

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

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Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
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 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** תח"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

VAYIGASH

ויגש

A

I. Our sages state that the words 'And Judah *stepped near*'^a signify that Judah was ready for anything, even to do battle.¹ Subsequently Scripture explains that Judah championed the cause of Benjamin so intensely 'because your servant became surety for the lad.'^b That is why he was prepared even for battle.

The immediate question is, how could Judah justify a battle against Joseph^c when he and his brethren were only a few while Joseph, as ruler, had all of Egypt under him?

To be sure, Judah was mighty, but Joseph and his sons were even stronger. Thus the Midrash² relates that when Judah and his brethren stamped on the ground and all of Egypt shook, Joseph, too, showed a feat of strength which made Judah exclaim 'He is stronger than I!' How, then, could he justify a battle?

However, as Judah had assumed responsibility to restore Benjamin to his father Jacob, it was not enough that all his other brothers would remain intact; his sense of responsibility compelled him to jeopardize himself for the sake of a single Jewish child.

II. This offers moral instruction for every father and mother charged by the Almighty with responsibility for every one of their children. They must have *mesirat*

a. [Genesis 44:18.]

1. *Bereishit Rabba* 93:6.

b. [Genesis 44:32.]

c. [Thus exposing himself and his brothers to danger.]

2. *Bereishit Rabba* 93:7.

nefesh, total and absolute devotion and concern, for even a single child to preclude all those things which should not happen to a Jewish child.

Mesirat nefesh for the pure, unadulterated education of our boys and girls leads to the conclusion of the *sidrah*: 'And they were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.'^d

(From the Sicha of Shabbat Parshat Vayigash 5711)

B

III. Commenting on the verse 'And [Jacob] sent Judah . . . before him to Goshen *lehorot*,^e Rashi quotes a Midrash^f to explain that *lehorot* means 'to establish before him . . . a house of study from which *hora'ah* (instruction) shall issue forth.'

When the Almighty told Jacob to go to Egypt, Jacob first ('before him') ensured the presence of Yeshivot. The Almighty had promised to be with him — 'I will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also surely bring you up again'^g — yet Jacob endeavored beforehand to prepare Yeshivot; only then did he go there, for Yeshivot are the foundation and mainstay of Jews.

The Yeshivot established by Jacob existed throughout the whole period that the Jews were in Egypt, as our sages said:³ "Our ancestors never were without a Yeshivah. When they were in Egypt they had a Yeshivah with them, as it is said⁴ 'Go and gather the elders of Israel.' "

In all times and places where Jews lived, even in the terribly harsh exile of Egypt, there were Yeshivot in

d. [Genesis 47:27.]

e. [Genesis 46:28.]

f. [*Bereishit Rabba* 95:3.]

g. [Genesis 46:4.]

3. *Yoma* 28b.

4. Exodus 3:16.

which Torah was studied; for, as it is said, Yeshivot are the life of the Jewish people.

IV. The Egyptian exile was the most severe of all exiles, including the present one, for several reasons:

(a) The Egyptian exile was prior to the Giving of the Torah. Torah was studied then also, as evident from numerous statements of our sages (including the one just mentioned — 'Our ancestors never were without a Yeshivah'). However, Torah was then studied only to the extent of man's natural ability. Regardless of the heights reached, personal ability can never transcend the root of created beings.⁵

(b) The Egyptian exile was the first in Jewish history, and thus the most difficult to bear. Take, for example, the case of a recurring misfortune, Heaven forbid: the first time it is very difficult to bear, but if it happens again it is no longer quite so difficult because one has already been somewhat conditioned by it.

(c) In Egypt all Jews were together. In the later exiles 'The Holy One, blessed is He, showed mercy to Israel by scattering them among the nations.'⁶ When the Jews are scattered over different places they may have a respite in one place and extend help to those persecuted elsewhere. In Egypt, however, all Jews were in one location and under the same regime.

(d) Egypt was a particularly oppressive country from which 'no slave had ever been able to escape [because the land was closed in on all sides]';⁷ yet six hundred thousand in number — excluding the women and children — had to be released.

5. See *supra*, *Chaye Sarah* — E, sect. XVI.

6. *Pessachim* 87b.

7. *Mechilta* [Yitro, *Amalek*: end of ch. 1; cf. *Zohar* III:212a]; Rashi on Exodus 18:9.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties they were never without a Yeshivah. There always were Yeshivot in which Torah was studied.

V. The Torah is not a history-text. Every subject and episode, every letter of the Torah, offers direction for all times and places.

Some claim that this is not a time for Yeshivot. In these difficult times a Talmud Torah is quite sufficient. If Yeshivot are essential, then certainly not of the sort of the days bygone, etc.

