

# LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the  
**Lubavitcher Rebbe**  
**Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson**

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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**

LECH LECHA

לך לך

A

I. The *Mishnah* teaches that Abraham was tried by ten tests.<sup>1</sup> Among the first of these, and perhaps one of the most trying, was that of Ur Kasdim.<sup>a</sup> Even so, this test is merely alluded to in the Torah,<sup>b</sup> and not mentioned explicitly. The first test that is mentioned explicitly is that of 'Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from the house of your father.'<sup>c</sup>

The reason may be that the aspect of 'Go forth from your land . . .' applies to the *avodah* of every person — on the level of *milema'alah lematah*, on the level of *milematah lema'alah*,<sup>2</sup> and on the level of *matah* itself.<sup>d</sup>

1. *Avot* V:3. — [See *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 26-31, and the notes of Rabbi David Luria *ad loc.*]

a. [Ur Kasdim, conventionally translated the Valley of the Chaldees, can also be translated as the Fire of the Chaldees, and in this latter sense alludes to the time Abraham was cast into a fiery furnace for his refusal to acknowledge, and his agitation against, the idolatry of his contemporaries. (See *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 26 and 52; *Bereishit Rabba* 38:13; and Rashi on Genesis 11:28.)]

b. [By the mere mention of the name Ur Kasdim, Genesis 11:28; see Rashi there, and Genesis 15:7.]

c. [Genesis 12:1.]

2. See *Torah Or*, beg. of Lech Lecha, p. 11a; *Torat Chayim*, Lech Lecha; *et passim*.

d. [*Milema'alah lematah* — from on high downwards, relating to the descent of the soul from its sublime level to be vested in a physical body; *milematah lema'alah* — from below upwards, relating to the ascent (superior level) caused to the soul itself by its very descent into, and involvement with, the body and worldliness; *matah* — below, the lowly world, relating to the actual involvement with lowly, mundane matters for the purpose of purifying them of their grossness and sublimating them to Divinity, which in turn effects an ascent for the soul itself as well. These principles are explained in

## II. Briefly stated this means:

The descent of the soul [from on high] into the body [in this lowly world] involves two opposing concepts. On the one hand, there is the principle of 'You live against your own will.'<sup>3</sup> That is, the life of the soul in a body is forced upon the soul. Before its descent to the body, the soul is said to be 'hewn from below the Throne of Glory.'<sup>4</sup> Yet even that is but the lowest aspect in the soul; there is a higher aspect by virtue of which the soul is referred to as 'It is pure,'<sup>5</sup> and there are still more sublime aspects and levels.

The descent of the soul into this world signifies a degradation for it. The *Rebbe* (my father-in-law) once explained<sup>5</sup> that, prior to its descent, the soul is shown the Garden of Eden and the Gehenna, in order to be made aware of its task in this world. Being sent to this world to animate a body thus is 'forced' upon the soul — 'You live against your own will.'

On the other hand, in spite of this initial degradation, this descent is the only way the soul can reach a level vastly superior to its original state, as indicated in the well-known maxim:<sup>6</sup> 'A descent for the purpose of ascent.'

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general terms in section II, and in technical terms of the mystical tradition in section III.

Note also, that this passage is interpreted in terms of man's soul and its mission, because Abraham signifies the soul (see *Zohar I:122b*; *Zohar Chadash*, Tikunim, 119b), as will be explained at greater length further on, Chaye Sarah, section I.]

3. *Avot* IV:22. [Life in the body in this world is *imposed* upon the soul. The soul does not want to leave its pure abode on high to become exposed to an impure world and involved with physical matters.]

4. See *Zohar* III:29b.

e. [Daily Liturgy; see further on.]

5. *Sichah* of *Shavu'ot* 5694, sect. 17ff., published in *Likutei Diburim*, vol. I, p. 337ff.

6. *Likutei Torah*, Behar, p. 41a; *et passim*.

III. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:]

Section III following will prove quite complex and difficult for the novice to Chassidic-Kabbalistic terminology. Essentially it states and explains the basic ideas expressed above, in sections I-II, from the profound perspective of mysticism and in the context of the Sefirotic system. To explain all the terms and concepts mentioned would go beyond the limitations of our intent. Even so, I felt that the original order and content of *Likutei Sichot* should be preserved intact and thus did not omit or summarize. Those who wish to pursue this section further are referred to my *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism* (appended to the bilingual edition of *Tanya*), where the technical terms and concepts appearing here are explained, especially in chapters III-IV.]

Both these aspects are alluded to in the verse of 'Go forth from your land, and from your birthplace, and from the house of your father, to the land which I will show you.'

'From your land' relates to the soul on the level of the Supreme Will (*ratzon ha'elyon*). This is a level superior to that discussed in *Tanya*, chapter 2, i.e., that the soul derives from the Supreme *chochmah* which is in absolute oneness with G-d, for *ratzon* (will) transcends *chochmah*.<sup>7</sup>

(This, too, is the meaning of the statement in *Tanya*, chapter 32, 'for they all are of a kind and all having one Father': 'they all are of a kind' relates to the aspect of *ratzon*; 'all having one Father' relates to the aspect of *chochmah*.)

'From your birthplace and from the house of your father' relates to the soul on the level of the *Sefirot chochmah* and *binah*. For a birth presupposes parents — a father and a mother — and in the scheme of the *Sefirot*,

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7. *Likutei Torah*, Tazria, p. 24a; *ibid.*, Bamidbar, p. 12a; *et passim*. *Derech Mitzvotecha*, p. 99. — [Ratzen relates to *keter*, the highest *Sefirah*, which transcends *chochmah*. See *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. XXIX (and note 24 in the English translation).]

*chochmah* is represented by the term 'father' and *binah* is represented by the term 'mother.'<sup>8</sup>

'Your birthplace' relates to the soul on the level of the *Sefirah* of *chochmah*, and 'the house of your father' relates to the soul on the level of the *Sefirah* of *binah*. For *av* (father) is *chochmah*, while 'house of your father' (i.e., a house and vessel for *av*) is *binah*.

From a different perspective: 'Your birthplace' can also be interpreted as corresponding to both the *Sefirot* of *chochmah* and *binah* — which together give birth, while 'house of your father' corresponds to the soul on the level of the *Sefirah* of *malchut*.

From a still different (and lower) perspective: The three terms 'from your land, and from your birthplace, and from the house of your father' refer to *binah*, *z'eyr anpin*, and *nukvah*, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

These three levels in the soul can be expressed also in terms of the hierarchy of the worlds: 'From your land' refers to the soul on a level beyond *Atzilut*. 'From your birthplace' refers to the soul in *Atzilut*; for *Atzilut* is the source of all souls,<sup>10</sup> and *chochmah* — the *yod* of the Tetragrammaton<sup>11</sup> — radiates in *Atzilut*. 'The house of your father' refers to the soul as it descends to the world

8. *Tanya*, chapter 3; *Torat Chayim*, Bereishit, s.v. Vayitzar, sect. 51.

9. *Zohar* I:77a. See *Likutei Torah Lagimel Parshiyot*, Lech Lecha.

10. See *Likutei Torah*, Shir Hashirim, the second exposition on 'Yanoti,' p. 19a.

11. Which compounds the supernal *chochmah* and *binah* (*Peri Eitz Chayim*, Sha'ar hatefilah, ch. 16; *et passim*).

f. [The four letters of the Tetragrammaton compound the ten *Sefirot*: the thorn of the *yod* — *keter*; *yod* — *chochmah*; *hey* — *binah*; *vav* — *tiferet*, or the totality of the six attributes from *chessed* to *yessod*; the latter *hey* — *malchut*. (See *Zohar* III:17a and 258a; *Tanya*, Igeret Hateshuvah, ch. 4) Also, each of these letters (and *Sefirot*) respectively predominates with its radiation in the various worlds: *yod* in *Atzilut*; *hey* in *Beriah*; *vav* in *Yetzirah*; the latter *hey* in *Asiyah*. (See R. Chaim Vital, *Sha'arey Kedushah*, III:1-2; *Mevo She'arim* VI:2:1)]

of *Beriah*; for in *Beriah* it is the *Sefirah* of *binah* which radiates,<sup>12</sup> and *malchut* of *Atzilut* constitutes the *keter* of *Beriah*.<sup>13</sup>

