

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb **Mordechai** ben Reb **Yosef HaKohen** ע"ה **Caplan**
On the occasion of his 25th yahrtzeit, 15 Tevet, 5779

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Vayechi, 5779
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
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 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
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 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
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 ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיו
Shagalov

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR PARENTS
 Mr. **Tzvi Hirsh** ben Reb **Yitzchok** ע"ה **Greenberg**
 Passed away on 19 Elul, 5771
 Mrs. **Chava** bas Reb **Chaim** ע"ה **Greenberg**
 Passed away on 25 Mar-Cheshvan, 5771
 ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
 *

DEDICATED BY THEIR CHILDREN שיחיו
 * * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR PARENTS
 Mr. **Meyer** ben Reb **Hershel** ע"ה **Berger**
 Passed away on 28 Iyar, 5772
 Mrs. **Faige** bas Reb **Reuven** ע"ה **Berger**
 Passed away on 22 Adar, 5766
 ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
 *

DEDICATED BY THEIR CHILDREN
 Mr. & Mrs. **Yaakov** and **Chana** שיחיו **Greenberg**

Our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, as proclaimed and announced by my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, the Yosef of our generation (named after the first Yosef who proclaimed and announced that "G-d will surely remember you and bring you up from this land to the land that was sworn to Avraham, to Yitzchak and the Yaakov"1). For all our deeds and Divine service have already been completed, all appointed times have already passed, teshuvah has already been done, and all the preparations have already been finished In a manner of "great preparation," all is ready for the festive meal2 of the time to come, Livyosan, Shor Habor3 and Yayin Meshumar.4

(From the talk of the 10th of Teves (may it be transformed into rejoicing), and Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 14 Teves 5752)

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 VI: *Bereishis*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

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1. Our Parsha 50:24.
 2. Based on the expression of our Sages, of blessed memory - Avos, chapter 3, Mishneh 16. Sanhedrin 38a and Rashi's commentary.
 3. See *Bava Basra* 75a. And *Vayikra Rabba* chapter 13:3.
 4. *Brochos* 34:b. See there for cross references.

VAYECHI

SEEING THE SPIRITUAL MIRRORED IN THE PHYSICAL

The conclusion of *Parshas Vayechi* relates that Yosef communicated the message of redemption to the Jewish people, telling them:¹ “G-d will surely remember you, and will bring you out of this land.” This shows that not only was Yosef the cause of the descent to Egypt, he was also the initiator of the exodus. Yaakov and his sons came to Egypt because of Yosef, and it was he who gave the promise and the sign for the redemption.² Moreover, this sign was more than a mere symbol; it empowered the Jews³ to proceed until the time when “[G-d]... will bring you out of this land.”

The connection between Yosef and the Egyptian exile and exodus can be explained by noting the unique quality Yosef possessed. Indeed, with regard to certain matters, Yosef possessed an advantage not only in relation to his brothers, but also in relation to Yaakov, his father.

Because Yosef possessed this spiritual advantage,⁴ he was granted a higher position with regard to material matters, serving as a ruler, and Yaakov and Yosef's brothers bowed down to him, as he had foreseen. The brothers bowed to Yosef several times,⁵ and Yaakov bowed to him once, as the

1. Bereishis 50:24.

2. Targum Yonason to Bereishis, *ibid.*; Midrash Tanchuma, *Shmos*, sec. 24.

3. See the maamar entitled *Lech*, 5627.

4. See *Toras Chayim, Vayechi*, 103b. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Vayigash* in this series, and the sources cited there.

5. Five times (*Bereishis Rabbah* 84:10).

king"¹¹ has acquired an exclusively **positive** connotation, one that is **visibly and manifestly good, even to eyes of flesh**. In the words of our sages:¹² The Holy One Blessed be He says to Israel, "My children have no fear. All that I have done¹³ I have done exclusively for you... the time of your Redemption has arrived."

