

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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Shagalov
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Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

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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

A

I. The *sidrah* begins: "And Jacob went out from Beer Sheba and went towards Haran."^a As Rashi notes, this verse repeats and resumes the narrative at the conclusion of the preceding *sidrah*.

Everything in Torah is precise. Numerous *halachot* are derived from even a single, seemingly superfluous letter. The repetition of a complete subject thus must certainly provide a lesson relevant for all times and all places, including our own time, for the Torah is beyond time.

II. The Torah offers two reasons for the name Beer Sheba:¹ (a) because of the oath when Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech; and (b) because of the seventh well dug after (Isaac's) peace-treaty with Abimelech. Both these reasons for the name Beer Sheba indicate a condition of tranquility for Israel. But the name *Charan* — 'and he went towards Haran' — is the reverse, as our sages interpreted it² to indicate 'the fierce anger (*charon af*) of the world.'

There are those who wonder: The Almighty has given us the Torah and *mitzvot* with 'a full and ample hand.' Wherever we turn there is either a positive precept with all its derivatives for us to observe, or we must guard against one of the 365 prohibitions and its derivatives. At the very least, then, the Almighty should have removed all our worries — the worry of the *galut*, worry about

a. [Genesis 28:10].

1. Genesis 21:31, and *ibid.*, 26:33. See also Seforno, *ad loc.*

2. See Rashi on Genesis 11:32.

livelihood etc. — in order to make it easier for us to observe the *mitzvot*! In fact we should be altogether freed of worldly concerns so that we might spend more time in the tent of Torah.

The Torah, therefore, shows us the procedures of Jacob, i.e., the procedures of Israel in a state of purity and already distinct from the world: 'Not like Abraham who begat Ishmael, nor like Isaac who begat Esau, but like Jacob who begat the twelve tribes in whom there was no taint whatsoever.'³

Before Jacob was to marry, that is, to build the House of Israel, he was told to leave Beer Sheba, even leave the *yeshivot* of Shem and Eber,^b and go to Haran — 'the fierce anger of the world.'

Before founding the People of Israel, Jacob could and should have remained in Beer Sheba, a place in which Divinity was evident, where it was easy to observe *mitzvot* and difficult to commit sins. However, in order to build the House of Israel he had to leave Beer Sheba and come to Haran, a place where G-d's presence was concealed.

The world (*olam*) *per se* is already a concealment, as indicated by the word *olam* which is an idiom of *helem*

3. See *Shabbat* 146a; also *Sifre*, Devarim, par. 312 (on Deuteronomy 32:9).

b. [The Torah was not revealed and enjoined upon Israel until after the Exodus, but it existed already beforehand: it preceded the creation of the world (*Pesachim* 54b; *Bereishit Rabba* 8:2), and in fact served as the blueprint for the creation (see above, *Bereishit*, note 6). When G-d created Adam, He taught him the Torah (*Zohar* I:199a; see *Nitzutzei Orot*, *ad loc.*, and cf. *Bereishit Rabba* 24:5); Adam passed it on to Shet, Shet to Hanoch, Hanoch to Shem, and Shem to Eber. Shem and Eber headed academies for Torah-study, frequently mentioned in Midrashim, and that is where the Patriarchs learned Torah (*Zohar Chadash*, Noach: 22d; cf. *Bereishit Rabba* 63:6 and 10; *et passim*). When Jacob left Beer Sheba, on his way to Haran, he first spent 14 years in the academy of Eber to study Torah (*Megilah* 17a, quoted by Rashi on Genesis 28:9; see also *Bereishit Rabba* 68:11, quoted by Rashi on Genesis 28:11).]

(concealment);⁴ how much more so then Haran — ‘the fierce anger of the world.’ In Haran it was very easy to sin and very difficult to be virtuous. Yet it was precisely because he was steadfast when exposed to temptation that Jacob was able to build the House of Israel so that ‘his offspring was perfect,’ with no defections.

This offers a lesson for every one of us: only when exposed to temptations^c and in overcoming them is it possible to build a Jewish home which is both radiant and warm.

III. The order in this procedure is related in the narrative in this *sidrah*.

When Jacob set out for Haran, the first thing was ‘*vayifga* — and he reached the place,’^d i.e., he prayed.⁵ It would seem that the first thing for him to do when going to Haran to find a spouse, was to learn the local language and customs, to garb himself according to the local fashion and so on. Jacob, however, put aside all these considerations and occupied himself with the *avodah* of prayer.

