

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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“5776 - YEAR OF HAKHEL”

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
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
 Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov

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LIKKUTEI SICHOT

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 X: *Devarim*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

SIMCHAS TORAH

EVERY CHILD'S INHERITANCE

“The Torah which Moshe commanded us is an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov”¹ is the first verse from the Torah to which a child is introduced. As our Sages state:² “When a child... learns how to speak, his father should teach him “the Torah which Moshe commanded us.”

This verse refers to the Torah as given by Moshe, who received it at Sinai. This includes the entire Torah, for “every new insight developed by an experienced sage was given to Moshe at Sinai.”³ This applies even to the mystical insights of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* to be revealed by *Mashiach*. For there are differences with regard to the extent to which various dimensions of the Torah have been revealed. At times, the revelation has been gradual, with glimmerings revealed in an earlier age, and the full revelation coming later.

But even when revelation was delayed, what was later revealed was “the Torah which Moshe commanded us,” for the giving of the Torah will never be repeated.

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1. *Devarim* 33:4.
 2. *Sukkah* 42a; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:1. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1176.
 3. This exact wording is not found in the *Talmud*. Similar sayings are found in *Megillah* 19b; the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Peah* 2:4; *Shmos Rabbah* 47:1; *Vayikra Rabbah* 22:1; *Koheles Rabbah* 1:9, 5:8. See also the responsa of Rav David Cohen, sec. 5, *Responsum 3, Toras HaOlah*, Vol. III, ch. 55; the introduction of the *Sifsei Cohen* to his commentary on the Torah; and *Or HaTorah* by the Maggid of Mezeritch, *Parshas Toldos*; *Tanya, Kuntres Acharon*, the passage beginning *Lehavin Peratei*. [See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XIX, p. 252.]

Thus no matter how deep a Jew delves in his Torah study, he must realize that he is learning “the Torah which Moshe commanded.” And this leads to an awareness that he knows only a tiny portion of the Torah, for its essence is infinitely deep.⁴

So the question arises: How is it possible to teach — or at least allude to — such a profound concept when dealing with a young child who is just beginning his study of Torah? Generally, we begin by teaching a child easy concepts, and then proceed to more difficult ones. This pattern continues until a person grasps all the concepts which he can comprehend. At that point, he is asked to proceed to “negative understanding,” i.e., he learns to appreciate how the true content of the Torah transcends our understanding entirely, and that he can hope to fathom only a small fraction of it. As one’s understanding develops, these concepts can be taught. When a child is first able to speak, however, it seems improper to convey such deep concepts to him.

This question can be resolved as follows: The essence of the Torah transcends intellectual comprehension entirely. This essence is, however, granted as an inheritance to every Jewish soul without distinction, even to a young child.

Following an ordered progression is correct with regard to subject matter that can be grasped on a rational basis. With regard to the essence of the Torah, however, this pattern does not apply.

The essence of the Torah transcends the intellect entirely. For G-d invested Himself in the Torah. Thus by studying the Torah, a Jew acquires G-d’s essence, as it were.⁵

4. See the *sichah* for the holiday of Sukkos in this series, which mentions related concepts.

5. See *Tanya*, ch. 47, which refers to the interpretation of *Shmos* 25:2 offered by the *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 140b.

This is not a restrictive process. On the contrary, G-d has invested Himself in the Torah which every Jew studies. The nature of the subject matter is not a determinant.

Just as a person with an underdeveloped intellectual potential is incapable of grasping the essence of the Torah, so too is the most developed intellect inadequate. It is only because G-d “chose us from among the nations” that “He gave us *His* Torah.”⁶ And so G-d is to be found equally in the verses recited by a young child and the sophisticated concepts grasped by a sage, for the Torah is G-d’s essential delight. When a young child reads its words, he expresses G-d’s essence.

This is the intent of the verse: “The Torah... is the inheritance⁷ of the congregation of Yaakov.” The maturity of an heir is of no consequence; even a newborn is granted his share of an inheritance.⁸ Moreover, he assumes the position of his testator as if there was no difference between the two.⁹

So too, the Jews are G-d’s children, as it were,¹⁰ and assume G-d’s estate, for through the Torah, we acquire G-d’s essence. This is “the inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov,” i.e., even Yaakov (יַעֲקֹב) — the level of the Jewish people that relates to the heel (עֶקֶב) — has the ability to relate to G-d’s essence through the study of Torah.

WHAT WILL THE FOUNDATION BE?