The emphasis of this generation - particularly this year, the year designated as "It shall be a year of wonders I will show him" - should be placed on the concept of G-d's support of those who have fallen,¹⁴ to strengthen and encourage the Jewish people, emphasizing particularly the support and encouragement acquired through faith in the coming of Moshiach and the implicit trust that "behold he (our righteous Moshiach) is coming."¹⁵ This should be accompanied with enhanced preparation for his arrival by way of teshuvah [repentance, return] and observance of Torah and mitzvos. In the words of the pronouncement of my sainted father-in-law - the leader of our generation: "immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption."¹⁶ "Return, O, Israel, unto G-d your G-d; prepare yourselves and your family to greet our righteous Moshiach, who shall arrive soon, in the most literal sense."¹⁷

*(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vayechi
(and Asara b'Teves, may it be transformed into joy) 5751)*

11. *Yechezkal* 24:2.

12. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu* 499.

13. This includes the efforts of the Babylonian King, who is merely an ax in the hands of the one who chops with it. [i.e. He is G-d's instrument.]

14. [The phrase *סומך נופלים* - "supports the falling" - is similar to the expression mentioned before - *סמך מלך בבל* - the Babylonian King besieged," which the Rebbe interpreted in a positive vein to mean that "he supported." Translator's note.]

15. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (2:8(b)).

16. In his *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, end of p. 361 ff., 377 ff., 408 ff. and in other places.

17. *Hayom Yom* - 15 Teves.

were previously a perfectly wicked person, she is betrothed, for perhaps he had a thought of teshuvah."

Considering the above, it is with utmost certainty that our righteous Moshiach must arrive **here and now, immediately, [mamosh] in the most literal sense.**

Now, this exercise of finding merit⁷ in and of itself should suffice to bring about the Redemption. Moreover, in addition to the finding of merit, the imminence of Moshiach's arrival constitutes a **definitive ruling issued by many rabbis and halachic authorities.** Further, since Torah "is not in heaven,"⁸ this ruling issued by the earthly courts "obligates," so to speak, and affords a unique privilege to, the heavenly courts. **And so it will be confirmed!**

* * *

In our day and age, after G-d has vented His rage with the destruction of the Holy Temple, and after all of "our deeds and actions throughout the duration of exile,"⁹ and after all the decrees of oppression and persecution - may Hashem, indeed, shield us and protect us from them - the Jewish people have endured throughout the protracted and arduous final exile, particularly the Holocaust of the very last generation, the process of refinement and purification has, without any doubt, been achieved in full, "enough and even too much." Consequently, the [current¹⁰] "siege of the Babylonian

7. [i.e., that we have already passed all the deadlines as well as satisfying the condition of Teshuvah. Translator's note.]

8. Netzavim, 30:12. See Bava Metzia 59b.

9. Tanya, beginning of chapter 37.

10. [The Hebrew term *Samach*, which means "besieged," can also be rendered "supported." This talk was delivered on the fast day *Asara b'Teves* (the Tenth of the month of Teves), the anniversary of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king. The Rebbe here is alluding to the threats of the modern day Babylonian dictator, which are actually the events which serve as preludes to the Redemption. Translator's note.]

beginning of this week's Torah reading states:⁶ "And Yisrael bowed down from the head of the bed."

Everything which takes place on the material plane has its source in the spiritual realms. This is particularly true with regard to the events which occurred to the Patriarchs and Yaakov's sons, whose entire lives focused on spiritual truth. As the Alter Rebbe writes in *Tanya*:⁷ "A *tzaddik's* life is not physical life, but rather spiritual life, [as expressed in] faith, awe [of G-d], and love [of Him]." As such, everything which happened to Yaakov and his sons had a spiritual source. Thus their bowing down to Yosef stemmed from the fact that he operated at a higher spiritual level than they.

YOSEF'S UNIQUENESS

Chassidus describes Yosef's advantage. The Patriarchs and Yaakov's sons were shepherds, living apart from the pressures of material concerns so that they would not interfere with their Divine service. Yosef, by contrast, served as a viceroy, a task which involved many time-consuming activities. Moreover, he held this office in Egypt, a land described as "the nakedness of the earth."⁸ Nevertheless, this did not prevent Yosef from clinging to G-d in a perfect bond.

This explains why "Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him."⁹ Yosef's brothers could not conceive that Yosef *HaTzaddik* could possibly be the viceroy of Egypt. According to their conception of Divine service, involvement in worldly affairs and closeness to G-d were mutually exclusive. Thus the phrase "they did not recognize him," can be interpreted to mean that they had no appreciation of the lofty level at which Yosef functioned.

6. Bereishis 47:21.

7. Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 27.

