

# 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**

MIKEITZ

SHABBAT CHANUKAH \*

מקץ

שבת חנוכה

A

I. At the beginning of *parshat Mikeitz*, as also in the preceding *sidrah, Vayeishev*, the Torah speaks of dreams: the dream of Pharaoh (in *Mikeitz*), and the dream of Joseph, and the dreams of the chief-butler and the chief-baker (in *Vayeishev*).

All these dreams stand in a causal relationship to the *galut* (exile) of Egypt, the root of all subsequent exiles.<sup>1</sup> Divine Providence directs every detail, and thus it follows that the effect — i.e., the *galut* — must be related and similar to the cause, i.e., dreams.

II. Various sources, including *Torah Or*,<sup>2</sup> explain that dreams derive from the imaginative faculty. This faculty may accomodate or combine even contraries of originally apperceived ideas, constructing even impossible images<sup>a</sup> such as an elephant going through the eye of a needle — provided the dreamer had thought of such things earlier.<sup>3</sup>

In this sense, *galut* is analogous to dreams. For in *galut* man may imagine that he loves G-d at the same time he loves his own body. In fact, however, it is impossible for both these loves to co-exist simultaneously,<sup>b</sup> and such

\*[The festival of *Chanukah* often coincides with the Shabbat of *parshat Mikeitz*, thus some *sichot* dealing with *Chanukah* are included here.]

1. *Likkutei Torah* of *Arizal*, Teitze.

2. See there, *Vayeishev*, p. 28c.

a. [Cf. Maimonides, *Shemonah Perakim*, ch. 1; *Moreh Nevuchim* I:73 — Proposition X, and II:36.]

3. Cf. *Berachot* 55b.

b. [It is impossible to love absolutely two or more essentially differing

a mistaken notion may cause man to indulge his mundane desires, and even to transgress the Divine Will (as explained elsewhere).

The discussion of this subject in *Torah Or* concludes that it is possible that after prayer one will act contrary to his attitude during prayer, and this may cause him to infer that his worship, Torah and *mitzvot* are proven worthless;<sup>c</sup> however, this is not true. The ultimate source of a dream is of a very sublime level<sup>d</sup> which radiates specifically during the time of *galut*,<sup>e</sup> (see there at length).

Relative to the *avodah* of man's soul, this means the following:

The Divine soul of every Jew remains intact at all times, and his Torah and *mitzvot* are everlasting.<sup>4</sup> Improprieties, however, are only temporary (for sooner or later every Jew repents); hence, even at the present moment<sup>f</sup> they lack any permanence just like 'rivers that dry up.'<sup>5</sup>

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things at one and the same time.]

c. [As he does not seem to be affected by his *avodah*, his prayer and Torah appear to be no more than a dream. Cf. *Sefer Hama'amarim-Kuntreisim*, vol. III, p. 125.]

d. [Depending on how much the imaginative faculty is properly developed, dreams may be false and worthless or true and prophetic. (See *Berachot* 55aff.; and Maimonides' discussion of dreams in *Moreh Nevuchim* II:36, specifically referring to the rabbinic statements that 'A dream is one-sixtieth part of prophecy,' and 'A dream is the *novelet* (unripe fruit) of prophecy.') Dreams thus are rooted in a very sublime level, though man, for lack of proper development, may not recognize this. In this sense too, man's *avodah* may be like a dream: it has a definite quality and value though this may not necessarily be noted.]

e. [Cf. *Keter Shem Tov*, sect. 312 (in comment on Isaiah 55:6 — 'Seek the Eternal when He may be found . . .'), and also *Likutei Amarim* of the *Maggid* of Mezhirech, sect. 77, to the effect that precisely now, in the time of *galut*, *ru'ach hakodesh* (the Holy Spirit) is much more readily attainable than in the time of the Sanctuary. See there at length, and the glossary notes *ad loc.* See also further on, note g and 7.]

4. *Tanya*, chapter 25.

f. [The moment of transgression, or prior to *teshuvah*.]

5. *Parah* VIII:9. See above, *Chaye Sarah*, note 22.

Evil thus cannot prevail over good because it lacks durability. Good, however, remains forever intact.

From this perspective the era of the *galut* has an advantage over the era of the Sanctuary. At the time of the Sanctuary the innermost powers of the soul radiated.<sup>6</sup> But this kind of radiation is subject to limitations, and that is why a defiled person was not permitted to enter the Sanctuary.<sup>g</sup> During the era of the *galut*, the transcendent powers of the soul shine forth and make themselves felt.<sup>h</sup> This illumination is not subject to any limitations, as it is said, 'Who dwells with them in the midst of their impurity.'<sup>7</sup>

IV. In practical terms this means:

There is the view that the only possible method is to go by way of an orderly *avodah*, of moving progressively from the easy to the difficult; and until the first step is completed one cannot think of a higher step. This approach, however, is correct and applies only when all one's personal affairs are systematic and orderly. But since 'we are like dreamers,'<sup>i</sup> one can — and *must* — perform every kind of *avodah* in the Divine service that is available, as our sages instructed, 'Seize and eat, seize and drink.'<sup>8</sup>

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6. *Sefer Hama'amarim* 5709, p. 108, sect. II.

g. [Though the inwardness of the soul is evident, it will not prevent or override impurity — thus allowing for the possibility of a person being separated (albeit temporarily) from the Sanctuary.]

h. [See above, Noach-C, note s, for the difference between *orot pnimiyim* and *orot makifin*, and apply that distinction in our context.]

