

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
 Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתי'ל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
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Shagalov

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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Volume I: *Bereishit*

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In English rendition
with Introduction and Notes
by
JACOB IMMANUEL SCHOCHET

BEREISHIT

בראשית

A

I. There is a well-known maxim of the *Rebbes*,* the leaders of *Chabad*:¹ *Shabbat Bereishit* affects the whole year, and the tone set on *Shabbat Bereishit* carries through the entire year.

Offhand this requires an explanation. What makes *Shabbat Bereishit* [the Shabbat on which the first section of the Torah is read] so unique? Why should the same not apply to that all-important day of *matan Torah* (the Day on which the Torah was given)? For that matter, surely all those *sidrot* with the only mention of certain *mitzvot* and other concepts, not repeated elsewhere in the Torah, are no less crucial to the whole year! Why, then, is *Shabbat Bereishit* so exceptional that it alone is said to determine the quality of the whole year?

II. The concept of 'In the beginning G-d *bara* (created *ex nihilo*, out of absolute nothingness²) the heaven and the earth'', implies³ that of necessity creation is a constant process which takes place every minute and every moment. That is, the unique novelty of the 'Six Days of Creation,' namely the change from the original absolute

*. [Hebrew and Yiddish words and expressions appearing in the text and notes without translation and explanation, are explained in the glossary.]

1. *Sefer Hama'amarim* 5711, p. 59.

2. [Genesis 1:1] The word *bara* signifies a creation *ex nihilo*; see the commentary of Ramban on this verse.

3. See *Tanya*, part II, chapter 2.

nothingness into material being, is something which continues every moment: there is a new coming-into-being at all times.

It is in this sense that the verse 'Forever, Eternal One, Your word stands in the Heavens'⁴ is explained at length in *Tanya*:⁵ strictly speaking, every creature *per se* is even now sheer nothingness, and its very existence is only by virtue of G-d's continuously causing it to be. Thus it follows that its ultimate being is Divinity.

III. We can now understand why *Shabbat Bereishit* affects the whole year. For the awareness of *bereishit bara* (in the beginning He created) is the very foundation of man's *avodah* (service of G-d) throughout the year.

When a Jew must transform his worldly affairs into instruments for Divinity, he may regard this as a difficult or altogether impossible task, contrary to the natural order. In reality however, 'Forever, Eternal One, Your word stands in the Heavens'! That is, ultimately there is no independent world, and everything exists only by virtue of the Ten Fiats by which the world was created:^a 'And G-d said let there be light,' and therefore 'there was

4. Psalms 119:89.

5. Part II, chapter 3.

a. [*Avot* V:1: 'The world was created by ten fiats,' — i.e., the ten utterances appearing in the first chapter of the Torah (Let there be light . . . Let there be a firmament etc.). Everything came into being, and is sustained in existence, by means of these ten fiats.]

6. *Zohar* II:161a. —

[The Torah preceded the world (see *Bereishit Rabba* 8:2), and in fact served as the blueprint for the creation of the world (*ibid.*, 1:1, cited further on). In other words, the universe was created and fashioned on the basis of, and suited to the contents and requirements of Torah. This is what we mean when saying 'The Holy One, blessed is He, looked into the Torah and created the world.' Now, as the world, or nature, is created in accordance with the Torah, it is impossible that this world could stand in conflict with Torah or be an impediment to the 613 commandments which are contained in that self-same Torah.]

light.' This, of course, applies to all creation. 'The Holy One, blessed is He, looked into the Torah (i.e., the Ten Fiats) and He created the world.'⁶ Thus when remembering and being aware that the very existence and reality of the world is utterly contingent on the Ten Fiats in the Torah,⁷ one realizes that the world cannot possibly be an impediment to *mitzvot*. For the same Torah also states 'I am the Eternal your G-d'⁸ and all of the 613 Mitzvot.