8. Bereishis 42:9; see *Koheles Rabbah* 1:4.

9. *Ibid.*:8. See *Toras Chayim*, Vayechi, p. 104d; *Torah Or*, p. 103b.

BESURAS HAGEULO The Announcement Of The Redemption

11

On this basis, we can also appreciate the interpretation of the verse:¹⁰ “This is the posterity of Yaakov. Yosef...” It is Yosef who draws the spiritual influence of Yaakov into the lower realms. Yaakov functioned in the realm of *Atzilus*. Yosef transferred this influence to the worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, and more specifically into our material world.

Yosef was the one able to accomplish this, because with regard to this task, he was on a higher spiritual level than Yaakov. For this reason, he was able to communicate with the lower levels, as it is said:¹¹ “It is that which is on the highest levels which can descend to the lowest levels.”

The above does not represent a contradiction to the fact that¹² “Only three [Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov] are referred to as forefathers.” For each of the forefathers endows every one of the Jewish people with a particular G-dly quality. Avraham endowed the attribute of *Chesed* (kindness); Yitzchak, *Gevurah* (might); and Yaakov, *Tiferes* (beauty), which relates to the attribute of mercy.

Yosef, by contrast, did not draw down any new influence. He represented “the posterity of Yaakov,” and served to bring Yaakov’s spiritual influence into our world. Yaakov was “the chosen of the Patriarchs,”¹³ for the quality he personified, *Tiferes*, reflects the middle vector which mediates between *Chesed* and *Gevurah* and includes them both.

But Yaakov’s lofty potential, acting alone, could not be revealed in this lowly world. Such revelation required Yosef, for in this regard he was on an even higher spiritual rung.

With respect to Gideon, we find that: "In his days¹ the Jewish people were in distress. The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought a person who would find merit in them. When He found Gideon to be meritorious, because he found merit in them, an angel immediately appeared to him, as it says: "And the angel of G-d appeared to him and said to him, 'Go with this power, with **the power of the merit you have found in my children.**'" "Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, it is within your capacity to find a defense for Israel. **In your merit they shall be redeemed.**"²

...The merit which will hasten the Redemption is the following:

Even in the Talmudic era it has been said that "all the deadlines have passed."³ Certainly now that we have endured a lengthy and arduous exile, the duration of which has exceeded 1,900 years, **and he has still not arrived...** And in regard to Teshuvah ("It depends only on Teshuvah³) [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption], they have already done Teshuvah. Indeed, there is no Jewish person who has not entertained a thought of Teshuvah, (not just once, but) several times in the course of his lifetime. This [thought of Teshuvah] can transform "instantaneously"⁴ a perfectly wicked person into a perfectly righteous individual, in accordance with the Talmudic ruling⁵ that one who would betroth a woman "stipulating that I am a (perfectly⁶) righteous individual, even if he

10. *Bereishis* 37:2. See *Biurei HaZohar, Parshas Vayechi* (30a ff); the *maamar* entitled *Ben Poras Yosef, Or HaTorah* 386a.

11. See *Shaarei Orach*, the *maamar* entitled, *Yaviu Levush HaMalchus*, ch. 12ff, and ch. 32ff.

12. *Berachos* 16b; see the explanation in *Torah Or*, the beginning of *Parshas Vayeira*.

13. *Shaar HaPesukim, Toldos* 27:25. See also *Bereishis Rabbah* 76:1; *Zohar*, Vol. I, pgs. 119b, 147b. See also the sources mentioned in the *sichah* of *Parshas Vayetzai* in this series.

1. *Tanchuma, Shoftim* 4.

2. *Yalkut Shimoni, Shoftim* 62.

3. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

4. *Zohar* I, 129, end side a.

5. *Kiddushin* 49b. Rambam, *Hilchos Ishus*, 8:5. *Tur, Shulchan Aruch, Even HoEzer*, 38:31.

6. Based on the version cited on *Or Zarua* 112.

THE POWER TO FREET MASHIACH

With regard to the future redemption, it is written:⁵⁸ “As in the days of your exodus from Egypt, I will show you wonders,” establishing a parallel between the two redemptions. Accordingly, like the Jews in Egypt, our Divine service in these final stages of the exile is to elevate the remaining sparks of holiness which have fallen to very low levels.