As stated, this narrative of Jacob — just like all narratives in Torah — offers instruction for all generations.

When someone is about to erect a home in Israel, he may think: It is well enough that I studied Torah and busied myself with prayer and *mitzvot* until now; now as

4. *Sefer Hama'amarim* 5700, p. 160.

c. [To be exposed to temptations and to prevail over them raises man to superior levels. It is understood, though, that we are speaking of tests and temptations which G-d places before us: it is doctrine that man has the capacity to remain steadfast in the face of all difficulties and tests imposed upon him by Divine Providence (*Avodah Zara* 3a; *Shemot Rabba* 34:1). Man is *not* to expose himself to temptation *on his own*, to test himself (see *Sanhedrin* 107a), for ‘all roads are presumed to be dangerous’ (*Yerushalmi, Berachot* IV:4). See at length, *Likutei Sichot*, vol. IV, pp. 1218-20.]

d. [Genesis 28:2].

5. *Berachot* 26b; *Bereishit Rabba* 68:9 — [the word *vayifga* also means ‘he prayed’].

I step into the world I must put aside these matters and devote my time to learn and practise the ways of the land, to become like everyone else. Thus he is told: No! The first priority is '*Vayifga* — he worshipped in that place!'

In fact, he must occupy himself with the *vayifga* now more than ever. His previous *avodah*, being occupied with Torah, *mitzvoth* and prayer, is not sufficient for his present situation of setting out to enter the world, worldly concerns, temptations incomparably greater than any encountered before. Thus he must beseech G-d to be able to overcome the difficulties and tests.

IV. The narrative continues:

When Jacob was on his way to Haran, 'he took of the stones of that place and put them for his head.'^e Rashi explains that he arranged them around his head because he was afraid of wild beasts.

Jacob knew where he was going, and that even along the way — that is, even before coming to Haran — there were 'wild beasts.' Thus he gathered stones and put them around his head in order to protect himself against these 'wild beasts.'

Offhand it is incomprehensible why Jacob put the stones only around his head, and did not also protect the rest of his body. After all, if he relied on G-d, then why did he surround his head? If, again, he did not wish to rely on supernatural intervention, then he should have protected his body and legs as well!

We can understand this with the verse, 'When you eat the toil of your hands, you will be happy and it shall be well with you.'⁶ Scripture clearly emphasizes 'the toil of *your hands*.' Earning a livelihood can be in two ways: (a) by the toil of your hands, that is, the head remains free and involved with Torah and worship, while the labor for

e. [Genesis 28:11].

6. Psalms 128:2.

sustenance is through the hands; or (b) by the toil of the head, that is, one is completely involved in earning a livelihood, even with his head.

Scripture thus emphasizes — ‘When you eat the toil of your *hands* (leaving the head to be occupied with Torah and *avodah*), then you will be happy and it shall be well with you’ — not only spiritually but also materially. All scheming and cunning is of no avail, as Scripture states, ‘the wise have no bread;’ in fact, they make things worse, as explained in numerous sources.⁷

When Jacob went to Haran he knew perfectly well where he was going. He knew that he would have to work for Laban the *Aramite*,⁸ and he knew also that even along the way, too, there were ‘wild beasts.’ So he took stones and put them around his head, to indicate that nothing and no one is to affect his head. The head must be protected. The troubles of the way or the work of Laban — that is, the preparations and actual work for a livelihood — these he would toil for with the hands only.

This teaches each of us to be certain that the head is protected. For when the head is as it should be, one’s hands and feet, too, will be as they ought to be. One’s labor for a livelihood will accord with the *Shulchan Aruch*; the hands will be so that only ‘the left hand thrusts aside while the right hand draws near;’⁹ and the

f. [Ecclesiastes 9:11].