When man accepts the Torah as the true reality of the world, he will be moved to recite sayings of our sages, a Psalm, a chapter of *Mishnah*, or a chapter of *Tanya*, even when walking in the street and involved in his personal occupations.⁹ Every good deed on his part will turn the scale for the whole world to the side of merit.⁹ In other words, man's recognition of, and contemplation on the inner meaning of *bereishit bara* affects all of Creation, the totality of 'the heavens and the earth and all their hosts.'

IV. The maxim that '*Shabbat Bereishit* affects the

7. *Tanya*, part II, end of chapter 1.

8. Exodus 20:2 (Deuteronomy 5:6).

b. [Torah is to be studied and recited not only in the synagogue or *yeshivah*, but also 'when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way' (Deuteronomy 6:7; see *Yoma* 19b). To know certain sections of Torah by heart — be it Psalms, *Mishnah*, *Tanya*, etc. — and to recite these at appropriate times, even in the office or business, when walking or travelling, not only facilitates the observance of Torah-study but also is of immeasurable benefit to the person doing so and to his environment. It is an antidote to the spiritual pollution of man and the air around him. See *Hayom Yom*, p. 10, and also *ibid.* pp. 5, 9, 27 and 35, where this idea is explained in detail. Cf. *infra*, Vayigash, note 10.]

9. *Kidushin* 40b -

['A man should always regard himself as though he were half guilty and half meritorious: If he performs one *mitzvah*, happy is he for weighing himself down in the scale of merit . . . Because the world is judged by its majority and an individual (too) is judged by his majority (of deeds), if he performs one *mitzvah*, happy is he for turning the scale both for himself and for the whole world to the side of merit.]

whole year'¹⁰ thus means that this *Shabbat* relates to all matters, whether spiritual or physical.

The knowledge and awareness that 'Forever, Eternal One, Your word stands in the Heavens' relates not only to man's worship, his spiritual affairs; by implication it also relieves him of worry about physical matters. Any worry about his needs in 'children, life or sustenance'^c is caused by momentarily forgetting that everything derives from G-d, as explained in *Tanya*.¹¹

To remember that everything comes from G-d means also to know that 'no evil comes from Him'¹² but only good, and this precludes any worries. As one realizes this fact one can see, even with the physical eye, how one's present condition is in fact good in a quite obvious and tangible form of goodness.

(From the *Sicha* of *Shabbat Parshat Bereishit* 5716)

B

V. According to Jewish custom, *mitzvot* — i.e. *aliyot*, are sold on *Shabbat Bereishit* for the whole year.

The *Rebbe*, my father-in-law, explained that at the time of an *aliyah*, when ascending to the Torah, one ascends into 'the lower, second and third stories [planes],'^d and still higher. This means that there is an ascent for the

10. The word *shana* (year) is etymologically related to the word *shinuy* (change). *Kol hashanah* (lit. the whole year) thus indicates 'all changes and variables.'

c. [See *Mo'ed Katan* 28b for the expression 'life, children, and sustenance'; also *Likutei Sichot* II:p. 632 and IV: p. 1306.]

11. *Igeret Hakodesh (Tanya, part IV)*, section XI.

12. 'Out of the mouth of the Most High do not issue evil things'; *Lamentations* 3:38 - ['No evil descends from Above (*Bereishit Rabba* 51:3) and everything is good, though it is not apprehended because of its immense and abundant goodness' etc.; *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. XI, see there at length.]

d. [Paraphrasing *Genesis* 6:16.]

nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayah and *yechidah*,¹³ culminating with the essence of the soul becoming bound up with the essence of the *En Sof* — with G-d Himself, as it were.

This, indeed, is the reason why one is not to recite a blessing for the study of *Torah shebe'al peh* if one does not understand the subject matter.¹⁴ For an *aliyah* to the Torah, however, even a completely ignorant person, he who does not understand the very words he utters, recites a blessing. In the latter case, he may indeed not understand what he is saying in his present state, but by the ascent of his *nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayah* and *yechidah*, there is a form of understanding which is drawn down from above: '*Mikra* — the Written Torah (Scriptures) — calls forth and elicits.'¹⁵

The universe is related to Torah, as it is said that 'the Holy One, blessed is He, looked into the Torah and created the world,' and the Torah is referred to as the 'blue-print'¹⁶ used by the builder when constructing his building. An *aliyah* to the Torah, therefore, affects even the physical universe.