7. [Leviticus 16:16; see Rashi on this verse (and on Numbers 36:34: 'though they are unclean, nevertheless the *Shechinah* dwells in their midst.' In *galut*, thus, there is no separation from the *Shechinah*.] For a more elaborate discussion see *sichot* of *Pessach* 5718.

i. [Psalms 126:1]

8. *Eruvin* 54a.

[Obviously this is meant in a metaphorical sense, and as explained in

Someone may be in a state of which it is said, 'It is impossible for him to begin serving G-d without first doing *teshuvah* for the past.'<sup>9</sup> Yet the *Alter Rebbe* rules in *Tanya*<sup>10</sup> — *pnimiyut Hatorah*, and in *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>11</sup> — the revealed part of Torah, that even he too must study Torah and fulfill *mitzvot*. At present he may well 'strengthen . . .,' but ultimately 'the banished will surely not remain banished from Him,'<sup>k</sup> and then his Torah and *mitzvot* too will be restored along with him.<sup>l</sup>

V. All this relates not only to the revealed (exoteric) Torah but also to *pnimiyut Hatorah* and its customs and ways, as our sages said, 'Seize and eat' (relating to the exoteric Torah which is compared to bread<sup>12</sup>), 'seize and drink' (relating to *pnimiyut Hatorah* which is compared to water<sup>13</sup>).

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the paragraphs following.]

9. *Tanya*, chapter 17.

10. End of chapter 39.

11. *Hilchot Talmud Torah* IV:3

j. [Avoiding a negative expression, the *Rebbe* did not state fully the principle that sinful acts strengthen and augment the power of evil and impurity, just as *mitzvot* and good deeds strengthen and augment the realm of goodness. Cf. *Eysha Rabba*, Petichta:33; *Zohar* III:112b; *et passim*.]

k. [*Par. II Samuel* 14:14]

l. [*Kavanah*, man's proper intent and devotion, is the very soul of a *mitzvah* (see *Tanya*, ch. 38). Without *kavanah*, lacking the fear and love of G-d, man's Torah and *mitzvot* 'cannot soar upwards . . . cannot ascend and stand before G-d' (*Tikunei Zohar* X:25b), let alone when they were performed *shelo lishmah* — for ulterior, personal motives (see *Tanya* ch. 39-40). But as man repents, studies Torah and performs a *mitzvah lishmah* (for its own sake, as a *mitzvah* of G-d), then even his previous *mitzvot* which had remained 'below,' will be restored and ascend with him; see *Tanya*, ch. 39-40, and *Kuntres Acharon*, sect. 3.]

12. *Likutei Torah*, Behar, p. 40b, and *Bechukotay*, p. 48b.

13. See also *sichah* of *Shabbat Chol Hamo'ed Sukot*, sect. 16.

[Actually water too, like bread, is a metaphor for *nigleh*, the exoteric part of Torah. But there is a distinction between water gathered in a pool (like a *mikveh*) and water springing from a well, thus still connected to its source. The former signifies *nigleh*, and the latter *pnimiyut Hatorah* — the

In previous generations, *pnimiyut Hatorah* could not be studied before completing a number of preparations.<sup>1\*</sup> In these generations, however, 'it is mandatory to disclose this wisdom'<sup>14</sup> — especially after the revelation of the teachings of *Chassidut* by the Baal Shem Tov and the

'soul of Torah'. Another distinction is between the unqualified term of water, signifying Torah in general (*Baba Kama* 17a), and the term water qualified as *mayim kedoshim* (holy water) which signifies *pnimiyut Hatorah*. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. IV, pp. 1278 and 1312.]

l.\* [*Zohar Chadash*, Bereishit, 6d: 'One must not reveal the mysteries of the Torah except to a person that is wise and studied Scripture and Talmud, whose studies endure and he is G-d-fearing and erudite in everything.' Cf. *Chagigah* 11b and 13a; Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah* IV:13. See also *Pessachim* 119a; *Kidushin* 71a; *Zohar* III:105b, and 244a (and *Nitzutze Orot* and *Nitzutze Zohar*, *ad loc.*).

R. Moshe Cordovero notes that he who wishes to pursue the esoteric teachings of the Torah must first possess some basic knowledge of *nigleh* (the exoteric Torah), of the laws relevant to daily life; otherwise he would be like one who 'gazes at the stars, observing the things above him and thus failing to see holes right under his feet: ultimately he will fall into a deep pit.' (*Or Ne'erav*, I:ch. 6) Cf. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevuchim* I:ch. 33-34, and also *ibid.*, ch. 31-32.

To study the mysteries of the Torah before Scripture, Mishnah and Talmud, is at best 'like a soul without a body, lacking efficacy and accountability . . . Man must study the wisdom of the Kabbalah, but first his body must be purified. This is effected by practising the *mitzvot* — which serve this purpose (cf. *Bereishit Rabba* 44:1) and are essential. Only thereafter can the *neshamah* (soul) — 'The soul of man is a lamp of the Eternal' (Proverbs 20:27) — radiate in this body like a lamp placed in a glass reflector: shining and invigorating him to understand the mysteries of the Torah, and revealing its depths . . .' (R. Chaim Vital, Introduction to *Etz Chayim*.)

14. *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. XXVI, on the authority of R. Isaac Luria.