We derive the potential to reach these levels from the Rebbe, the leader of our generation. For the Rebbe’s Divine service was characterized by the principle: “It is that which is on the highest levels which can descend to the lowest levels.”

This is also what is demanded of us in our Divine service, for “the body follows the head.” Our Divine service involves taking the deepest spiritual truths, the mystical secrets of the Torah, and disseminating them to the ends of the earth, following the directive given to the Baal Shem Tov by *Mashiach*:⁵⁹ “When your wellsprings spread outward...”

Through these efforts, even the lowest sparks of holiness will be elevated, and this will bring about *Mashiach*’s coming, here in this world. May this take place in the immediate future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Rosh Chodesh Kislev*, 5712;
Sichos Acharon Shel Pesach, 5721)



58. *Michah* 7:15.

59. See the letter sent by the Baal Shem Tov to his brother-in-law, R. Gershon Kivover, published at the beginning of *Kesser Shem Tov*.

THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE DIVINE SERVICE OF THE PATRIARCHS AND YOSEF ON THE ONE HAND AND THE THREE PILGRIMAGE HOLIDAYS AND SHEMINI ATZERES ON THE OTHER

On this basis, we can understand the statement of the *Zohar*¹⁴ that the three pilgrimage festivals correspond to the three Patriarchs. Pesach corresponds to Avraham, who gave the command:¹⁵ “Knead [a dough] and make cakes [of *matzah*].” Shavuot corresponds to Yitzchak, for Shavuot commemorates the Giving of the Torah, associated with the call of the *shofar*,¹⁶ which shares a connection with the ram of Yitzchak.¹⁷ And Sukkos corresponds to Yaakov, of whom it is said:¹⁸ “And he made *sukkos* (‘booths’) for his herds.” This is the first time the word *sukkos* is mentioned in the Torah.

Shemini Atzeres corresponds to Yosef,¹⁹ “the posterity of Yaakov,” just as Shemini Atzeres is a continuation of the holiday of Sukkos.

With regard to Shemini Atzeres, we find a contradiction. On the one hand, it is considered a festival in its own right.²⁰ As such, we recite the blessing *Shehechyanu* on Shemini Atzeres, in contrast to the seventh day of Pesach, when this blessing is not recited, for the seventh day of Pesach is not a separate holiday. And yet the very name *Shemini Atzeres*, lit. “the assembly of the eighth day,” implies that it is a continuation of the holiday of Sukkos.

14. Vol. III, p. 257b. See also *Menoras HaMeor* (from R. Yonah Alnakava), Vol. II, *Hilchos Rosh Chodesh* in the name of R. Yehudah, the son of Rabbeinu Asher.

15. *Bereishis* 18:6.

16. *Shmos* 19:19.

17. *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 31, cited by *Rashi*, *Shmos* 19:13; *Midrash Aggadah*, *Bereishis* 22:13. See also the *maamar Shuvah*, 5641, in the series of *maamarim* entitled *Yonasi*, 5640.

18. *Bereishis* 33:17.

19. See *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 208b.

20. *Sukkah* 48a.

The explanation is that the connection between Shemini Atzeres and Sukkos parallels that between Yosef and Yaakov. Yosef is an extension of Yaakov; his contribution represents the transmission of Yaakov's influence into the lower realms. The ability to transmit this influence, however, is something which Yaakov himself does not possess. Similarly with regard to Shemini Atzeres, this holiday internalizes all the influence of the holiday of Sukkos, which in turn includes the influence of Pesach and Shavuos, as the attributes of Yaakov include the attributes of Avraham and Yitzchak.

To explain: The holiday of Sukkos represents an encompassing light (*or makkif*, in Chassidic terminology), just as a *sukkah* encompasses the people who dwell within. Shemini Atzeres makes it possible to internalize the influences of Sukkos. This is implied by the name *Atzeres*, which means "gathering in," collecting and concentrating.²¹ The fact that Shemini Atzeres makes it possible for these influences to be internalized indicates that in itself it possesses a more powerful potential. This more powerful potential permits revelations which transcend nature (and which otherwise could only be drawn into the world in an encompassing manner) to be internalized within the framework of worldly existence.

