, and the sicha needs both. First, Torah contains a valuation of persons in which achievement is formally irrelevant. Second, that valuation is not a pious sentiment about equal worth; it is a *ruling*, with a number attached, and it cannot be argued with by pointing at anyone's biography.

Hence the difficulty a young man would naturally raise is not a beginner's confusion. It is the obvious objection, and the sicha states it in the first person so the reader cannot watch from outside.

And on the face of it, someone could raise a difficulty: I have occupied all my years with Torah and avodah — with matters in which the Holy One takes pleasure, in which the heavenly household takes pleasure, and which even by human reason are worthy of esteem; my years therefore have great value. Whereas so-and-so's years were squandered on nothing, "and it were better for him not to have been created" — how, then, can it be that the years of the two of us have equal value?!

And the answer to this is: when someone has a difficulty in Arachin — he must first take his own measure, properly — and then the difficulty will dissolve of itself.

Read the answer as an answer. It does not dispute the objector's premises; it observes what producing that objection required. To feel its force you had already placed your years on one side of a scale and his on the other, and read off a result in your own favour. The question is not refuted. Its author is identified — and the question was only ever available from a position he should not have been standing in.

אני עסקתי כל שנותי
בתורה ועבודה

TM – I have spent all my years in
Torah and avodah

שנותיו של פלוני בזבזו
לריק וטוב לו שלא נברא

his years squandered – "better he had
not been created"

עליו להעריך עצמו
(כדבעי) תחלה, ובמילא
תתבטל הקושיא

he must first assess himself properly
– and the difficulty dissolves of it-
self

DEEP DIVE • FROM THE APPARATUS

Two footnotes that finish the argument

The Toras Menachem edition carries two notes here that complete the reasoning, and they belong at the point of use.

The lowest valuation. The answer fits even the law of the *erech* of a non-Jew: when a person assesses himself as he should, his value comes out the lowest — **כִּי יָדַע אִינֶשׁ בְּנַפְשׁוֹ עֲרֻכּוֹ**, a man knows his own worth from inside, where the evidence is least flattering — and a non-Jew comes to the same sum, since there is nothing lower than the lowest. The note grounds this in the Alter Rebbe's precision in Tanya ch. 30, where the reading is **הוּא שָׁפֵל רוּחַ בְּפָנָיו כָּל הָאָדָם**, with the definite article — which the note takes to include the non-Jew as well.

The displacement effect. A second note adds what follows in practice: once he is thinking about and assessing himself, he will simply not be thinking about the other's deficiencies. *Not suppressed — crowded out. The same point as "no leisure will remain," now stated as a mechanism rather than a consequence.*

SUMMARY • SECTION 4

Before the shofar we ask *yivchar lanu* of Atzmus itself, across a gap for which no incommensurability we can construct is even a parable. That should silence the request. Reb Hillel, hidden under the bed with a question in Arachin, receives the answer before he can ask it: first take your own measure. And Arachin is the right tractate, because it prices a person by years and not by merits — so the objection anyone would raise turns out to require the very self-elevation the ruling denies. Assess yourself properly and the question dissolves; there is no longer a vantage point from which it can be asked.



SECTION 5

The deposit

BEFORE WE READ

A turn from Rosh Hashanah back to Elul, and from diagnosis to mechanism. Elul's letters spell out several verses; three of them line up with the three pillars of Torah, avodah and gemilus chasadim. Torah and avodah were treated on Chai Elul; this sicha takes the third. The section then asks two textual questions whose answer supplies the whole basis for giving.

Regarding the month of Elul: beyond the general acronym "ani l'dodi v'dodi li," there are several particular acronyms — which describe the manner in which "ani l'dodi" is done — and in general they fall into three groups, corresponding to the three lines of Torah, avodah, and gemilus chasadim.

(a) "inah l'yado v'samti lach" — corresponding to the line of Torah, since words of Torah are absorbed. (b) "ish l'rei'eihu u'matanos la'evyonim" — corresponding to the line of gemilus chasadim, that is, tzedakah. (c) "u'mal Hashem Elokecha es levavcha v'es levav zar'echa" — corresponding to the line of avodah, prayer and teshuvah in general, as the verse concludes "l'ahavah" — and it is explained in Kuntres HaAvodah that the essence of the avodah of prayer is love, not fear.