VI. Just as it is with *aliyot* to the Torah on any *Shabbat*, Monday or Thursday,^e beginning with *Shabbat*

13. *Bereishit Rabba* 14:9. —

[This Midrash states that in the Scriptures we find these five terms as names for the soul. However, they are not synonymous; rather, every one of these terms denotes a different gradation — in ascending order — of the soul. See the Glossary, *s.v.*]

14. *Magen Avraham* on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, end of section 50.

15. See *Likutei Torah*, *Vayikra*, p. 5b. —

[The word *mikra*, denoting Scripture, is of the root *kara* — to call; evoke. The very reading of Scripture, because of its infinite sublimity, calls for and evokes a manifestation of the Divine light.]

16. *Bereishit Rabba* 1:1.

e. [These, in addition to Holy Days and fast-days, are the days on which the Torah is read in public, as instituted by Moses, the prophets, and

Bereishit, so too with designating times for the study of Torah. *Shabbat Bereishit* is an auspicious opportunity to undertake an intensified study of both *nigleh* (the exoteric part of Torah) and *Chassidut*. That is, in addition to every one's undertaking during the month of *Tishrei* to learn Torah throughout the year, on *Shabbat Bereishit* one should add to the daily Torah-study — in the study of *nigleh* as well as in the study of *Chassidut*. In the supplemental study of *Chassidut* one should include a part of the expositions of the weekly *sidrot* in *Torah Or* and *Likutei Torah*.¹⁷

May the Almighty grant that everyone decide to accept this upon himself according to his true abilities — as much as he is able to, and in accordance with the root of his soul. The resolve on *Shabbat Bereishit* to increase the study of Torah also confers the very ability to do so in the course of the year and prevents many difficulties later on. This will also elicit abundant blessings in the physical realm of 'children, life and sustenance.'

The advantages of brevity are well-known, and thus to summarize: every one should accept upon himself to supplement both the study of *nigleh* and the study of *Chassidut*. (From the *Sicha* of *Shabbat Parshat Bereishit* 5716)

C

VII. This is the *Shabbat* on which we bless the month of *Marcheshvan*.¹ The month is called *Marcheshavan*

Ezra the Scribe (see *Baba Kama* 82a; *Yerushalmi, Megilah* IV:1; and *Masechet Soferim*, ch. 10).]

17. *Torah Or* and *Likutei Torah* contain the Chassidic discourses and expositions on the weekly readings of the Torah, by R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, author of *Tanya* and *Shulchan Aruch*.

f. [On the last *Shabbat* of every month (except for *Elul*) the date of the beginning of the new month is proclaimed, and special prayers are recited which invoke the Divine blessings for the new month. This *Shabbat*, thus, is called *Shabbat mevarchim hachodesh* — the *Shabbat* on which the month is blessed.]

because it is the season for rain.^{17*}

Chassidut explains the difference between *tal* (dew) and *matar* (rain):¹⁸ rain depends on the *avodah* of man and one must pray for rain; while dew is a manifestation of *itaruta dile'eyla* (an arousal from Above), and 'Dew is never withheld.'¹⁹ Since rain depends on human *avodah*, it follows that it is more difficult to attain.

Herein we find the difference between the seasons of summer and winter [in the spiritual context of *avodah*]. In the summer there is dew — *itaruta dile'eyla*. Winter is the season for rain — *itaruta diletata* (arousal from below).²⁰ Winter, thus, is a more difficult time.

There is another difference between the days of summer and the days of winter. In the summer, there is a strong radiation — in the spiritual sense — from 'The Eternal G-d is a sun and shield.'²⁰ That is why even in the physical sense as well, there is then a stronger radiance of the sun, especially in the solstice of *Tamuz*. Winter, however, is a time for *avodah* by means of *itaruta diletata*.