Moreover, there is another significant distinction between Shemini Atzeres and Sukkos. On Sukkos, 70 bulls would be sacrificed, corresponding to the 70 nations of the world.²² Since the influence of Sukkos is drawn down in an encompassing manner, it was possible for the gentile nations to benefit from it. Therefore 70 bulls were sacrificed to refine the 70 nations.

21. On this basis, we can appreciate the implications of the wording used by *Rashi*, *Sukkos*, *op. cit.*: "[Shemini Atzeres is] a holiday in its own right, for we do not dwell in *sukkos*." On the surface, the fact that we do not dwell in *sukkos* is merely a negative factor, indicating that it is not part of the holiday of *Sukkos*; it does not show that it is a holiday on its own. Based on the above, however, it can be explained that the intent is that we no longer dwell in *Sukkos*, but that the encompassing influence of *Sukkos* is internalized within our homes.

22. *Sukkah* 55b.

The Torah prescribes that according to natural law, when a person falls into a pit of snakes and scorpions, one may assume that he has been killed. We even accept this as evidence that he is dead with regard to granting a woman permission to remarry, because we follow the principle of *רוב*, acting on the more likely probability.⁵²

With regard to granting a woman permission to remarry, this principle is followed with restrictions. Even if the probability of a man surviving is minimal, his wife is not permitted to remarry.⁵³ As long as what is required to save the person is something other than an actual miracle,⁵⁴ i.e., a contravention of natural law, and not necessarily what people at large refer to as a miracle (such as those events for which our Sages have instituted an obligation to recite a blessing),⁵⁵ the woman is not granted permission to remarry.

Nevertheless, even when an actual miracle is required to save a person, there is a possibility that he will be saved. Nonetheless, when determining *halachah* today, we do not consider that possibility because we follow the principle of acting on the more likely probability.

The above principle did not apply with regard to Yosef, because according to many authorities, Yosef's brothers were considered as *bnei Noach*,⁵⁶ (i.e., they were not bound by the laws which governed the Jewish people after the giving of the Torah), and the principle of following the more likely probability does not apply with regard to *bnei Noach*.⁵⁷

52. *B. Basra* 23b.

53. *Tosafos*, *Bechoros* 20b. [For that reason, even if a person is lost at sea, our Sages forbade his wife from remarrying, since there is a faint chance of him surviving.]

54. See the Responsum of the Alter Rebbe cited previously.

55. See *Berachos* 54a; *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Berachos* 10:9. See also the connection of this ruling to Yosef in the *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Vayechi*, sec. 17.

56. See the beginning of the text *Parshas Derachim*.

57. See the *S'dei Chemed*, *Klallim*, *Os Gimmel* 25:20; *Peas HaSadeh*, *Klallim*, *Os Gimmel* 6:3.

people entirely. They can choose their own course of behavior.

The responsibility of free choice enables us to understand Reuven's motive in telling his brothers:⁴⁶ "Throw him into the pit... let us not lay a hand on him." Our Sages state⁴⁷ that the pit was filled with snakes and scorpions. If so, why was throwing Yosef into it better than killing him themselves? According to Torah law,⁴⁸ a person who falls into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions is considered dead. So powerful is this assumption that if witnesses testify that a man has been thrown into such a pit, his wife is allowed to marry another man. Therefore throwing Yosef into the pit was no different than killing him outright.

Reuven's conduct can, however, be explained as follows: The brothers maintained that Yosef was worthy of capital punishment.⁴⁹ Reuven, however, argued that they should not execute this sentence themselves; since they were granted free choice, it is possible that they could make a mistake. "Why kill him ourselves?" argued Reuven. "Let us leave his judgment in G-d's hands. It is possible that a miracle will occur.⁵⁰ If he is not deserving of death, the snakes and scorpions will not kill him, for they do not have free choice."⁵¹

46. *Bereishis* 37:22.

47. *Shabbos* 22a; cited by *Rashi* in his commentary to the above verse.

48. *Yevamos* 121a; *Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer* 17:29. See, however, the commentary of the *Atzei Arazim*, who notes that the standard text of the *Jerusalem Talmud* (*Yevamos* 16:3) states that such testimony is not sufficient to allow a woman to remarry. The *Atzei Arazim* explains that the *Jerusalem Talmud* differs with the *Babylonian Talmud* on this issue, and maintains that we suspect that a miracle might have occurred and the person might be saved as Yosef was saved.