Torah and avodah were explained on another occasion. Now the matter of tzedakah will be explained — "ish l'rei'eihu u'matanos la'evyonim."

On the face of it this is not understood: since the allusion to tzedakah lies in the words "u'matanos la'evyonim," why were the initial letters of "ish l'rei'eihu" included as well — words which speak of mishloach manos and not of tzedakah? And on the other hand — why were only the initials of the last words, "ish l'rei'eihu," included, and not those of "mishloach manos"?

And the explanation is to be said as follows.

The wording is "u'matanos la'evyonim," and not "la'aniyim." The difference between aniyim and evyonim is this: an ani is one who is not

אני לדודי ודודי לי

Shir HaShirim 6:3 — the general acronym of Elul

אנה לידו ושמתי לך

Shemos 21:13 — the line of Torah

איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים

Esther 9:22 — the line of gemilus chasadim

ומל הויי אלקיך את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך

Devarim 30:6 — the line of avodah

עיקר עבודת התפלה (לא יראה, אלא) אהבה

Kuntres HaAvodah — the essence of prayer is love

משלוח מנות

the sending of portions — Purim, not tzedakah

ומתנות לאביונים ולא לעניים

"gifts to the destitute" — not "to the poor"

עני... יש לו משהו

wealthy — and not even of middling means — but who nonetheless has something. Whereas an evyon is one who, as Rashi explains, "craves everything": he desires every trifle, because he has nothing at all.

an ani still has something

**אביון — שתאב
לכל דבר**

Rashi — an evyon craves everything

צו יעדער קלייניקייט

LS — for every smallest thing

DEEP DIVE • AT POINT OF USE

Craving at both ends of the scale

The sicha immediately widens the term, and the widening is the interesting part. **תאב לכל דבר** — craving everything — applies at the *other* extreme too: a man may crave even the greatest thing, because he was accustomed to it. The example given is a horse to ride upon.

The reasoning is not about appetite. Since he craves it, and without it he cannot carry out his mission in the world, **עליך לתת לו** — you must give it to him. What defines destitution here is not the size of the gap between what he has and what others have, but the gap between what he has and what he needs in order to function.

Which quietly removes the giver's favourite instrument of assessment. You do not get to decide that his need is extravagant. The measure is his sblichus, not your budget for it — and section 4 has just established that you are the worst available judge of another man's scale.

And since a person might think that he is the wealthy one, and that when he gives the destitute man something — whether a large thing or a small one — he is giving from what is his, therefore the verse says "ish l'rei'ei hu u'matanos la'evyonim": to teach you that even the "gifts to the destitute" are in the manner of "a man to his fellow."

That is, the recipient is his fellow, and stands in the same condition as he does — as the giver does. Neither needs to approach the other, since the giver is not giving from what is his; he is only returning to him what was found with him on deposit.

The word to hold onto is pikadon. Not a gift, not even a loan: property belonging to someone else that happened to be lodged with you. On that construal, generosity is not a virtue you exercised — it is an obligation you discharged, and late.

And as the saying of the early chassidim ran, in the Alter Rebbe's time: "the piece of bread that is found in my possession is yours as much as mine" — and they would put the word "yours" first.

מחזיר לו מה שנמצא

אצלו בדרך פקדון

returning what was with him on deposit

"דיינער ווי מיינער"

LS — "yours as mine," with yours said first

יותר משהבעל הבית

עושה עם העני, העני

עושה עם בעל הבית

Vayikra Rabbah 34:8

נפשו של עני החיית...

ומציל אני אותם

Tanchuma, Mishpatim

And as Chazal said: "more than the householder does for the poor man, the poor man does for the householder." And as Chazal said further: "the soul of a poor man you have sustained... tomorrow your son or your daughter... and I save them."

SUMMARY • SECTION 5

Elul's acronyms line up with Torah, avodah and tzedakah; this sicha takes tzedakah. The verse says *evyonim*, not *aniyim* — one who craves everything, at either extreme, because he has nothing or because he cannot function without what he is used to. And it prefixes *ish l'rei'eibu* to keep the giver from mistaking his role: the recipient stands where you stand, and what you hand over was on deposit with you. The early chassidim said the bread is yours as much as mine — and said *yours* first.