The soul thus is told: 'Go forth from your land, and from your birthplace, and from the house of your father' — *descend* from your root and source in all the levels mentioned, to go 'to the land which I will show you' — i.e., to become vested in an earthly, physical body. For it is only in that physical body that the soul will achieve its most sublime ascent.

Likewise we say in the Benedictions of the Morning: 'The soul which You have given me, it is pure . . . You guard it within me.' The phrase 'it is pure' refers to the soul as it is in the world of *Atzilut*, while 'which You have given me' refers to a more sublime level. But the soul is lowered from there to 'You have created it' — the world of *Beriah*, and to 'You have formed it' — the world of *Yetzirah*, verily down to 'You have breathed it into me' — the physical body.

The level of 'You have breathed it into me' is essential to achieve the 'and You guard it within me.' The latter originates far beyond the level of 'it is pure,' and even beyond the level of 'which You have given me'; for a guard is in principle stronger than that which he guards.

This is the meaning of 'to the land which I — the Almighty Himself — will show you.' For it is only down here, in *this* world, that it is possible to grasp the Divine Essence. Thus it is explained in *Tanya*, chapter 4, that no thought can grasp Him unless it is vested in Torah and *mitzvot* — which are not in Heaven<sup>14</sup> but expressly in this physical world.

12. *Tikunei Zohar*, VI; cf. *Tanya*, chapter 39.

13. *Torah Or*, Vayeira, p. 14a. *Likutei Torah*, Shlach, p. 39b; based on the teachings of R. Isaac Luria.

14. [Deuteronomy 30:11-12: 'For this mitzvah which I command you this day . . . it is not in heaven' etc.] See *Baba Metzia* 59b.



IV. When the soul completes the task of 'Go forth from your land' — *milema'alah lematah* (downwards), by descending from all its sublime levels and entering the physical body, it receives an ability to realize the 'Go forth . . . to the land which I will show you' in the second sense, that is, *milematah lema'alah* (ascent).

The *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) is the first to enter man, instigating from the very moment the child emerges from the womb.<sup>15</sup> Thus man is in need of a special strength to prevail over it. The soul is given this special strength as it descends. By means of this strength the soul can leave *artzecha* (your land) — an idiom of *ratza* (will, desire),<sup>16</sup> i.e., the (mundane) desires of the animal soul; and 'your birthplace' — i.e., a person's natural assumptions which derive from his world-oriented intellect and world-oriented emotions; and 'the house of your father' — i.e., all those notions which derive from improper unbringing and habits.<sup>17</sup> One must leave all these and go 'to the land which I will show you' — i.e., the places of worship and Torah-study, where the desires of the Divine soul prevail. This will annul the natural, world-oriented desires, the assumptions of the natural, world-oriented intellect and emotions, and the habits of the animal soul.

V. As the soul completes this experience in *avodah* — leaving the 'land,' 'birthplace,' and 'house of your father' of the animal soul — it must undertake the still higher *avodah* of leaving the same categories of the Divine soul:

'From your land' — i.e., the desires [*ratzon*] of the Divine soul; 'from your birthplace' — i.e., the wisdom [*chochmah*] of the Divine soul; 'from the house of your father' — i.e., contemplation [*binah*] in the realm of

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15. *Bereishit Rabba* 34:10.

16. *Bereishit Rabba* 5:8.