[Cf. R. Chaim Vital, *Sefer Hagilgulim*, ch. 32: 'In this, our era . . . it is necessary to reveal *Chochmat Ha-emet* — the Wisdom of the Truth (the mystical teachings of the Torah), in order that the Messiah will come, as stated in *Tikunei Zohar* (VI:23b f) that by merit of the *Zohar* the King Messiah shall be revealed.' See also *Kuntres Inyanah shel Toras Hachassidus* (*On the Essence of Chassidus*), ch. IV, XXI, and Appendix; and *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, Foreword to Third Edition (especially sect. III-IV, and the notes *a.l.*).

R. Chaim Vital reconciles this imperative with the restrictive prerequisites noted above, by stating: If we were to apply the prerequisites as strictly as they appear to be, no one would be able to pursue this study unless he had an instructor as great as R. Shimon bar Yochai to resolve all problems en-

*Alter Rebbe* and their followers. *Pnimiyut Hatorah* no longer differs from any other part of Torah, and every Jew is enjoined to study *all* parts of the Torah.<sup>15</sup>

VI. The approach of 'Seize and eat, seize and drink' means to ignore the present status, whether one is ready for higher things or not. It leads man to continually augment and intensify the study of Torah and the fulfillment of *mitzvot* (analogous to the aforementioned concept of a dream).

This very act of augmenting the light of Torah and *mitzvot* removes the slumber of the *galut* and brings out the true light of the redemption — 'The Eternal will be to you for an everlasting light,'<sup>16</sup> just as we see that a person awakens when the light of dawn begins to shine.

VII. This, then, is the lesson in fact that dreams were the cause of both the exile and the exodus from Egypt.

The exile of Egypt was the most difficult *galut*, and that is why all exiles are referred to by the term 'Egypt.'<sup>17</sup> Even so, it was this very *galut* which led to the condition of 'Afterwards they shall come out with great substance.'<sup>18</sup>

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countered. 'Thus it seems to me that the *mitzvah* to pursue this wisdom remains in effect, provided one has adopted the following approach: When seeing bewildering passages which may arouse doubts, one must think 'If this matter appears to be vain — it is on *my* account' (see *Yerushalmi, Pe'ah* I:1 on Deuteronomy 32:47); that is, I don't understand it because of the deficiency of my intellect, and not Heaven forbid, because the subject-matter is questionable . . . The study [of mysticism] is prohibited only to him who is unable to stand in the palace of the King and may come to heresy, Heaven forbid, because he thinks himself very wise and without deficiency on his part.' *Kol Ramah on Zohar* III:141a, (quoted in *Nitzutzei Zohar a.l.*), and *Etz Chayim*, Introductions, ed. Tel Aviv 1960, p. 23bf. Cf. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevuchim*, I:ch. 31-34, and III:ch. 26 and 50.]

15. See *Hilchot Talmud Torah* I:4 and II:10.

16. Isaiah 60:20

17. *Bereishit Rabba* 16:4

18. Genesis 15:14

It is the same with our present *galut*. The whole *avodah* throughout this *galut* is similar to a dream. Nevertheless, the very fact that it is like a dream allows for the possibility of ascending to higher levels by 'leaps,' unbounded, and to augment the light of Torah and *mitzvot*. This in turn will remove the slumber of the *galut* and lead to the state of 'As in the days of your going out of Egypt I will show him wondrous things'<sup>19</sup> — through the advent of the righteous Messiah, speedily in our own days.

(From the Sicha of 19th of Kislev 5717)

## B

VIII. The principle that the *galut* itself causes a greater ascent is alluded to in this *sidrah*. For when Joseph named his younger son Ephraim, he did so because 'G-d *hiphrani* (caused me to be fruitful) in the land of my poverty':<sup>m</sup> the *hiphrani* — the additional 'light' [augmentation] in Joseph, happened precisely 'in the land of my poverty.'

Joseph's personal level was extremely high. Thus it is explained in *Torat Chayim*<sup>20</sup> that Joseph was punished for his reliance on natural channels<sup>20\*</sup> because he was far beyond these bounds. Jacob also relied on natural means,

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19. Michah 7:15

*m*. [Genesis 41:52. The name *Ephraim* is derived from *hiphrani* (caused me to be fruitful).]

20. See there, *Vayechi*, s.v. Ben Porat Yosseph.

20\*. Joseph asked the chief of butlers to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh, to be freed [see Genesis 40:14]. This is accounted to Joseph as a sin, and as a punishment he had to remain in prison for two more years [see Rashi on Genesis 40:23, quoting various *Midrashim*], notwithstanding the fact that his father Jacob, too, had relied on natural means — appeasing Esau to forgive him by sending presents [Genesis 32:13ff.] and by referring to him as 'my lord' [Genesis 32:4 and 18; 33:8, 13, 14].

but this was appropriate in his case because he was part of the normative process of development<sup>n</sup> and therefore feared the consequences of a possible sin.<sup>21</sup> Joseph, however, by virtue of his level as 'supreme *tzadik*,'<sup>o</sup> should have feared nothing and did not need to rely on natural channels.

Similarly it is further explained in *Torat Chayim*, in comment on the verse, 'And Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him,'<sup>p</sup> that the Tribes (Joseph's brothers), like the Patriarchs before them, were shepherds, isolated from the world, in order that worldly affairs not disturb them.

Joseph, on the other hand, was on such a plane that he could be *within* the world and involved with it, as a ruler of Egypt, to the point that 'Without you no man shall lift up [his hand or foot].'<sup>q</sup> As a Scriptural text does not lose its plain meaning,<sup>r</sup> this means quite plainly that any Egyptian who wished to bear arms, and so forth, needed the permission of Joseph.<sup>s</sup> But even while Joseph

n. [Being part of a normative process Jacob had to rely on normative (natural) means to safeguard himself. Indeed, he had been promised Divine protection and blessing (Genesis 28:15 and 31:3), but he was afraid that he may have become defiled by some sin *after* these promises were made and thus forfeited the Divine protection. See *Mechilta* and *Tanchuma*, Beshalach, on Exodus 17:14; note also *Midrash Hagadol* on Genesis 32:8.]