SECTION 6

Tzedakah in the other register

BEFORE WE READ

Short and consequential. Everything established about material giving is now transposed to the spiritual — including the obligation on those who have nothing to give. The section's sharpest line is not about generosity at all; it is about how you know whom to help.

And the same applies to tzedakah in spiritual terms — since a person is composed of a body and a soul, the matter of tzedakah exists in spiritual terms as well.

By way of introduction: just as tzedakah in material terms is an obligation upon every single Jew, even upon a poor man in Israel, so too tzedakah in spiritual terms is an obligation upon every single Jew — even one who is poor in spiritual terms is likewise obligated in tzedakah, since every Jew has something to give.

And the very fact that he met so-and-so constitutes an instruction that he must help him and give to him — since every matter is by particular Providence, and the Holy One created nothing for nothing; it is therefore certain that this came about by design, so that he should give the other something.

This is the operative test, and it replaces judgment with observation. You are not asked to determine whether the person in front of you is deserving, or whether you are the right one to help. That he is in front of you at all is the ruling. Nothing is arranged idly, so the encounter is not raw material for a decision — it is the decision, already made, addressed to you.

And just as in material tzedakah it is not that he is the one giving to his fellow, but rather that he is doing himself a good — as above — so too in spiritual tzedakah: through the influence he gives to another, he is in fact the one receiving from him, since the true wholeness comes only through the inclusion of the head with the foot, as above.

האדם מורכב מגוף ונשמה

man is composed of body and soul

אפילו עני ברוחניות...

גם הוא מחוייב בצדקה

even one poor in spiritual terms is obligated

יעדער איד האט וואס

צו געבן

LS – every Jew has what to give

עצם העובדה שנפגש

עם פלוני מהוה הוראה

שעליו לעזור ולתת

the very fact of the encounter is the instruction

בהשגחה פרטית •

לא ברא הקב"ה

דבר לבטלה

particular Providence • nothing was created for nothing

ההשפעה לזולת —

הרי הוא מקבל ממנו

in giving to the other, he is the receiver

Section 3 is now doing its work. If the head's wholeness arrives only through the foot, then giving downward is not condescension performed well; it is the only route by which the giver becomes whole. The direction of benefit is the reverse of the direction of transfer.

התכללות הראש והרגל

the inclusion of head with foot

SUMMARY • SECTION 6

Body and soul, so tzedakah has a spiritual register — and there too the obligation falls on everyone, including those poor in it, because every Jew has something to give. How do you know whom? You met him. Nothing is created for nothing, so the encounter is itself the instruction, and no assessment is required or permitted. And as in the material case, the one who gives is the one who receives: the head is completed through the foot.



SECTION 7

The tallis set down

BEFORE WE READ

The Tzemach Tzedek's own account, told to his son the Maharash, of an event decades after the Alter Rebbe's passing. Two things to hold in view from the start: what he hoped for was a *revelation*, not a meeting — the Alter Rebbe was long gone — and the story's turn comes when he interrupts his own preparation for prayer.

The Tzemach Tzedek once spoke about the virtue of tzedakah — how great is the worth of helping a Jew with his livelihood, and how much the thing assists in avodas Hashem, for the opening of the mind and the heart to receive the revelations from Above.

And the Tzemach Tzedek told his son — the Rebbe Maharash — that "with me it happened":

When I travelled from Dobromysl to Lubavitch, I was greatly gladdened by the inner closeness of the Zeide — the Alter Rebbe — and I hoped that on my arrival in Lubavitch I would merit to see the Zeide with a shining countenance (in a vision — this was many years after the Alter Rebbe's passing). Meanwhile several questions had arisen in me, in matters of nigleh and matters of Chassidus, and I had arranged the matters in my mind.

On arriving in Lubavitch I went straight to the place the Zeide had told us about on the road to Liadi — that he had learned in the shul which stood there. As I have recounted, the ground was then empty, after a fire that had occurred. My father-in-law the Mitteler Rebbe told, of this place, that fifty-seven years earlier the Alter Rebbe had made Lubavitch a place fit for the leadership of Chabad chassidim, with length of days and years, and an everlasting standing until the coming of Moshiach.