The *Rebbe*, my father-in-law, once declared that the service of G-d is easier in the summer than in the winter.

The Shabbat on which the month of *Marcheshvan* is blessed confers the necessary strength and abilities for the months of rain. This Shabbat is still in the month of *Tishrei* — 'the seventh month satiated with everything,'²¹ and that is why it confers the strength for the *avodah* of

17.* Cf. *Aruch*, s.v. *Marcheshvan*.

18. See *Likutei Torah*, s.v. *Ha'azinu Hashamayim*; [part IV, p. 73a ff.]

19. *Ta'anit* 3a.

g. [General reference to the seasons, in our prayers and other sources, is as they are in the Land of Israel: the warm season of summer and the rainy season of winter.]

20. *Psalms* 84:12 —

[See *Tanya*, part II, chapter 4, for the concept of the sun symbolizing G-d.]

21. *Vayikra Rabba* 29:8.

winter.^h Though this *avodah* requires an *itaruta diletata*, man's own efforts, still there is a bestowal of strength for it. And as one performs this *avodah* of the winter, this *Shabbat mevarchim Marcheshvan* becomes a source of blessing for the whole year, in both the material and spiritual senses. (From the Sicha of Shabbat Parshat Bereishit 5716)



^h. [The month of *Tishrei* is an all-comprehensive month, affecting the year following, because it contains the special days of *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukot*, *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*. See below, *Chaye Sarah* – D, text for note 48.]

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The Announcement Of The Redemption

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In our times, miracles and wonders are happening throughout the world. These include "great wonders,"¹ beyond those miracles discernable to G-d "Who **alone** performs great wonders," but where "the beneficiary does not recognize the miracle."² Rather, the miracles we experience now include wonders obvious and revealed to all; they are thus representative of, analogous to and a prelude for the miracles and wonders of the future Redemption, which shall arrive imminently. About this imminent Redemption, it is said:³ "As in the days of your departure from Egypt, **I will show him wonders.**"

To illustrate:

a) Several major and powerful regimes are undergoing progressive, positive developments and changing for the better - in the spheres of goodness, righteousness and justice.⁴ These transformations are representative of, analogous to and a prelude for the **correction and perfection of the world in the days of Moshiach.**⁵ Further, by affecting the Jewish people, granting them freedom in all matters associated with Judaism, Torah and Mitzvot, even permitting the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Jews to freedom [from the former Soviet Union, etc.], these changes are also representative of, analogous to and a prelude for the **ingathering of the exiles**⁶ which will transpire in the days of

1. *Tehillim*, 136:4.

2. *Niddah*, 31a.

3. *Micha*, 7:15.

4. See also *Sefer HaSichos* 5750, vol. I, p. 152 ff.

5. See Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim*, end of ch. 11: "And he will perfect the world."

6. In the spirit of "those who savor it will merit eternal life." See *Likkutei*

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Moshiach.

b) The events which occurred in the Persian Gulf - *are among the signs of the Redemption*, based on the saying of our sages that when "nations provoke one another..."⁷ it portends the coming of *Moshiach*. More specifically, our sages in the *Midrash* present the following scenario as an indication of the arrival of the Era of Redemption: "The king of Persia (obviously referring to the entire geographic area comprising Iraq) will provoke the Arabian king... and all the nations of the world will be in turmoil and terror... and (G-d) says to them (Israel)... "Do not fear, the time for your Redemption has arrived."⁸ The *Midrash* continues and concludes: "When the King *Moshiach* comes, he will stand on the roof of the *Beis HaMikdash* [Holy Temple] and proclaim to Israel: "Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived."

Ironically, in recent days the (seventy) nations of the world gathered, in a way reminiscent of "The nations are in an uproar and the peoples mutter,"⁹ in order to accuse Israel: "You are thieves for having conquered the land of Israel," They refer not just to Gaza or Samaria, but also (and primarily) to Judea which includes **Jerusalem**, the capital of the Land of Israel, "The city where David encamped."¹⁰ This accusation comes at a time when everyone knows the refutation, as clearly enunciated by Rashi at the very beginning of his commentary to the Torah: "All of the earth is G-d's, He is the one who created it and gave it to whomever was just in His eyes... He gave it to us."