17. Cf. end of 'Lech Lecha 5667' [*Yom Tov shel Rosh Hashanah* 5666, Kehot 1976, p. 397f.]

holiness;<sup>g</sup> to go 'to the land which I will show you' – i.e., to reach a level transcending mind and reason, the level of a perception and vision of *chochmah* – *pnimiyut abba* – which transcends intellect, even the intellect of *chochmah*.  
(From the Sicha of 13th of Tamuz 5714)

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g. [Here we must refer back to section III where 'your land' is related to *ratzon (keter)*; 'birthplace' to *chochmah*; and 'house of your father' to *binah*. In other words, these three terms apply not only to physical, mundane categories (related to the animal soul in man) but also to spiritual desires and aspirations (related to the Divine soul in man).

The ultimate intent is to transcend the ego, the self, altogether – not only the emotive but also the intellectual levels, even in so far as they are related to G-dliness. One must 'go to the land which I (*G-d Himself*) will show you': to be absorbed in *pnimiyut abba* – the all-pervasive, *supra-rational* core and essence of the supernal (Divine) *chochmah* in which everything else (even the most sublime intellect) dissolves.]

## BESURAS HAGEULO

### The Announcement Of The Redemption

#### 45

It should be noted once again (as I have said many times) **that the Rabbis must publicize the legal decree that "all the appointed times have passed."**<sup>1</sup> In regard to *teshuva*,<sup>2</sup> *teshuvah* has already been done and all aspects of Divine service have already been completed. All that remains now is **the true and complete Redemption in actual reality.**

There is nothing more to wait for, since all aspects of Divine service have already been concluded and *teshuvah* has already been done, **and it depends only on the coming of Moshiach himself.**

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1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. As the Gemora continues: "it [the coming of Moshiach] depends only on *teshuva*."

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

The statement of the Gemara that "It depends only on **teshuvah**" was [required] earlier, but now that teshuvah has already been done it depends only **on the coming of Moshiach himself**. All that is necessary is for Moshiach to come in actual reality and [for us to] "point with his finger and say this is the one,"<sup>3</sup> this is our righteous Moshiach.

One should immediately "point with his finger and say this is the one." I have repeated and emphasized many times that not only will the Redemption eventually come, but **the Redemption already stands on the threshold**. It waits for every man and woman of Israel to open the door and pull the Redemption into the room!!

*(At the visit of the Rav and Gaon, Mordechai Eliyahu,  
6 Cheshvan 5752)*

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3. See *Ta'anis* at the end. *Shmos Rabba*, end of chapter 23. Rashi's explanation of *Beshalach* 15:2.

## 46

As mentioned several times, "all the appointed times"<sup>1</sup> have already concluded, and my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, has announced that *teshuvah* has already been done and we have also "polished the buttons." Therefore according to all the signs, our generation is the last generation of exile and automatically the first generation of Redemption. What this time requires is that one should prepare **in reality** to "Get you out of your land... to the land I will show you," imminently and immediately.

...Particularly in our generation, the last generation of exile and

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1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

## BESURAS HAGEULO

the first generation of Redemption, there should be a special emphasis on the Divine service of "Get you out of your land... to the land I will show you," and the acquisition of all ten lands.<sup>2</sup> This must be reflected primarily in an increase in Torah study, which foreshadows this service. This needs to be not only with his three intellectual faculties as they are connected to his emotional character traits, but also in the essence of the three intellectual faculties. What this means specifically is an increase in the study of the inner teachings of the Torah (with intellectual explanations<sup>3</sup>), including the subject of Redemption and our righteous Moshiach.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha,  
11 MarCheshvan 5752)*

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2. [The land of Israel originally comprised the land of the seven nations; these correspond to the seven emotional attributes. In the Age of Redemption, the Torah promised us that we will acquire an additional three lands; these correspond to the three intellectual faculties. Translator's note.]

3. See also the talk of 8 Cheshvan of this year.

### IN HONOR OF

The Soldier of "Tzivos Hashem" **Tiferet Rochel Faiga** תחי

On the occasion of her seventh birthday,

Shabbat Parshat Lech Lecha, 13 Mar-Cheshvan, 5781

### AND IN HONOR OF HER SISTERS AND BROTHER

The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

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