From the fact that on my arrival in Lubavitch the Rebbe concealed himself from me — says the Tzemach Tzedek — I was badly broken and

מעלת הצדקה... פתיחת
המוח והלב

the opening of mind and heart

בדידי' הוה עובדא

"with me it happened"

פון דאבראמיסליא
אין ליובאוויטש

LS — from Dobromysl to Lubavitch

קירוב פנימי

inner closeness

(במחזה — הדבר הי'
שנים רבות לאחר
הסתלקותו)

in a vision — many years after the
histalkus

השטח פנוי, לאחר שריפה

the ground empty, after a fire

לפני חמשים ושבע שנים

fifty-seven years earlier — see
apparatus, note 3

מאיגרא רמה
לבירא עמיקתא

fell in spirit. I had the sensation of a fall, God forbid, from a high roof into a deep pit. I had prepared myself for an inner closeness, and in the end I had such a distance.

I was greatly pained, and I searched through my deeds to examine what thing might have caused this distance — in order to do teshuvah, so that I might merit to see the Zeide's holy face and to hear matters of Torah and avodah.

On Wednesday, 20 Elul, the Tzemach Tzedek went to shul to pray. On his way he met one of the townspeople, by the name of Reb Pinchas, who asked him for an interest-free loan of three rubles, so that he could buy a little at the market and sell, and earn something for the Shabbos expenses. The Tzemach Tzedek told him to come to his house after davening, and he would give it to him then.

While the Tzemach Tzedek was preparing for prayer, and had laid his tallis on his shoulder, he recalled Reb Pinchas's words — that today was market day, and the market opens in the morning, and Reb Pinchas surely needed the money at once.

The Tzemach Tzedek removed the tallis, went home, took five silver rubles, and handed them to Reb Pinchas, so that he could trade a little and earn.

He had been asked for three.

When the Tzemach Tzedek returned to the minyan and washed his hands at the basin, in order to stand for prayer — the Alter Rebbe revealed himself to him, and resolved his doubts for him, and his holy face shone.

from a high roof into a deep pit

ופשפשתי במעשי

and I searched through my deeds

ביום רביעי, כי אלול

Wednesday, 20 Elul

הלואת גמילות-חסד
בסך שלושה רובלים

an interest-free loan of three rubles

והניח טליתו על שכמו

and laid his tallis on his shoulder

פינף זילבערנע רובל

LS – five silver rubles; TM: חמשה

רובלים. See apparatus, note 2

התגלה אליו אדמו"ר

הזקן, ופתר לו את

ספיקותיו ופני קדשו אורו

the Alter Rebbe revealed himself, resolved his doubts, and his holy face shone

DEEP DIVE • AT POINT OF USE

במהרה — why this is not a meeting

The parenthesis is easy to read past and the story collapses without it. The Alter Rebbe passed away in 5573 (1812). What the Tzemach Tzedek hoped for on the road to Lubavitch was to see him *in a vision*, decades later — and what he got, at the basin, was a revelation.

This matters for the reading in section 8. Had the story been about arriving somewhere in time to catch someone, the moral would be about diligence, and Reb Hillel's failure in section 4 would be its counterexample. Because it is a revelation, the question is not *where he had to be* but *what condition made it possible* — and the answer will turn out to be the one thing in the account that looks like an interruption of avodah rather than an instance of it.

SUMMARY • SECTION 7

The Tzemach Tzedek, decades after the Alter Rebbe's passing, arrives in Lubavitch hoping for a vision of his grandfather, questions arranged in his mind. Instead: concealment, and the sensation of falling from a roof into a pit. Then a Wednesday, 20 Elul, a man in the street named Pinchas, a request for three rubles to buy at the market. The tallis already on his shoulder, he remembers the market opens early — takes the tallis off, goes home, and brings five. At the basin afterwards, the Alter Rebbe reveals himself and answers everything.



SECTION 8

Reading the story precisely

BEFORE WE READ

The sicha now reads its own story, and the method is subtraction. It lists what did not work, then isolates what did — by naming, one after another, each channel of merit that was *absent* at the decisive moment. Count them as they come.

We see from this story that tzedakah acts in spiritual matters as well.