(And, incredibly, this cacophony of nations accusing Israel includes even those who have traditionally endeavored to further

Sichos, vol. XX, p. 173. See there for cross references.

7. *Bereishit Rabbah*, 42:4. *Midrash Lekach Tov*, *Lech Lecha*, 14:1.

8. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Yeshayahu*, remez 499.

9. *Tehillim*, 2:1.

10. *Yeshayahu*, 29:1.

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the cause of righteousness and justice in the world, as seen by their reaction to the events of the Persian Gulf; there, they based their behavior on righteousness and justice, (that is, to prevent a state of theft of one individual from another, of country from country, etc.). However, in this matter, they too have conducted themselves improperly towards the **Children of Israel.**)

One might suggest the following explanation for this paradoxical phenomenon (that such an undesirable situation occurred in this era of open miracles):

As mentioned earlier [in the full text of the *Sicha*], in the Divinely ordained system for this world, concealment and darkness precede the revelation of light. Thus, we should not be dismayed by the "Nations raising an uproar and the peoples muttering," since it is - as the verse concludes - "In vain." As the Midrash comments: "All of their uproar is... in vain,"¹¹ because "the One who dwells in Heaven will laugh, G-d will mock them."¹² Therefore, the Jewish people stand firm in all matters relating to the integrity of the Land of Israel (particularly Jerusalem), knowing that "All of the earth is G-d's, He created it... and gave it to us."

Moreover, the phenomenon of "the nation raising an uproar and the peoples muttering" is, in and of itself, one of the **signs of Redemption**, as Rashi observes that: "Our sages interpreted the entire verse of the "nations raising an uproar..." as a reference to the **King Moshiach.**"

(From the talk of Shabbos Bereishis (Isru Chag of Shmini Atzeres and Simchas Torah) 5751)

11. *Midrash Tehillim* and *Yalkut Shimoni* loc cit.

12. *Ibid* 4.

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We have already openly seen the miracles at the beginning of this year, in continuation of the miracles of last year, in connection with the fact that that country (Russia) freed and assisted thousands and thousands of Jews to go the land of Israel (and other places). In those places they can live their individual lives in full freedom. This reveals the greatness of Israel, that even the nations of the world recognize this and assist them.

The revelation in the world and recognition by the nations of the greatness of the Jewish people has increased from generation to generation. As we approach ever nearer to the final and true Redemption, the declaration that "And nations will go by your light,"¹ "And kings will be your midwives and their princes your nursemaids,"² comes closer to its fulfillment.

Over the course of generations - even in the time of exile - we find that the nations of the world have recognized that the Jewish people are the Chosen People. We see this in many places in the Midrashim of our Sages of blessed memory. (For example, in Zevachim,³ saying to the Rabbi] "I will fulfill the Biblical prediction of: kings will be your midwives," **and in other sources.**)

It is also known that non-Jews call the Jewish people (even when speaking among themselves) - the "Chosen People."

In the United States and other benevolent countries, Jews are permitted to perform their Divine service with a calm mind and amidst physical comfort. Jews in the Diaspora and in Israel are

1. *Yeshayu* 60:23.

2. *Ibid* 49:23.

3. 19a at the beginning.

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commonly offered assistance.⁴ This assistance itself has increased in recent years, specifically last year (the year of "I will show them wonders") and beginning with this year (a year with miracles within it) in relation to the permission to emigrate and the aid from that country to our fellow-Jews to go to the land of Israel.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Bereishis,
Blessing of the month of Mar-Cheshvan 5752)*

4. There are many well-known stories in which non-Jews gave honor to our Rebbeim and leaders (see for example in relation to the Rebbe MaHaRash, *Sefer HaMaamarim Meluket*, vol. 4, p. 26.)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Chana** (Carrie) bas Reb **Meir** ע"ה **Greenberg**
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
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*
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