49. See the commentary of the *Or HaChayim*, the *Seforno*, and others to *Bereishis* 37:20.

50. See the *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 185b, the *Jerusalem Talmud* (*loc. cit.*), *Tosafos, Yevamos* 121b, the Responsa of the Alter Rebbe, *Responsum* 28.

51. See the commentary of R. Chayim Vital and R. Moshe Cordevero to the *Zohar* (*loc. cit.:a*) as quoted in the text *Or HaChamah*. See also the commentary of the *Or HaChayim* to *Bereishis* 37:21.

On Shemini Atzeres, by contrast, only one bull and one ram were offered, pointing to the singular bond between G-d and the Jewish people, as the *Midrash* comments:²³ "This is for you alone, and not for any strangers with you." Although the influence revealed on Sukkos has already been drawn down into this world, on Shemini Atzeres it is drawn down in such a manner that no "strangers" can receive any benefit from it. A parallel to this can be seen in the Divine service of Yosef, who despite his involvement in Egyptian society, "the nakedness of the land," was able to cling to G-d in a perfect bond.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER EIGHT

There is another factor which reflects the connection between Yosef and Shemini Atzeres. One of the reasons the holiday is given the name *Shemini Atzeres* although it is "a festival in its own right" is to emphasize the significance of the number eight. For eight reflects a light that transcends the limits of the natural order, going beyond the limits of *Seder HaHishtalshelus*, the chainlike progression of spiritual worlds.²⁴

The natural order is structured in sets of seven; the number eight reflects a light that transcends these limits. This light is revealed on Shemini Atzeres. And because Shemini Atzeres is associated with a transcendent light that is not confined by any limits whatsoever, it can allow for the internalization of the spiritual influences which are so lofty that they can be revealed on Sukkos only in an encompassing manner.

We find a similar concept with regard to the *mitzvah* of circumcision, which is carried out on the eighth day of a

23. Cf. *Mishlei* 5:17. The connection of this verse to *Shemini Atzeres* is explained in the *maamarim* entitled, *BaYom HaShemini Atzeres* from 5709 and 5710.

24. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 87d. See also the *sichah* in this series for Chanukah and the sources mentioned there.

child's life. Circumcision activates the level associated with the number eight. This in turn makes it possible to draw down the highest levels of holiness — those which transcend the world (in *Kabbalistic* terminology, the level of *Kesser*²⁵ which transcends *Seder HaHishtalshelus*) — connecting them with the limb described as “*yesod*, the end of the torso.”²⁶

Through the *mitzvah* of circumcision, our physical flesh is refined and brought into an eternal bond with G-d. The level of eight which shines on Shemini Atzeres is associated with Yosef,¹⁹ who is described as “the *tzaddik*, the *yesod* of the world.”²⁷

AT THE VORTEX OF THE DYNAMIC OF REDEMPTION

On this basis, we can appreciate the connection between the Yosef and the events in Egypt. The intent of the descent into and exodus from Egypt was to gather the wealth of Egypt, i.e., to refine the sparks of holiness which were encloded in that land.²⁸ When the Jews completed this task, redemption came.

On this basis, we can understand our Sages' statement²⁹ that the redemption from the Egyptian exile came about through the merit of the blood of circumcision and the blood

25. This is reflected by the fact that the *mitzvah* of circumcision is one of the two positive commandments for which the lack of observance is punishable by *koreis*, “the soul being cut off.” *Koreis* (כרת) shares the same Hebrew letters as *Kesser* (כתר). With the exception of the Paschal sacrifice (which is connected to circumcision, as cited in note 29), there are no other positive *mitzvos* for which the lack of observance is punishable by *koreis*. The rationale is that, generally, the level of *Kesser* is too lofty to be drawn down through positive activity. Instead, it is holding back, refraining from activity, which draws down this level. The uniqueness of the *mitzvos* of circumcision and the Paschal sacrifice is that they make it possible for the light of *Kesser* to be drawn down through positive activity, and thus to be encloded within vessels.

26. *Hakdamas Tikkunei Zohar* 17a, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 125.

27. Cf. *Mishlei* 10:25.

28. See the *sichah* for *Parshas Vayigash* in this series.

29. *Mechilta*, Bo 12:6, quoted in *Rashi* on that verse.