The Tzemach Tzedek — with all his own qualities, and in particular the closenesses he had merited during the period of the Alter Rebbe's passing, when he was alone with the Alter Rebbe — *the Mittler Rebbe was in Kremenchug; Reb Chaim Avraham was unwell; and Reb Moshe had remained on the other side of the front and could not come, because of the war* — and he had many closenesses from the Alter Rebbe, and beyond that he undertook various measures to see the Alter Rebbe — none of this availed.

Only when he met a Jew in the street — not within the Tzemach Tzedek's own four cubits (that is to say, not that the man came to the Tzemach Tzedek), but within the other man's four cubits, Reb Pinchas's; and not at a time when he was saying Tehillim or the like, but at a time when he was thinking how to obtain an interest-free loan so that the man could earn —

and for the sake of this he set aside the matter of prayer, and in particular the prayer of the Tzemach Tzedek, which is "a time of expanded intellect above and also below," and whose advantage over Torah is great, since through it a change is effected in physical matters, healing the sick and blessing the years, as explained in Iggeres HaKodesh —

through having set aside prayer in order to do a Jew a material good, he merited to see the Alter Rebbe.

צדקה פועלת גם

ברוחניות

tzedakah acts in spiritual matters too

כשהי' לבדו עם

אדמו"ר הזקן

when he was alone with the Alter Rebbe

כל זה לא הועיל

none of this availed

לא בד' אמותיו של

הצ"צ... כי אם בד'

אמותיו שלו, של ר' פנחס

not in his own four cubits but in Reb Pinchas's

ולא בשעה שאמר תהלים

and not while saying Tehillim

שעת מוחין דגדלות

למעלה וגם למטה

Tanya ch. 12 – a time of expanded intellect

רופא חולים

ומברך השנים

healing the sick, blessing the years

DEEP DIVE • AT POINT OF USE

Four subtractions

The sicha's negations are not rhetorical accumulation. Each removes one specific way the merit could be assigned to the Tzemach Tzedek, and together they leave exactly one thing standing.

One — not his four cubits. The man was in the street. The encounter did not happen in the Rebbe's domain, and was not produced by anyone coming to him.

Two — not a holy moment. He was not saying Tehillim. He was working out how to raise a loan.

Three — it cost him his prayer. Not neglected prayer: prayer set aside deliberately, mid-preparation, tallis on the shoulder.

Four — and the prayer of the Tzemach Tzedek at that — which the sicha is careful to price: *שעת מוחין דגדלות*, and greater than Torah in the specific respect that it changes the physical world, heals the sick, blesses the years. *The thing he gave up was itself the most materially effective instrument he had. He set aside the tool that heals bodies in order to hand a man five rubles.*

What remains after the four subtractions is a single act with no devotional dressing on it at all — which is the point. Had any of the four been present, the revelation could have been credited to it.

SUMMARY • SECTION 8

Everything that should have worked did not: his own qualities, the closenesses of the histalkus period when he was alone with the Alter Rebbe, and the deliberate measures he took. What worked had none of the marks of avodah. Not his four cubits but Pinchas's; not Tehillim but a calculation about a loan; and it cost him his prayer — the prayer whose advantage over Torah is that it changes the physical world. Strip all four away and one act is left, and that is the one that opened the vision.



SECTION 9

In practice

BEFORE WE READ

The instruction, addressed to yeshiva students, together with the objection anyone would raise against it — and then the sicha's last move, which answers not the objection but the longing that section 7 opened.

As to practice:

Since the yeshiva students have an advantage in two things — (a) they have what to give, being situated within the four cubits of Torah, and (b) they have the quality of vigour, which is the nature of the young — *and this is why they are called by the name elem*, from the word for strength — it is fitting and correct that they should go on Rosh Hashanah to the shuls, in order to rouse Jews.

And since Rosh Hashanah is two days, and each of them has its own particular advantage: on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, "stern judgment," and on the second, "mild judgment"; the first day from the Torah, the second from the Rabbis — and since "the words of the Sages are the weightier," each day has an advantage over the other, and they complete one another, until they become "one long day" — one must go to the shuls on both days.

Someone is liable to argue: since I have such a tangled accounting of a whole year — I do not know what stems from the good inclination and what from the evil inclination — and now I have been given forty days of favour in which to work out my reckoning, how can I devote that time of mine to others?