21. *Berachot* 4a [see preceding note].

o. [Joseph is unique among the sons of Jacob: he is usually referred to with a special designation as *Yosseph hatzadik* (Joseph the righteous one; see e.g., *Berachot* 55b; *Yoma* 35b; *Zohar* I:59b). Actually his younger brother Benjamin, too, is sometimes referred to with the same designation (e.g., *Megilah* 26a; *Sotah* 37a; etc.). The *Zohar* (I:153b and 259a) thus distinguishes between them in terms of Joseph being *tzadik le'eyla* (the *tzadik* above; supreme *tzadik*), and Benjamin the *tzadik letata* (the *tzadik* below).]

p. [Genesis 42:8]

q. [Genesis 41:44]

r. [*Shabbat* 63a. Scripture does not lose its plain meaning despite other interpretations of the text. Cf. *supra*, *Vayishlach* note b.]

s. [*Targum Onkelos* on Genesis 41:44, cited there by Rashi. In other words, Joseph was totally involved with Egypt (worldly affairs), even with the most trivial.]

was so deeply involved with such affairs he remained fully attached to G-d. <sup>o</sup>

Notwithstanding all his greatness, however, Joseph attained 'fruitfulness,' augmentation, only through 'the land of poverty.'

IX. This narrative of Joseph offers a lesson for us all. The descent of the soul into the body in this material world, and particularly during the time of *galut*, is not to torment the soul but in order that it achieve a special quality: 'Clearly the purpose of the *hishtalshelut*, the progressively downward gradation of the worlds . . . is not for the sake of the higher worlds, because for them this is a descent from the light of His blessed Countenance. Rather, the ultimate purpose is this lowest world,'<sup>22</sup> for it is in this world that the Divine Essence is revealed.

The Torah could not have been received in this material world prior to the *galut* of Egypt. Passing through the 'iron furnace'<sup>u</sup> of the Egyptian exile conferred upon the Jews the capacity for receiving the Torah, as our sages stated<sup>23</sup> that Israel received the Torah because they had descended to Egypt and were enslaved by Pharaoh.

X. This is also the meaning of 'And I taught Ephraim to walk':<sup>24</sup>

It is said of *matan Torah*<sup>25</sup> that if there had been six hundred thousand less one — (meaning, lacking 'the

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t. [As opposed to his sublime level.]

22. *Tanya*, chapter 36

u. [See Deuteronomy 4:20]

23. See *Shabbat* 88b.

24. Hosea 11:3. See *Likutei Torah*, Vayikra, p. 2a, and Pinchas, p. 80b; *Lecha Dodi* 5689 [sect. 3; *Sefer Hama'amarim-Kuntreisim*, vol. I, p. 41].

25. *Mechilta deRashby* (and see also *Mechilta [vulgate]*), Yitro, on Exodus 19:11; *Devarim Rabba* 7:8.

One<sup>v</sup>) the Torah would not have been given, Heaven forbid, not even to Moses. This is also alluded to in the verse 'Six hundred thousand *ragli* (footmen) amongst whom I (*Anochi*) am':<sup>26</sup> the presence of *all* six hundred thousand, including the 'footmen' — and *especially* the 'footmen'\* — brought about the giving of the Torah which begins with *Anochi*; the revelation of the *Anochi* even to Moses.

Ephraim, as noted, represents 'for G-d caused me to be fruitful in the land of my poverty'; it was the experience of Egypt that led to the supreme achievement of *matan Torah*. And therefore Scripture says of Ephraim, 'I taught Ephraim to walk': *tirgalti* (taught to walk) is an idiom of *regel* (foot), signifying the *avodah* of *kabalat ol* by means of which one reaches the *Anochi*, the ultimate 'I'.<sup>v\*</sup>

(From the Sicha of Shavuot 5713)

## C

XI. The special *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* is to kindle lights. How is light created? By taking a physical object like oil, wood, or some other fuel, and heating it until it loses its physical character and illuminates its surroundings.

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v. [In other words, 'less one' is to be read not only in the literal sense of 'one of Israel', but also in a metaphorical sense of 'lacking Him who is called *Echad* (the One; G-d) — signifying a lack of consciousness of G-d.]

26. Numbers 11:21.

[The metaphorical interpretation of 'lacking the One' can be read into this verse as well, by reading *ragli* in the sense of the people *analogous* to feet (signifying *kabalat ol*; acceptance of G-d — thus 'having (as opposed to lacking) the One'), and *anochi* signifying *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* (I am the Eternal your G-d; Exodus 20:2), the first words of the Ten Commandments.]

\*[Parenthetical in the text:]

As explained elsewhere, 'feet' signify the virtue of *kabalat ol*. [See *infra*, Vayechi, sect. II-IV.]

v\*. [The text has *Anochi mi sheAnochi* — which literally means 'I who am I.' See *Zohar* III:11a: 'I am who I am, and it is not known who He is.' The ultimate 'I' refers to G-d — uncaused, transcendent, the only truly independent; see Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah* I:1ff.]