Questions, nevertheless, remain: Although the essence of the Torah is manifest when a child reads it, why must the

6. The blessing recited before Torah study, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 10.

7. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 94d, and the sources mentioned there with regard to this interpretation of the Hebrew word *morashah*.

8. *Niddah* 5:3.

9. See *Bava Basra* 65a, *Zevachim* 4b. See the interpretation of these concepts by the *Tzofnas Paneach*, Vol. I, Responsum 118. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Shelach* in this series, which explains the difference between an heir and a purchaser.

10. Cf. *Devarim* 14:1.

child himself be informed of this? What would happen if this concept was communicated afterwards, when he is older and more capable of understanding? In the interim, he could be exposed to those aspects which he is capable of understanding.

The answer depends on understanding a fundamental concept. The essence of the Torah transcends rational understanding; it revolves on the awareness that it is G-d's wisdom, and that "He and His wisdom are one."¹¹ When a person does not possess such a conviction, the entire foundation of the Torah is lacking.

The realization that G-d and the Torah are one is not an additional concept necessary for comprehension of the Torah, and which can be preceded by easier concepts. It is the *essence* of the Torah. And for that reason it is taught to a child first, so that it can serve as the foundation on which his conceptual framework will be built.

All the Torah a child studies until he learns this truth will have an unstable base, for he will have become used to appreciating only the intellectual dimension of the Torah, and will find it difficult to understand that the Torah transcends the intellect entirely.

As is well known, intellect conceals those dimensions of the soul which transcend reason. Therefore, at the very beginning of a child's intellectual development, he is given a foundation of spiritual truth. Afterwards, "even when he grows older, he will not depart from it."¹² Even when he is involved in the intellectual dimensions of Torah study, his understanding will be permeated by fear of heaven and acceptance of G-d's yoke.

11. Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, 2:10; *Tanya*, ch. 2, and *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 7..

12. *Mishlei* 22:6. See the introduction to *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, in *Tanya*.

WHY THE TORAH REMAINS CLOSED DURING OUR CELEBRATIONS

It is a custom — and our Rabbis taught that Jewish custom is considered as the Torah itself¹³ — to celebrate with the Torah on Simchas Torah. We take a Torah scroll wrapped in its mantle, and dance with it around the reading platform. Since the Torah is associated with intellectual understanding, the celebrations of Simchas Torah should seemingly be associated with progress, quantitatively and qualitatively, in Torah study. And this study will lead to happiness.

Why is the very opposite done? Why is the celebration characterized by dancing with the Torah wrapped shut, so that it is impossible to study it?

It is true that one must also fulfill one's fixed quota of Torah study even on Simchas Torah. But that is because one is obligated to study Torah every day. It is not customary to make an increase in Torah study on Simchas Torah; this is not the way the holiday is celebrated.

As explained above, the essence of the Torah transcends intellectual understanding. For this reason, even unlearned people share a connection to its holiness,¹⁴ and celebrate on Simchas Torah.

Why is the intellectual dimension of the Torah necessary? So that the Torah will permeate a person's inner dimensions, and not remain merely an encompassing light. Comprehension internalizes the transcendent bond between the essence

13. See the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Pesachim* 4:1; *Tosafos*, *Menachos* 20b, entry *nifsal* uses the expression: "The custom of our ancestors is..." See also *Minhagim Yeshanim Midura*, p. 153; *Maharil*, as quoted by the *Ramah*, *Yoreh De'ah* 376:4.

14. For this reason, even unlearned people recite a blessing before the reading of the Torah although they do not comprehend what is being read. Moreover, even with regard to the Oral Law, [where comprehension is required,] "a person should study the entire Torah, even those matters which he cannot understand" (*Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, the conclusion of ch. 2). See also *Avodah Zarah* 19a.

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of the Torah and the essence of the soul, and makes it an active part of our consciousness.

This is why on Simchas Torah we dance with the Torah wrapped in its mantle. We thus emphasize that the Torah transcends our understanding, and this becomes a source of happiness. Our happiness does not stem from the Torah's intellectual dimension, but rather from the fact that reading and studying it binds us to G-d's essence.¹⁵

We dance with our feet. The feet are identified with faith, which expresses the essence of the soul.¹⁶

Our celebration and dancing with the Torah while it is wrapped initiates our Divine service in the new year. The month of Elul — and in a different way, the unique days of Rosh HaShanah, the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, and Shemini Atzeres — are days of preparation, characterized by *teshuvah*. When does the Divine service of the new year begin? Simchas Torah.