Why then was Yosef punished for trying to make a natural vehicle to facilitate his release from prison?

The answer is that a person on Yosef's spiritual rung — united with G-dliness on the level of *sovev kol almin*, which transcends creation — does not have to rely on natural vehicles or preparations. A higher level of trust is demanded from such a person, one not at all bound by natural limits. With regard to such a level of trust, it is written:⁴³ “It is better to rely on G-d [the level of *sovev kol almin*] than to trust in man [the level of *memale kol almin*].”

UNFETTERED BY NATURE

Similarly, my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe manifested conduct which transcends the natural order. He broke through all the veiling and concealment of G-dliness which characterizes the natural order, revealing G-dliness in an overt manner, more so than any of the Rebbeim who preceded him.

This is reflected by his continued positive activities despite the fact that he was held imprisoned several times,⁴⁴ in conditions far more severe than those experienced by the previous Rebbeim. Indeed, he was actually sentenced to death. (When the Alter Rebbe was arrested, there was a danger of such a sentence, but it was never actually issued.)

Moreover, those who arrested the Rebbe and tortured him were Jews, who possessed the power of free choice. As it were, G-d had no control over their conduct, as implied by our Sages' statement:⁴⁵ “Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven.” And so, with regard to matters involving the fear of Heaven, and the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos*, G-d surrenders His control to the Jewish

43. *Tehillim* 118:2, as explained by *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 91b.

44. See *Likkutei Dibburim*, p. 609ff.

45. *Berachos* 33b.

AN ELEVATED TRUST

Because Yosef functioned on a higher spiritual plane than his brothers and even the Patriarchs — the Divine light which transcends material existence, the level of *sovev kol almin*, was revealed for him — he was required to conduct himself on a plane that transcends the natural order.

This explains³⁸ why Yosef *HaTzaddik* was punished for asking Pharaoh's butler to mention him to Pharaoh.³⁹ He should have had perfect faith and trust that G-d would redeem him from prison. Because of his lack of trust, he was forced to remain in prison for another two years.

On the surface, the question arises: What was Yosef's sin? It is well known that a person must create a vehicle within the natural order through which G-d's blessing can be expressed, and that this is not a contradiction to complete trust in G-d.

To cite a parallel: With regard to earning one's livelihood, it is written:⁴⁰ "And G-d will bless you in all that you do." In *Chassidus* it is explained⁴¹ that although the source for our success is G-d's blessing, man must still "do," i.e., create a vehicle within the natural order through which G-d's blessings can be expressed. Afterwards, he should trust that G-d will send His blessings through this vehicle.

We see this pattern reflected in the conduct of the Patriarchs. Yaakov feared his confrontation with Esav, lest "he smite me, mothers and children alike."⁴² What did he do? He prayed and trusted in G-d, but at the same time he created vehicles for salvation within the natural order, sending presents to Esav and preparing for war.

38. See *Toras Chayim*, *Vayechi* 107a, and the *maamar* entitled *Vilo Zachar Sar Ha-Mashkim*, 5688.

39. *Bereishis Rabbah* 89:3, cited by *Rashi* at the conclusion of *Parshas Vayeishev*.

40. *Devarim* 15:18.

41. See *Kuntres U'Mayon*, Discourse 25.

42. *Bereishis* 32:12.

of the Paschal sacrifice. For the intent of the *mitzvah* of circumcision is to elevate the lowest levels,³⁰ the organ which is identified with "*Yesod*, the end of the torso."

The potential to descend to the lowest levels and elevate the sparks of holiness found there comes from Yosef *HaTzaddik*. So the Egyptian exile came about because of Yosef, and he was the one who communicated the message of redemption. For he was the one who endowed the Jewish people with the strength to carry out the purpose of the exile, completing the task of refinement, and in this way preparing for the redemption.

A PARALLEL TO YOSEF HATZADDIK IN OUR DAYS

On several occasions,³¹ my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, would explain that on Sukkos, together with the seven *Ushpizen* mentioned by the *Zohar*, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov,... come the seven Chassidic *ushpizen*: the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezeritch, the Alter Rebbe, the Mittler Rebbe, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, the Rebbe Maharash, and Rebbe Rashab. On each of the seven nights of Sukkos, one of these Chassidic leaders comes as the honored guest of the day. Since my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, was the successor of these seven *nesi'im*, it can be understood that he comes on the eighth day, Shemini Atzeres.