The lights lit on *Chanukah* derive from the lights lit in the Sanctuary. The lights of the Sanctuary were lit every evening, but in the time when the miracle of *Chanukah* occurred, pure oil for these lights could not be found. The Almighty then performed a miracle and 'a flask of pure oil sealed with the seal of the High Priest' was found. The oil in that flask was barely enough for one day, but it burned miraculously for a full eight days. To commemorate this miracle we kindle lights all eight days of *Chanukah*.

However, though the lights of *Chanukah* derive from those of the Sanctuary, there are some basic differences between them:

(a) The lights in the Sanctuary were always of the same number. On *Chanukah*, however, every evening we add a new light.

(b) The lights in the Sanctuary were lit expressly in daytime, when it was still bright.<sup>w</sup> The lights of *Chanukah*, however, are lit after sunset.

(c) The lights of the Sanctuary were indoors. The lights of *Chanukah*, however, 'it is incumbent to place them by the door of one's house on the outside.'<sup>x</sup>

(d) The *mitzvot* of the lights of the *mishkan* (Tabernacle) and the Sanctuary were observed in a time when Israel did not lack anything materially. Especially throughout the period of the *mishkan* in the desert the Jews had everything they required: for food they had the manna from heaven; water they had from the Well of Miriam; even their garments grew along with them and were always clean.<sup>27</sup>

Later, when the Sanctuary was built in the days of King Solomon and the *menorah* was lit there, a period of

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w. [See Exodus 30:8: 'toward evening.']

x. [*Shabbat* 21b]

27. See Rashi on Deuteronomy 8:4

peace again existed for Israel: no one waged war against the Jews; others paid a tribute to Solomon and there was a state of '[Judah and Israel dwelled in safety], every man under his vine and under his fig-tree.'<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, spiritually too a state of peace and tranquility prevailed, for when untroubled by mundane worries there is a total devotion to Torah and *mitzvot*, to spiritual — *Jewish* — matters.

The lights of *Chanukah*, however, are related to a time when the country was under the foreign oppression of the Hellenes, when the Jewish army was very small in both number and spirit, and when there was no pure oil for even a single night.

XII. All these distinctions are interrelated:

A time of material welfare is also one of spiritual welfare, as stated previously. For when a Jew is able, he will contribute for spiritual matters with an open and generous hand. In such a time there is no need for wars and *mesirat nefesh*. The lights can be of equal number every day, for as everything runs normally there is no need for supplementary activities.

In such a time there is also no need to exert efforts to illuminate the 'street': the 'street', that is, the world outside, is not 'dark.' When the *menorah* burned in the Sanctuary the street too was illuminated.

In a difficult period, however, in a period of wars — wars not only against gentile Hellenes but also against Jewish Hellenizers who cared for neither the Sanctuary nor independence and sought assimilation among the Hellenes<sup>29</sup> — then there was a need for *mesirat nefesh*. And under such difficult conditions the Almighty gave us the *mitzvah* of the *Chanukah*-lights.

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28. I Kings 5:5

29. See *Baba Kama* 82b

In such a time it is not enough to illuminate one's own home. For there is darkness outside which pervades the streets and may penetrate into the home. Thus one must exert efforts to illuminate the street: the *Chanukah*-lamp is lit when it is dark, and specifically by the door, in order to illuminate the outside.

It will not do to kindle the light on a table on which we eat or work and then to open the door to allow the light to shine outward. One must kindle the light by the door, that is, one must exert efforts to illuminate the street.

Moreover, the lights of the previous night are not sufficient. One cannot be content with the fact of not having fallen to a lower plane, of having retained yesterday's level. There must be a continuously progressive ascent, rising ever higher and higher.

XIII. In brief:

One must not be shaken by the darkness outside, regardless of its pervasiveness. One must go about with *mesirat nefesh* to illuminate the 'street,' daily supplementing and augmenting the light until there will be another supply of pure and clear oil. All this should be in the following manner:

1) One must not be content with the light used to illuminate the previous day. Every day one must add more and more: today one light, tomorrow two, the day after three, and so forth. One cannot take a great leap by beginning right away with many. Thus we begin with only a single light, but must immediately be ready and prepared to add another light tomorrow, and another one the day after.

2) One must not be content with illuminating one's own home, trusting that this will already of itself cast light on the street as well. One must make direct efforts to illuminate the outside.

3) This approach must be coupled with *mesirat*

*nefesh*, the human counterpart of a miracle that transcends the laws of nature. If others disapprove, one should not be disturbed but continue with *mesirat nefesh* to carry out the mission entrusted to him by G-d.

XIV. These principles are demanded of every Jew. Each one must know that he is an 'ambassador' of G-d to warm the physical environment of his part of the world\*\* so that it will illuminate himself as well as his environment.

It must be done without complacency because of yesterday's accomplishments, but rather by continuously striving to augment the light. An awareness of yesterday's accomplishments is important only in terms of knowing how much more must be added today. When following this path, proceeding with *mesirat nefesh* and not being content with having illuminated the self with previous achievements, one is assured that ultimately his efforts will be crowned with success: the 'street' will be bright with a progressively increasing light until pure and clear oil will be found to light in the Sanctuary.

(From the Sicha of 21st of Kislev 5713)

## D

XV. The *mitzvah* of the *Chanukah*-lights differs from all other *mitzvot* in two respects:

1) Every other *mitzvah* can be fulfilled in accordance with one of two standards: *ketikunah* — as ordained by law, doing just what one must do; or with *hidur mitzvah* — adorning the *mitzvah*, performing it in an exemplary manner by going beyond the strict requirements of the law. The standard of *hidur min hahidur* (adorning of the adorning), however, does not apply to these other *mitzvot*.