The Egyptian exile thus instructs us: Conditions in Egypt were far more difficult than those at present but were disregarded nonetheless and Torah was studied. Moreover, they disregarded not only the severe conditions of the exile but also the potential heights to which the study of Torah would take them — whether to the root of created entities or beyond.^h Nowadays, then, when the *galut* is nowhere as severe, and the study of Torah is much more sublime, all calculations must be set aside and there must be Yeshivot!

VI. The same applies to supporting Yeshivot. There are those who claim that conditions are 'tight' in the head and 'tight' in the pocket; when conditions will improve and they will be much more comfortable, they will support a Yeshivah, and perhaps manifest *mesirat nefesh* by sending their own children to the Yeshivah — up to the age of thirteen . . .

These people must be told: In Egypt the *galut* was far worse. There our ancestors did not have even stubble for bricks and had to wander through a foreign land to search for it while Pharaoh's taskmasters stood over them

^h. [They were indifferent to the fact — stated above, beginning of section IV (and reference given in note 5) — that they would reach only a limited level by means of their Torah-study.]

lashing out with their whips. Nonetheless: there was no straw, but they had Yeshivot!

VII. The *Gemara*⁸ discusses whether it is worse to pass a place of blatant immorality or of idol-worship. It would seem that passing a place of immoral conduct is harmful because the visual experience may later arouse undesirable thoughts even if at the time of perception there were no improper thoughts.⁹ But what could be wrong with passing by a place of idol-worship? The argument of a harmful visual experience does not apply, because there is only the perception of wood and stone. In fact, however, everything has an effect on its environment. The very presence of impurityⁱ permeates the environment with impurity which, in turn, may have an adverse effect on the person.¹⁰

What am I trying to say?

The prevalent atmosphere and attitude that the present is not a time for Yeshivot has affected even some Yeshivah-students.

Some students argue that it is difficult to study properly because they must first assure themselves of a livelihood. They will eventually attain marriageable age and will find a suitable bride, become engaged and marry, and then — in a joyous and blessed time — they will have children. They worry now already how to support the children with which the Almighty will bless them in due time, and this prevents them from studying in peace. Moreover, they are already concerned about an estate to bequeath their children after passing on. Now, obviously,

8. *Avodah Zara* 17a.

9. *Zavim* II:2. See also *Kuntres Ha'avodah*, ch. 2.

i. [I.e., the idol-worship.]

10. On the effects of the atmosphere see also *Hayom Yom*, p. 10; *Kovetz Lubavitch* I:4, p. 63.

[Cf. *supra*, Bereishit, note b.]

with an attitude like this they are already — in mind, at least — out in the street searching for a livelihood.

From where do such thoughts enter the minds of Yeshivah-students? From the atmosphere of their environment. The *Rebbe*, my father-in-law, said that the ice [in America] has already begun to melt.¹¹ Nonetheless, there is a vast difference between the ice melting and having come to a boiling point by 'the Eternal your G-d is a consuming fire.'¹¹ Moreover, there still are some remnants from the previous condition [of 'iciness' and negativity], and the type of students mentioned in effect reach out to join those remnants.

VIII. It must be said in their favor that the environment is at fault. Even so, this is not really a proper excuse. We can learn about this from the Egyptian exile:

The Egyptian *galut* was so severe and oppressive that the very thought of redemption was not even considered. Even when Moses proclaimed the redemption 'they did not listen to Moses because of shortness of spirit and harsh servitude.'¹² Nonetheless, even before Moses proclaimed the Divine assurance of 'I have surely remembered you'^k they did not make calculations about the future but 'sat' in Yeshivot and studied. How much less then should such concerns be considered today! One must learn Torah without calculating the future.

This is especially true nowadays when man's task is much easier than then. For of the 288 'sparks' which fell, two-hundred-and-two have already been extracted and refined, as it is said 'And *erev rav* (a mixed multitude),

j. [I.e., the indifference or altogether negative attitude towards the Torah way of life, so prevalent in the earlier part of this century, is no longer as intense as it was.]

11. Deuteronomy 4:24.

12. Exodus 6:9.

k. [Exodus 3:16]

l. [Exodus 12:38]

too, went up with them.'¹³ Thus there remained but eighty-six more 'sparks' [in the numerical equivalent of the Divine name *E-lohim*], and many of these, too, have already been extracted in the course of time with much Jewish sweat and blood. Hence there remain now but a few 'small jars.'^m

It is obvious, then, that the present-day *avodah* is much easier, for two reasons: (a) There is but little that still needs to be 'refined;' and (b) the 'sparks' already extracted add their support to this end.

(From the Sicha of Shabbat Parshat Shemot 5713)

13. *Torah Or*, Bo, p. 60c.