This is also indicated by the Rebbe's first name, Yosef,³² for as our Sages explain,³³ a person's name influences his des-

30. See *Sichos Acharon Shel Pesach*, 5721, which explains that the Paschal sacrifice is also associated with the refinement of the lowest level of G-dly sparks, elevating an even crasser form of material existence than that elevated by the *mitzvah* of circumcision.

31. See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5711, p. 47.

32. There is also an allusion to the concept which follows in the second name of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, Yitzchak. For Yitzchak is numerically equivalent to 8 times 26, the numerical equivalent of the name ח-י-ח .

33. *Berachos* 7b. See *Shaar HaGilgulim*, *Hakdamah* 23, and *Sefer Chassidim*, sec. 244.

tiny. This is particularly true since the Rebbe's name was selected by *tzaddikim*, the *nesi'im* of the Jewish people.

As mentioned above, Yosef *HaTzaddik* is associated with Shemini Atzeres. The Divine service of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, paralleled that of Yosef *HaTzaddik*.³⁴ For he was able to translate all the lofty spiritual truths communicated by the previous Rebbeim into terms that could be understood by those on the lowest spiritual levels.

This was reflected in the Rebbe's efforts to disseminate the teachings of *Chassidus*, not only in *Lashon HaKodesh*, our holy tongue, and in Yiddish, but in many other languages. For his Divine service involved spreading G-dliness everywhere, even on the lowest levels.

Thus the Divine service of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, encompassed two extremes. On the one hand, he invested all his energies in spreading the deepest teachings of *Chassidus*. Simultaneously, he invested the same degree of vitality in spreading the very basics of Jewish practice, e.g., teaching Jewish children the *alef-beis*, encouraging Jews to observe the *Shabbos*, *kashrus*, and *taharas hamishpachah*.

Not only did he involve himself in these activities, he charged his chassidim to follow his example, for "the body follows the head."³⁵ He encouraged them to involve themselves in spreading proper Jewish education and the observance of the *mitzvos*, while at the same time engrossing themselves in the study of *Chassidus*. (For this purpose, the Rebbe wrote and published the deepest *maamarim* and texts of Chassidic teachings.)

This parallels the conduct of Yosef *HaTzaddik*, who involved himself with very lowly activities such as keeping account books and providing food for the Egyptians. Simul-

34. See *Sichos Simchas Torah*, 5705 (*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709), sec. 8, and 10ff.

35. *Eruvin* 41a.

taneously, he was united with G-d in a complete and perfect bond.

IN THE CITIES' HUB

The above concepts were further reflected in the fact that the Rebbe lived in large cities, as Yosef *HaTzaddik* lived in the metropolis of Egypt, despite the fact that "living in a large city is difficult,"³⁶ All the previous Rebbeim had lived in small villages — Liozna, Liadi, and Lubavitch. It is true that because of their involvement on behalf of the Jewish community, and for the welfare of certain individuals, they traveled to large cities, both in Russia and outside it, but these were temporary visits. Their permanent dwellings, by contrast, were in small cities.

Moreover, even when the Rebbe Rashab moved from Lubavitch to Rostov, a large city, Rostov was at that time cut off from the world. Furthermore, within Rostov itself, the Rebbe Rashab choose to live in the suburbs, outside the city *per se*.

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, by contrast, was involved with many different journeys from the beginning of his *nesius* on. He settled in the large cities of Moscow, Petersburg (then called Leningrad), Riga and Warsaw. As the Rebbe himself remarked:³⁷ "Lubavitch has undergone 10 exiles." This pattern continued until the Rebbe settled in New York.

In all of these large cities, the Rebbe was involved in disseminating the deep teachings of *Chassidus*, and simultaneously spreading the fundamental observance of Judaism. This follows the pattern established by Yosef *HaTzaddik*, who was united in a perfect bond with G-d while functioning as viceroy of Egypt and directing the economy of that land.

36. *Kesubos* 110b.

37. *Kuntres Beis Rabbeinu ShebeBavel*, section 6, and sources cited there (reprinted in *Sefer HaSichos* 5752, Vol. II, p. 465ff).