And the answer to this: "ish l'rei'eh u'matanos la'evyonim" — even the "gifts to the destitute" are "a man to his fellow," and through going to rouse his fellow, it will be added to him as well.

בנוגע לפועל

as to practice

יש להם מה לתת •
סגולת המרץ

they have what to give • the quality of vigour

"עלם" מלשון כח

"elem" from the word for strength

דינא קשיא •
דינא רפיא

stern judgment • mild judgment

חמורים דברי סופרים

the words of the Sages are weightier

יומא אריכתא

one long day

חשבון מסובך של
כל השנה

a tangled accounting of a whole year

ארבעים ימי רצון

forty days of favour

ועי"ז שילך לעורר את
חבירו — יתוסף לו גם הוא

The objection assumes the forty days are a fixed quantity to be allocated. Section 5 already dismantled that: what you hand over was never a holding of yours to spend. The days behave like the five rubles.

Every one of us wants to see the Rebbe, my father-in-law — so that he should resolve his questions; for every single person has questions (even one who does not know that he has questions), and in order to resolve them one must see the Rebbe.

And the counsel for this is — the going on Rosh Hashanah to the shuls to rouse Jews, souls in bodies. For in this one fulfils the Rebbe's will, and through this he will merit that the Rebbe resolve his questions in the manner of a soul in a body.

This is the sicha's last line, and it closes the circuit. Section 7 was never a story about the Tzemach Tzedek; it was the reader's own case, told at a safe distance. He too came with questions arranged in his mind. He too got concealment. What ended it was a man in the street and a loan — and the instruction here is the same road, now named: go and rouse souls in bodies, and your answer will come in a body too.

through going to rouse his fellow, it is added to him too

כל אחד מאתנו רוצה
לראות את הרבי... כדי
שיפתור את שאלותיו

TM — each of us wants to see the Rebbe, that he resolve his questions

גם מי שאינו יודע,
שיש לו שאלות

even one who does not know he has questions

לעורר את בניי,
נשמות בגופים

to rouse Jews — souls in bodies

באופן של נשמה בגוף

in the manner of a soul in a body. TM only — see apparatus, note 4

SUMMARY • SECTION 9

To the yeshiva students: you have what to give and the energy to give it — go to the shuls on Rosh Hashanah, both days, since each day holds an advantage the other lacks and together they are one long day. To the objection that forty days barely cover your own reckoning: the days are not yours to hoard, and rousing another is how it comes to you. And the way to have the Rebbe answer your questions is the road the Tzemach Tzedek took — rouse souls in bodies, and the answer arrives in a body.

APPARATUS

The witnesses

W¹ — **Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 398 ff.** Yiddish. The Rebbe's own edited text (*mugah*), consulted here in the Mayanos reader, which segments it as *Sicha 1, Sections 1–9* with matching Hebrew labels שיחה א, סעיף א–ט.

W² — **Toras Menachem 5710, printed pp. 205–218.** Hebrew, headed בלתי מוגה. Its publisher's note on the first page states the position exactly: from there through the the end of section 9 was edited by the Rebbe in Yiddish and printed in Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 p. 398 ff.; this recension adds some source references and a number of details from an unedited transcript. Sections 10–14 that follow in W² lie outside the sicha and are not part of this edition.

Section correspondence. The two witnesses agree section for section, 1 through 9, with no divergence in sequence. The sicha is *one* sicha in nine sections — worth stating, since it has elsewhere been presented as more than one.