[Reference is made here to the mystical concept of *shevirat hakeilim* (the 'Breaking of the Vessels'); for a detailed explanation of this important doctrine see my *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, chapters VII and XI. Of immediate relevance here is the idea that at the time of creation there were 288 general 'sparks of Divinity' which were, so to speak, 'imprisoned' or 'exiled' in creation. It is the purpose of man to refine creation by 'extracting' (thus freeing) these sparks. When all the sparks shall have been disencumbered, the Messianic era is ushered in. Now, of these 288 general sparks, 202 were extracted by the time of the exodus. This is alluded to in the verse '*erev rav* — a mixed multitude *went up with them*': the numerical equivalent of *rav* is 202 Cf. *Kanfei Yonah*, cited in *Yalkut Re'ubeni*, Yitro, on Exodus 19:3]

m. [See above, Chaye Sarah, note 19*.]

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The Announcement Of The Redemption

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"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt"¹ alludes to the time of exile. Even then, a Jew can be the master of the world, "the lord of the land."² We thus receive governmental assistance in the manner depicted in the Torah: "The best of the land of Egypt is yours."³ Among the explanations why this paradoxical phenomenon is most pronounced in **this generation**, one can offer the following:

Since our generation is the last generation of exile and the first of Redemption, preparing for the transformation of the exile into Redemption is emphasized through a "taste" of what is to come, now in the days of exile. Thus, as we stand at the very **end** of exile, we can experience the state of "And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt." The closer we get to the transformation of the exile - with the advent of the true and complete Redemption - this condition increasingly intensifies.

...This is particularly true in the "Year of Miracles" (5750) and the Year of "I Will Show Him Wonders" (5751). And, indeed, we have vividly beheld miracles and wonders in the most recent period. This includes - and relates specifically - to the change in attitude of a "super power," the former Soviet Union,⁴ inducing it to aid and facilitate the emergence of the Jewish people from distress to freedom, so that even in the Land of Egypt (in the last moments of exile) they should experience the state of "And Jacob lived."

And all this is happening because we are now situated, literally, so close to the true and complete redemption, through our righteous

1. *VaYechi*, 47:28.

2. *Miketz*, 42:30,33.

3. *VaYigash*, 45:20.

4. [*"That country" in the original. Translator's note.*]

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Redeemer. In the words of David, the Anointed King, "The sweetener of the songs of Israel," in Psalm 89: "I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to My servant David,⁵ I have anointed him with My holy oil,"⁶ through the conclusion of the Psalm, "Blessed is G-d forever, Amen v'Amen." [And as commentators explains the reason for King David's gratitude:] "He saw... the coming of Moshiach, he therefore gave thanks to Hashem."⁷

* * *

One of the essential components of the future true and complete Redemption is the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash (the Third Temple which will supersede the *Mishkan* [Tabernacle], as well as the first and second Temples), the "Sanctuary⁸ of G-d, the workings of Your hands." One should thus intensify those "actions and deeds" which are **analogous** to and a **preparation** for the building of the Holy Temple, by building new **homes** (or, by adding on to and strengthening existing) - **homes** for all three modes of Divine service: Torah, Tefillah (prayer) and acts of loving kindness.

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas VaYigash, 5 Teves, 5751)

5. Verse 4.

6. Verse 21.

7. *Even Ezra*, loc. cit.

8. *Beshalach*, 15:17.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

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As mentioned many times recently, according to the announcement of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, all the preparations for the Redemption have already been completed, and now the Redemption just requires to be drawn into the material and coarseness of the world (a coarseness that is converted into the material), and revealed to the physical eye.

...Now one need only open the eyes, to see that the whole world demands that every Jew stand in the condition and situation of the true and complete Redemption.

It may be said that this is the reason why we see today that Jews can maintain their Judaism with great strength and mastery also over the nations of the world - for it all depends on their will. We are immediately prior to the Redemption, when it will become actually revealed that "And Dovid my servant will be the leader over them forever,"¹ "And the nations will know that I am the L-rd."² This is reflected in the actual situation of our generation, which is a preparation for the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

Further, this is also indicated in "And Yehuda approached him." Together with the assistance from the power of the Divine service of the Yosef of our generation (my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation) we also possess the power of "And Yehuda approached him," i.e., Moshiach, who will actually come imminently, when "And Dovid my servant will be the leader over them forever." This comes through the support of and infusion of

1. *Yechezkel* 37:25.

2. *Ibid*, 28.

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strength from Yosef (of our generation), "you are like Pharaoh,"³ (the pharaoh of holiness), that "through him all the lights are uncovered and revealed."⁴

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayigash, 7 Teves 5752)

3. Our Parsha 44:18.

4. *Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 210a. [*The word Pharaoh can be translated as "revealed." Translator's note.*]

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb **Ariel Leib** ben Reb **Chaim** ע"ה **Milner**
Passed away on 27 Shevat, 5779

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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Reb Yitzchok (Isadore) ben Reb Nochum Tzvi ע"ה Plotkin

Passed away on 19 Shevat, 5765

Mrs. Yenta (Yetta) bas Reb Nochum ע"ה Plotkin

Passed away on 11 Tevet, 5764

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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