At that time, the Jewish people are like a young child that must be educated. And that education begins in the spirit of the verse “The Torah which Moshe commanded us...,”¹⁷ emphasizing the importance of *kabbalas ol*. This lesson has an ongoing effect throughout the year. Even when we focus on the intellectual dimension of Torah study, our efforts will be permeated by faith and *kabbalas ol*.

BECOMING THE TORAH'S FEET

The above concepts also help us understand a statement made by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe. He would say that on Simchas Torah, the Torah also desires to dance

15. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1217, note 27, which states that dancing during the *hakafos* on Simchas Torah takes one beyond his personal limitations.

16. *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim*, p. 63d.

17. This verse is read during the Torah reading of Simchas Torah. See the *Sheloh*, *Cheilek Torah Shebichsav*, *Parshas Vayeishev*, which explains the interconnection between the annual cycle of Torah readings and the festivals.

around the reading platform. The Torah, however, has no feet, so the Jewish people become its feet, carrying it around the reading platform.

What is meant by becoming the feet of the Torah scroll? That the dancing on Simchas Torah expresses a Jew's commitment to accepting G-d's yoke to the extent that he is no longer an independent entity. The feet are given over to the head. As soon as the head desires something, the feet respond.¹⁸ Indeed, when the feet behave like independent entities, and hesitate before carrying out the will of the head, it is a sign of sickness.

By becoming the "feet of the Torah scroll," a Jew subsumes his identity to the Torah. He resolves to carry out its directives spontaneously, as a natural expression of who he is. And this resolve extends over the entire year to come.

There is another element to the analogy. The feet complement the head, taking it to places which it could not reach on its own.¹⁹ So too, in the Jew's relationship to the Torah, by accepting its yoke with joy, we bring it to a higher level.

This is why the plural is used in the expression "the season of our rejoicing." For just as the Jews celebrate with the Torah, the Torah celebrates with the Jews. For it is the Jews' celebration with the Torah that lifts the Torah to a higher level, and enables it to celebrate.

AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING MONTH

As mentioned above, the fundamental element of Simchas Torah is joyous dancing. Nevertheless, we connect this celebration with the reading (and thus the study) of the Torah,²⁰

18. See *Tanya*, ch. 23. See note 16 to the *sichah* for the holiday of Sukkos in this series.

19. *Likkutei Torah*, the beginning of *Parshas Nitzavim*.

20. For reciting verses of the Written Law is considered to be Torah study (see *Magen Avraham* 50:2).

for the dancing is done around the platform where the Torah is *read*. Moreover, the celebrations are introduced by reciting the verses of *Atah Horeisa*. Seemingly this is a fusion of opposites: a celebration associated with both *kabbalas ol* and Torah study.

To explain: The month of Tishrei is an all-encompassing month, generating power for our observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* during the entire year to come. Therefore, this month must include a connection with the Torah. This connection must embrace, moreover, not only the *foundation* of the Torah, *kabbalas ol* (which is expressed in joyous celebration), but also *actual study*. Thus on Simchas Torah, the foundation of *kabbalas ol* is emphasized through joyous dancing, but verses are read to link us to the actual study of the Torah.

A COMPLEMENTARY PROCESS

There is another factor. *Kabbalas ol* influences our conceptual processes. For our powers of understanding to perceive the truth, they must be based on *kabbalas ol*. For when the essence of one's being is connected to holiness, it has an effect on all the soul's powers of expression.

The connection is also complementary. Extending *kabbalas ol* into one's conceptual powers brings fulfillment to the essence of the soul.²¹ For if one's essence is expressed only in faith and *kabbalas ol*, one's personality and thinking processes remain separate from G-dliness. There is a dichotomy between what the person believes and the way he thinks. G-dliness cannot be comprehended by such a person, and can affect him only in an encompassing manner.

21. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1216, which explains the advantage of "the crown of the Torah," which relates to Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah (*Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 83a), i.e., our powers of understanding, surpass the crowns of priesthood and royalty, which relate to Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur (*ibid.*), *kabbalas ol* and our encompassing powers.

When, by contrast, a person feels at one with his faith, he is at one with G-d. His faith affects the way he thinks, and even the way in which he carries out his mundane activities.