7. Cf. the Foreword to (the *Mitteler Rebbe’s*) *Derech Chayim*: ‘Shrewdness causes a loss;’ *Sefer Hamitzvot*, by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, s.v. ‘Tiglachat metzora;’ *et passim*.

g. [The word *Arami* (Aramite) is an idiom of *ramai* (deceiver). *Laban the Aramite* thus becomes the paradigm of deceitfulness (see *Bereishit Rabba* 63:4; *Midrash Hane’elam*, *Zohar* I:137a; in comment on Genesis 25:20)].

h. [When the head — ‘king of all the limbs’ (*Shabbat* 61a) — is as it should be, then so will all the limbs: all will automatically perform their required functions, as, for example, the case of R. Mathna whose head bowed in prayer of its own accord when so required by law (*Yerushalmi*, *Berachot* II:4; cf. below, note i.) Of the hands it is said (*Sotah* 47a) ‘Always let the left hand thrust away and the right hand draw near.’ The two hands thus signify

feet will speed towards mitzvot.¹

When Jacob encircled himself and fenced himself off so that the world would not affect him, he did so expressly with *stones*. He did not do so with the intellect, nor with emotion, but with stones — which are inorganic, devoid of vitality, devoid even of a vegetative capacity.

This teaches the following:

When one steps into the world, and is concerned that the world shall not affect him, one must first establish a total *kabalat ol*, a total acceptance of the 'yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven,'⁸ as signified by stones. Intellect and emotion are insufficient. One must truly regard oneself like an inorganic stone: 'I have composed and quieted myself';⁹ 'let my soul be unto all as the dust.'¹⁰

Inorganic matter cannot move itself. It needs someone to carry it from one place to another. That is how each one must regard himself: like inorganic matter, a simple servant, carried by the Almighty from one place to another. He must allow himself to be moved in order to fulfill the intended goal and mission imposed upon him by G-d.

the principles of repulsing the improper and drawing near the desirable. In the ideal state the hands will perform these functions of their own accord.]

i. [As opposed to going elsewhere. Cf. *Vayikra Rabba* 35:1: "David said: Sovereign of the Universe! Every day I used to plan and decide that I would go to a particular place . . . but my feet always brought me to Synagogues and Houses of Study. Hence it is written 'And turned my feet towards Your testimonies' (Psalms 119:59)." Moreover, the feet will not only go where they should, but they will *run* towards their intended goal to accord with the instruction of 'Run to perform even an easy mitzvah . . .' (*Avot* IV:2) — the running indicating alacrity and eagerness.]

8. *Berachot* [II:2, and] 14b; *Shulchan Aruch* of the *Alter Rebbe*, *Orach Chayim*, 2:8.

[The first step must be total submission, an unqualified acceptance of the 'yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven,' beyond reason, an expression of man's very essence or soul. Thereafter comprehension and feeling can be experienced as well. Cf. *above*, *Chaye Sarah*, note 25.]

9. Psalms 131:2. See Ibn Ezra, *ad loc.*

10. *Berachot* 17a.

VI. The reward for this attitude, as told near the end of this passage, is that 'this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be G-d's House.' Neither silver nor gold, but simple stones became G-d's House. And these were not even stones from a city, from an inhabited house, but stones which Jacob found in the middle of the road.

How did these stones become the House of G-d? By virtue of Jacob encompassing himself with them, and by virtue of binding himself to G-d by means of a vow. For the concept of a vow is to be compelled by the vow to do something which normally one would not do by virtue of will, intellect or emotion.^k That is how Jacob attained the greatest heights, to the point that even his most ordinary things became a House of G-d.

This, too, is an instruction and moral for every one, particularly for those setting out to build a house in Israel, i.e., a bridegroom and bride. Not only the *Sidur* and *Chumash* in the home, but — *lehavdil* — even the fork and spoon in the house must be holy. How is this achieved? By virtue of the first act being '*vayifga* — he *prayed* in that place' so that not only when awake and in the midst of prayer, but even when asleep, '*This* (wherever he may be) *is the gate of heaven,*' — that is how the house itself, and everything within it, becomes G-d's House.

(From the Sicha of Shabbat Parshat Vayeitzei 5711)

j. [Genesis 28:22].

k. [See above, Chaye Sarah-D, section XIII, and note 30 *ad loc.*]

l. [Genesis 28:17].

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

7

Maimonides writes:

"In that era¹ there will be neither famine nor war..."