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x\*. [See *supra*, Vayeira, note g, and Vayishlach, note e, on the concept of man's 'part of the world'.]

This is evident from the statement in the Gemara,<sup>30</sup> that '*hidur mitzvah* is up to a third';<sup>y</sup> if one desires to go beyond that he can do so, and it is reckoned 'up to a third of his own, but from a third and more it is of the Holy One, blessed be He.'<sup>z</sup> Thus we see that there is no limit *per se* to adorning a *mitzvah*, and however much one does is regarded as *hidur mitzvah*.

In the *mitzvah* of the *Chanukah*-lights, however, there is (a) the *mitzvah per se*; (b) *hidur mitzvah*; and (c) *mehadrin min hamehadrin*.<sup>aa</sup>

2) Generally most people observe all *mitzvot* just as they are ordained by law. With respect to the *mitzvah* of the *Chanukah*-lights, however, there is a universal practice<sup>31</sup> of observing not just the *mitzvah* proper but with *hidur mitzvah* and even with *hidur min hahidur*.

## XVI. There are two miracles related to *Chanukah*:

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### 30. *Baba Kama* 9b

y. [See above, *Vayeitze*, note z<sup>4</sup>]

z. [Rashi (and *Tossafot*) explains that up to a third is at man's own expense for which he will not be rewarded during his life-time (in this world), as it is said '*this day*' (in this world) is the time in which '*to do them*' (the *mitzvot*) but not in which to be rewarded for them (see *Avodah Zarah* 3a, interpreting Deuteronomy 7:11); any reward will be paid only in the world to come. 'From a third and more', however, will bear the fruits of the Divine reward even in man's life-time. (Other commentators — see *Shitah Mekubetzet* — interpret that *hidur mitzvah* up to a third is obligatory regardless whether one is rich or poor; but to go beyond that would only have to be 'of G-d', that is, according to the wealth attained by Divine blessing — only to the extent that one can afford.) In any case, regardless of whether one goes up to a third or beyond, it is all regarded only as *hidur mitzvah*.]

aa. [(*Mehadrin min hamehadrin* refers to the persons who fulfill a *mitzvah* with *hidur min hahidur*.) See *Shabbat* 21b: The *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* demands that one light be lit every night, and it will suffice for a man and his household; those who observe *mitzvot* with *hidur* — kindle one light every night for each member of the household; and the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* . . . according to *Bet Hillel*, kindle one light on the first day and thereafter progressively increase by adding another light each night.]

31. *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, 671:2, glosses of *Rema*.

1) the military victory which is commemorated by the recitation of *hallel*<sup>bb</sup> and prayers of thanksgiving; and 2) the miracle with the flask of oil which is commemorated by the kindling of lights.

The principle of *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is not applied to the *mitzvah* of *hallel* and thanksgiving, but to the *mitzvah* of lighting the lamps which derives from the miracle with the flask of oil.

The unique quality of the miracle with the oil, when compared to all other miracles — including the one of the victory in war, will be understood when considering that the Divine conduct of the universe may manifest itself in three different ways:

1) A 'natural conduct.' It may manifest itself in a sublime and very successful manner, but the success itself is within the boundaries of the natural order.

2) A 'miraculous conduct,' transcending nature. The victorious warfare of *Chanukah* falls into this category as it was a supra-natural event of 'the<sup>32</sup> strong delivered into the hands of the weak, and the many into the hands of the few.'<sup>cc</sup> Had it been a case of 'the strong into the hands of the strong' that too would have been noteworthy in view of what happens in warfare, but it would not have been a miracle. 'The strong into the hands of the few,' however, is a miraculous event which transcends the boundaries of nature.

3) A 'supra-miraculous conduct,' unnecessary for any physical needs of the body or even for the spiritual needs of the soul.<sup>dd</sup> It is a *hidur* associated only with the soul. The miracle of finding pure oil falls into this

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32. Prayer of "All Hanissim."

bb. [Psalms of praise, in the Book of Psalms 113-118.]

cc. [See above, Vayeishev, note s.]

dd. [In other words, both the physical and spiritual life can continue unhampered *without* the supra-miraculous.]

category; it was of a purely spiritual nature, relating to the soul alone. Furthermore, it served to demonstrate G-d's affection for Israel. (For according to the Halachah, the lights of the Sanctuary could then have been lit even with impure oil, as 'impurity is overridden — or permitted — in the case of a community.' Thus the miracle was to demonstrate G-d's love for Israel.<sup>33</sup>)

XVII. It is a basic premise that all which happens on High depends on the *avodah* of man below.<sup>ee</sup> There are three forms of *avodah* which elicit the three forms of Divine conduct described above:

The 'natural conduct' follows from the normative observance of Torah and *mitzvot*. Scripture thus states:<sup>34</sup> 'If you walk in my ordinances . . . then I will give your rains in their season and the land shall yield its produce' — and all the other blessings.

The 'supra-natural, miraculous conduct' is effected expressly by *hidur mitzvah*. When one is not content with fulfilling the *mitzvot* strictly as ordained by law but performs them in an exemplary manner of truly 'adorning the *mitzvah*,' G-d reciprocates 'measure for measure'<sup>35</sup> with a supra-natural conduct.