Textual notes

№	SECTION	NOTE
1	ד	"Reb Hillel never again managed to be by the Alter Rebbe..." is set off in W ² in square brackets — an editorial addition, not part of the Rebbe's own line. W ¹ likewise sets it off, with dashes. Retained here, and marked as bracketed. Footnote 19 in W ² identifies him as הרב ר' הלל ברי מאיר הלוי מאליסאוו, אב"ד באברויסק (5555 – 11 Menachem-Av 5624), although the sicha's body calls him "of Paritch."
2	ז	Five rubles: silver or not. W ¹ (the edited Yiddish) reads פינף זילבערנע רובל — five <i>silver</i> rubles. W ² reads simply חמשה רובלים. Since W ¹ is the Rebbe's own edited text, "silver" is retained in the body and W ² is recorded as the shorter reading. Both witnesses agree that three were requested and five were given.
3	ז	"Fifty-seven years earlier." Both witnesses carry the figure in the Mitteler Rebbe's statement about the Lubavitch site. Taken at face value it does not sit easily with the received chronology of the Alter Rebbe's move to Liadi and the Mitteler Rebbe's settlement in Lubavitch. Recorded here as the reading of both witnesses, AS CITED , without emendation.
4	ט	The closing tie. The final paragraph — everyone wants the Rebbe to resolve his questions; the counsel is to go and rouse souls in bodies; and thereby the answer comes באופן של נשמה בגוף — is present in W ² and absent from W ¹ , which ends section 9 at "it will be added to him as well." It is therefore one of the details W ² draws from the unedited transcript. Included here because it is the payoff of section 7, and flagged as W ² -only.
5	ד	The two notes rendered in the deep dive "Two footnotes that finish the argument" are W ² footnotes 20 and 22. Note 20 carries a further starred addendum drawn from a letter of the Rebbe, printed in Igros Kodesh vol. 20 p. 237 AS CITED .
6	ה	W ² footnote 30 states that Torah and avodah — the first and third of Elul's three acronym groups — were treated in the sicha of Chai Elul of that year, which is why this sicha takes only tzedakah.
7	ד	

The story of Reb Hillel is sourced by W²'s editors to **שפב ואילך** — רשימת היום — תו"מ. Any attribution of it to Likkutei Dibburim should be treated as **AS CITED** pending a page-level check; the Reshimas HaYoman locator is the anchor to prefer.

Citation status

VERIFIED Date and day: 27 Elul 5710 = Shabbos, 9 September 1950 (Rosh Hashanah 5711 fell on Tuesday, 12 September 1950). · The nine-section structure and its identity as one edited sicha, from W²'s publisher's note and W¹'s own segmentation. · Every Hebrew and Yiddish anchor phrase in the right-hand rail, transcribed from the two witnesses in hand. · Scriptural references: Devarim 29:9, 29:11, 30:6, 6:5; Yehoshua 9:15; Tehillim 47:5; Esther 9:22; Shemos 21:13.

AS CITED Internal locators supplied by W²'s apparatus and reproduced without independent checking: Likkutei Torah, Reshimas HaYoman p. 382 ff., Tanya ch. 12 and ch. 30, Kuntres Acharon, Kuntres HaAvodah, Vayikra Rabbah 34:8, Tanchuma Mishpatim, Igros Kodesh vol. 20 p. 237, and the "fifty-seven years" figure of note 3.

UNVERIFIED The closing page of the Likkutei Sichos printing. W² gives the start page (398) and not the end. Any citation of a range should be confirmed against the printed volume.

Method and its limits

The English of this edition is composed for it and is not a translation of either witness's running text; the right-hand rail carries short anchor phrases rather than a continuous reproduction. Anchors were transcribed from the two witnesses in hand — the Hebrew from a decoded rendering of the Toras Menachem pages, the Yiddish from the Mayanos reader — and not reconstructed from memory.

One caution for anyone extending this work: the note-to-marker mapping in a Mayanos print export is unreliable, and footnote numbers there cannot be trusted to bind to the right anchors. Every footnote used in this edition was taken from the Toras Menachem witness, where the apparatus is intact. Body text in the Mayanos reader is sound; its exported apparatus is not.

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SICHAS SHABBOS PARSHAS NITZAVIM, 27 ELUL 5710 — SHABBOS, 9 SEPTEMBER 1950

FULL ELUCIDATED EDITION · ELUCIDATED STUDY SYNTHESIS, NOT A FULL BILINGUAL REPRINT

WITNESSES: LIKKUTEI SICHOS VOL. 2 P. 398 FF. (YIDDISH, EDITED) · TORAS MENACHEM 5710 PP. 205–218 (HEBREW)

COMPLETE YIDDISH TEXT AT MAYANOS.ORG — LIKKUTEI SICHOS VOL. 2, NITZAVIM, SICHA 1

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METHOD: RESHIMU · ATZMUT OS · TEXT-FIDELITY METHODOLOGY.

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