A foretaste of this peaceful state can be realized even in the last moments of exile. For even as "the nations are provoking one another," and "The king of Persia provokes the Arabian king... and all the nations are in turmoil and terror," the Jewish people are experiencing a state of tranquillity and peace, since "G-d says to them 'My children, do not fear. Whatever I have done, I have done only for your sake... the time for your Redemption has arrived.'" Furthermore, "The 'King Moshiach' - the Redeemer of Israel - "stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash... and says, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived.'"²

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayitzei, 7 Kislev, 5751)

1. Rambam, conclusion of his work *Mishneh Torah*.
2. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez 499*.

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The subject that is most urgent in our generation and our time is - the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. As has been mentioned many times of late, now all the requirements have already been concluded, we need only receive our righteous Moshiach in actual reality.

All the more so in our generation and our time, when according to the signs of our Sages of blessed memory (in the tractate *Sanhedrin*, in Midrashim and in many places) we are actually on the verge of the Redemption.

As mentioned many times recently, that after our many great achievements and Divine service throughout the generations, and specifically after the Divine service of our Rebbeim and leaders through the Divine service of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, all necessary spiritual purifications have been accomplished.

This also includes the spiritual purification of "Aisev [Esau] is Edom."¹ Aisev is already completely spiritually purified, as we see how the nations at this time (in the exile of Edom²), which stem from "Aisev is Edom," conduct themselves as benevolent governments. Such conduct has spread to other nations, as we have seen, especially of late.

1. *Vayishlach* 36:1.

2. *[The Jewish people have endured four exiles, each named after the dominant country or culture of the time. These were the Egyptian exile, the Babylonian, the Greek and the Roman. Edom is the Biblical ancestor of the Roman people, whose empire still persists both in a spiritual sense and in a physical sense in the domination of European civilization and its derivatives. Translator's note.]*

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

It's therefore understood that now the situation is already one in which the physical body, and even the physicality of the world, is completely purified and refined. It is a "vessel" receptive to all the spiritual lights and concepts, primarily the light³ of our righteous Moshiach, the light of the true and complete Redemption.

And the only thing missing is that a Jew should open his eyes as he should, when he will see that all is ready for the Redemption! There is already the Shulchan Aruch (the Set Table); there is already the Livyosan, the Shor HaBor and the Yayin Meshumar.⁴ The Jewish people already sit by the table, "the table of their Father"⁵ (the Holy One Blessed be He), together with our righteous Moshiach. (As is stated in holy books⁶ that in every generation there is "one descended from Yehuda who is qualified to be Moshiach"). In our generation this is the leader of our generation, my sainted father-in-law. And now forty years after the passing of my sainted father-in-law we also have already "a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁷

We must now only open the "heart to know" and open "the eyes to see" and open the "ears to hear." Likewise we must utilize all 248 physical limbs and 365 physical sinews in the learning of the inner aspects of the Torah, as revealed in the teachings of Chassidus and observing the directives of our Rabbeim and leaders.⁸ These

3. *Zohar* section 3 34:b. Cited and explained in *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on the *Zohar*, section 3, p. 219 ff.

4. See *Brochos* 34:b. *Bava Basra* 75:a. *Vayikra Rabba* Chapter 13:3. And in other sources.

5. *Brochos* 3, end of side a.

6. Commentary of the Bartenura on *Megillas Rus*. And see also *Sha'alos U'teshuvos Chasam Sofer Choshen Mishpat* (vol. 6) at the end (section 98). And see *S'dei Chemed, Peas HaSadeh*, entry Aleph , Klal 70. And elsewhere.

7. *Tavo* 29:3.

8. In addition to learning Torah and observing mitzvos in general (the 248 positive commandments corresponding to the 248 limbs (*macos* 23, end of side

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directives include learning about the concepts of Redemption, in a way that will open the heart, eyes and ears. That is, one must understand, see and hear in the physicality of the world the true and complete Redemption in actual reality. One should learn the Torah of Moshiach (the inner aspects of Torah) in a way of seeing. All of the above is already prepared; one need only open the eyes to see it!

Also the custom of the Jewish people which is continually spreading in our time, to learn the subject of Redemption and Moshiach, in order to prepare himself and others even more for the revelation of the true and complete Redemption, as mentioned above.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeitze, 9 Kislev 5752)

b) and the 365 negative commandments corresponding to the 365 sinews (*Zohar*, volume I, 170b.)

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Plotkin

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