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33. See above, Vayeishev-C, section I.

ee. [In the measure with which man measures it is meted out to him (*Sotah* I:7-9; see *Sanhedrin*). 'The Eternal is your shade' (Psalms 121:5), that is, G-d conducts Himself with man just like a shadow: just as the shadow follows every motion of man, so G-d's treatment of man reflects the behaviour of man (*Keter Shem Tov*, Hossafot, sect. 60). The Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid thus interpreted the *Mishnah* of *Avot* II:1: 'Know what *shelema'alah mimcha* (there is above you)': know that all there is Above (*i.e.*, the Divine conduct with man) is *mimcha*, from you, (*i.e.*, your actions and behaviour determine it); *Tzavaat Harivash*, sect. 142 (and see the notes *ad loc.*). The procedures on High are directly caused and determined by the human actions below. See also above, Noach, note s.]

34. Leviticus 26:3ff.

35. *Sanhedrin* 90a [see above, note ee.]

The third type of conduct, however, is manifested only as the result of *mesirat nefesh* which transcends even the level of *hidur mitzvah*.

XVIII. How is *mesirat nefesh* superior to *hidur mitzvah*? *Hidur mitzvah* means that something is done not just because one was required to do it, but because he truly delights in the *mitzvah* and thus performs it with love and enthusiasm. He seeks for ways to improve and adorn it even though he is not obligated by law to do so.

The analogy for this is the servant carrying out an order of his king. If he lacks the love and enthusiasm for his task and does so only because he must execute the command of the king, he will do only as much as he must. He will not exert himself to adorn the act, because he lacks a feeling of love for it. If, on the other hand, it is precious to him and he is enthusiastic about it, he will look for all kinds of ways to adorn it.

Nevertheless, even with the act of *hidur* his own ego is undiminished and he is a distinct independent entity: there is the desire and willingness to fulfill the *mitzvah* and there is the separate person with this desire. *Mesirat nefesh*, however, is superior to *hidur mitzvah*. It implies that he is no longer an independent entity. His very being is fulfillment of the Divine Will. He is not interested in himself, concerned that he be the 'thinker' or 'sayer' or 'doer'. His sole concern is that the act be carried out, and it is altogether irrelevant to him whether it will be done by himself or another — as long as it is accomplished.

This *avodah* of *mesirat nefesh* — totally devoid of self-interest, even for his soul, with an exclusive concern for the performance of the *mitzvah* — elicits a reciprocal 'measure for measure' conduct from G-d which transcends even the miraculous. Man's boundless devotion to G-d calls forth G-d's boundless response to man.

XIX. On *Chanukah* the Jewish people were in a state of *mesirat nefesh* and thus merited the miracle with the flask of oil which demonstrated G-d's love of Israel transcending normative reality. *Hidur* on man's part effects miracles which are beyond the boundaries of nature but still related to the reality of the physical world. *Mesirat nefesh*, total self-denial, absolute devotion, however, effects a conduct on G-d's part which is no longer related to the physical or normative reality.

In turn, Divine conduct which is beyond the reality of the world evokes in us a readiness for *mesirat nefesh*. In fact, *mesirat nefesh* is a universal character-trait of Israel. Even the 'most worthless of the worthless' is moved by it<sup>36</sup> (which is not the case relative to Torah, or charity etc.).

*Chanukah* indicates this reciprocity. There was Divine action to demonstrate G-d's love of Israel — evoked by the *mesirat nefesh* of the Jewish people. In turn, this evoked among Israel the act of *mehadrin min hamehadrin*: not just a performance of *mitzvot* as ordained by law, nor just a performance of *mitzvot* with *hidur*, but *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, a total submission and self-negation.

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36. *Tanya*, chapter 19. See also *Eyn Hakadosh Baruch Hu ba Betarunya 5685* [*Sefer Hama'amarim-Kuntreisim*, vol. III, p. 119ff.]; *Sefer Hama'amarim 5709*, p. 118.

[Every Jew is possessed of a desire to unite with his source in G-d, but this desire or love of G-dliness is hidden and veiled in the case of sinners. It is dormant and does not exercise its influence so long as the mind is preoccupied with mundane pursuits. Nevertheless, when a Jew is confronted with a test in a matter of faith touching the very soul, this love is 'aroused from its sleep' and exerts its influence. On such occasion even the 'most worthless of the worthless and the transgressors of Israel' will in the majority of cases sacrifice their lives for the sanctity of G-d's Name and suffer harsh tortures and martyrdom rather than deny their Jewishness — though they be boors, illiterate and ignorant of G-d's greatness. (See *Tanya*, chapters 18-19) But this applies only to *mesirat nefesh* (touching the very soul) and not to the usual observance of *mitzvot* like Torah, charity, etc.]

That is why the lights of *Chanukah*, unlike all other *mitzvot*, have the universally practiced aspect of *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, for the central aspect of *Chanukah* itself is an experience of *mehadrin min hamehadrin*: total self-negation, which is the essence of *mesirat nefesh*. (From the Sicha of 5th day of Chanukah 5713)



# BESURAS HAGEULO

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

### 9

When one is totally immersed in a certain subject, it's human nature when encountering another topic to immediately search for and find the connection with that subject in which he is immersed, even though this other topic has its own issues and critical features.

As Jews -- particularly in the end of the period of exile (after the passing of all the deadlines<sup>1</sup> and after my sainted father-in-law testified that we have already done *Teshuvah* and that all the necessary efforts have been completed) -- "we are totally immersed" in "awaiting for him every day that he will come."<sup>2</sup> Throughout each and every day we wait and yearn for the true and complete Redemption.

And, inasmuch as Jews are passionately involved with the coming of Moshiach, it is reasonable that in all matters we should search primarily for their association with our awaiting every day that he will come.

Applying this to a timely theme:

As we stand in the days of Chanukah -- though a multifaceted Holiday -- we ought to emphasize primarily its connection with Redemption.

This festival was instituted because of the miracle with the cruse of oil involved with the kindling of the menorah in the *Beis HaMikdosh* [Temple]. Afterwards, the Hasmoneans dedicated the Temple ("They cleared Your Sanctuary and purified Your Holy Temple"). Mention of the Temple is an immediate reminder of the Redemption, and serves

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1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. The text of "Ani Ma'amin - I believe" (Printed in several editions of the prayer book) based on the language of *Chabakuk* 2:3. *Commentary on the Mishneh* by Rambam, *Sanhedrin*, Introduction to chapter "Chelek," 12th Principle.

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

to enhance our anticipation for his coming every day, the building and dedication of the third *Beis Hamikdosh* and the lighting of the Menorah by Aaron the High Priest, which will occur with the true and complete Redemption by our righteous Moshiach.

...Similarly with respect to the Torah reading of the Shabbos of Chanukah. During the Torah reading, as soon as a Jew hears and comprehends the word "*Mikeitz* - the End," he exclaims, "Aha! This is an allusion to the end of exile, referred to as the "end of days - *Kaitz Hayamim*" [spelled with a final mem which connotes the end of exile], as well as "the end of days - *Kaitz Hayamin*" [spelled as it is in the end of the book of Daniel, with a final nun<sup>3</sup> which connotes] the deadline for the Redemption!

And afterwards, when one reads or hears the Haftorah (the selection of the prophets read weekly after the Torah reading) which states, "I beheld the Menorah, entirely of gold,"<sup>4</sup> one senses immediately a reference to the future Redemption!<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, upon reading about the *Nesi'im* [princes] and the *Nasi* [prince] of the tribe of Reuvein [Jacob's first born son] in particular, a Jew is reminded forthwith of the true and complete Redemption, at which time all the *Nesi'im* will be present, and the status of the Jewish People as the "first born child" of the whole world will be manifest.

Moreover, the fourth light of Chanukah, is an immediate reminder of the "fourth [and final] Redemption," when the most complete G-dly manifestations will extend to all four directions of the world.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz,  
Shabbos Chanukkah, 5751)*

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3. See *Or HaTorah*, beginning of our Parsha. See also above p. 20 for further references.

4. *Zecharya* 4:2.

5. *Midrash* cited in *Likkutei Torah, Be'ha'aloscha* 34, end side b.

The revelation of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus began with the Alter Rebbe on the 19th of Kislev and continued and increased with greater strength and greater vigor through all seven generations of its leaders. This includes in particular the founding of the Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim, the soldiers of the House of Dovid who go out to the wars of the House of Dovid to be victorious over those "who revile the footsteps of your Moshiach"<sup>1</sup> and to bring into reality the revelation of Dovid King Moshiach.<sup>2</sup> The revelation comes to its fulfillment in our generation, which has already completed all the requirements, and the only thing necessary is "to open the eyes" and to see that "Behold he (the King Moshiach) comes."<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

From this we can derive a practical lesson:

In addition to this generation being the last generation of exile, the end of the exile, it is also the first generation of Redemption, the beginning of Redemption. We therefore find ourselves at an auspicious time connected to the Redemption. There should be a daily increase (connected to the lesson of Chanukah,<sup>4</sup> that "from here on continuously increase"<sup>5</sup>) in matters that bring the Redemption into reality and into the open.

1. *Tehillim* 89:52.

2. See *Sichos Simchas Torah* 5661 - *Likkutei Dibburim* vol. 4, 787b and ff. *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, end of p. 141 ff.

3. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.

4. And in a continuing manner also after Chanukah, since "increase in holiness and (certainly) don't decrease" (*Shabbos* 21b).

5. *Shabbos* 21b. *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* Section 671, section 2. [*This is a reference to the increase in light during the days of Chanukah, lighting one candle the first night, two candles the second, etc. Translator's note.*]

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

Among them:

One must strengthen one's belief in, longing for and anticipation of the coming of Moshiach, to such an extent that as long as our righteous Moshiach has not yet come in reality and openly, one feels his life is lacking. As Yaakov said, even one hundred and thirty seven years were "few"<sup>6</sup> because the Redemption had not yet actually come.

Further and fundamental:

One must increase in learning and spreading the inner teachings of the Torah (and Torah in general is Yaakov's function), oil (secrets of the secrets) of the Torah, in a way that they light "from the opening of the house on the outside,"<sup>7</sup> "your wellsprings will spread outward,"<sup>8</sup> "until the Tarmudites leave the market."<sup>9</sup>

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, Shabbos (6th of) Chanukah, Evening Rosh Chodesh Teves 5752)*

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6. *Vayigash* 47:9.

7. *Shabbos*, *ibid.*

8. *Mishlei* 5:16.

9. *Shabbos*, *ibid.* [This is a reference to the passage in the Talmud that discusses the latest time for kindling the Chanukah lights; the rabbis declare this to be when the Tarmudite merchants would leave the market and no one else would remain outside. Chassidus explains that the word "Tarmud" (the name of a nation) rearranged spells "Moreds," rebel. Metaphorically this means that we will bring light to the outside to the extent of removing all resistance to the Divine. Translator's note.]

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Reb Asher Zelig (George) ben Reb Baruch ע"ה Weiss

Passed away on 30 Kislev, First day of Rosh Chodesh Tevet, 5781

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF HIS WIFE - שתבלחט"א -

Mrs. Gittel (Gisele) bas Malka שחח'י Weiss

May she go from strength to strength  
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

\*

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