For this reason, we associate the dancing of Simchas Torah with the reading of verses from the Torah. For the study of Torah complements and validates our Simchas Torah celebrations.²²

WHEN THE MIND IS SHAPED BY THAT WHICH IS ABOVE THE MIND

That the expression of a faith which transcends rational thought must be coupled with rational thought is made clear in the first verse recited before the *hakkafos*: “You have been shown to know that G-d is the L-rd; there is none aside from Him.”²³

“You have been shown” [every Jew has been given the power to see, and sight is a faculty beyond the power of understanding] “that G-d is the L-rd.” Moreover, the wording “you have been shown,” rather than “you saw,” indicates that this act is not dependent on the Jews’ will. Instead, they were granted the vision as a result of the essential bond between their souls and G-d.²⁴

22. In this vein, it is explained (the *maamar* entitled *LiOseh Niflaos*, 5704) that the verses recited before the *hakkafos* resemble the verses of *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos* and *Shofros* recited on Rosh HaShanah. For the intent is to draw down the essence (which is expressed through the sounding of the *shofar* and the *hakkafos*) through the medium of the Torah.

23. *Devarim* 4:35; *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 335.

24. On this basis, it is possible to resolve a seeming disparity between the simple meaning of the above verse and an interpretation offered by the Alter Rebbe (see the *maamar* entitled *Vayidaber E-lohim*, 5704, sec. 4, and the *maamar* entitled *LiOseh Niflaos* cited above).

According to the simple meaning of the verse, the pronoun “you” refers to the Jewish people. The Alter Rebbe, however, interprets it as referring to G-d’s essence. According to that understanding, the verse implies that G-d’s essence revealed itself so that we would have the ability to know Him.

These visions are “to know,” for the vision which transcends our powers of understanding must also affect our powers of knowledge. For if our powers of knowledge were to remain unaffected, it would indicate that the vision — and the oneness with G-d which is its source — is incomplete. When one is truly at one with G-d, every power and capacity is involved.²⁵

This is alluded to in the conclusion of the verses recited before the *hakkafos*: “Out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of G-d from Jerusalem.”²⁶ Zion and Jerusalem are physical places. How can they become the source for “Torah” and “the word of G-d”?

This, however, is the contribution of the Torah, that the essential vision alluded to by the phrase “You have been shown” will affect mortal intellect, and life in the material realm. Our material existence will be merely a representation (the meaning of the name *Zion*)²⁷ of G-dly truth. For in truth, material reality has no independent existence; “there is nothing aside from Him.”

This leads to Jerusalem (ירושלים), which in Hebrew is a composite of the words *ירא שלם*, meaning “complete fear.”²⁸ Material existence will be permeated by the fear of heaven, for through the Torah we will come to appreciate that even amidst physical reality, “there is nothing aside from Him.”

(Adapted from *Sichos Leil Simchas Torah*, 5722)

Based on the explanations above, the two interpretations can be fused. For our ability to have a vision of G-dliness — and for that vision to be drawn down to knowledge — comes as a result of an initiative on the part of G-d.

25. As mentioned above, the fact that a revelation remains on the level of faith and is not extended into one’s conceptual process reflects that the unity with subject of one’s belief is not complete. In this instance, however, the lack is more notable, for we are speaking of the revelation that “there is none aside from Him.” The fact that any entity exists that does not feel a bond of oneness is a direct contradiction to the truth that “there is none aside from Him.”
26. *Yeshayahu* 2:3; *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 336.
27. *Torah Or, Bereishis* 37b, 38a.
28. See *Likkutei Torah, Shmos*, p. 4a, *Devarim*, 29d; see also *Tosafos, Taanis* 16a, entry *Har*, based on *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 56.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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Our many discussion of late all indicate that we are now standing on the threshold of Redemption, when "Behold he (Moshiach) is coming"¹ and immediately thereafter, it can be read as he **has already** come.²

One can accordingly appreciate that the nature of the Jewish people's service during Simchas Torah and its extension throughout the year, particularly this year, is one that is permeated with the ideal of Redemption and Moshiach. This means, that the manner in which a Jew conducts his daily activities, even as we stand in exile immediately before the Redemption, is a sampling of and analogous to the way of life and conduct that will occur in the actual Messianic Age.

[This is also the reason for the recent emphasis on learning the "laws of Moshiach," i.e., the laws that relate to the life of a Jew in the Era of Redemption.]

One of the essential features of the future era (as stated in Tanya, cited earlier), is that we will experience fully the state expressed in the verse: "You have shown us to know that G-d is the L-rd, there is none else besides Him."³ The entire world will manifest that there is no other existence save G-d, "There is none besides Him."

The life of a Jew must also reflect a similar sense and feeling that "There is none besides Him." This means that not only should the **intent** and **objective** of all worldly matters be G-dliness, so that

1. *Shir Hashirim* 2:8 and *Shir Hashirim Rabah* on this verse.

2. [The Hebrew word "Ba" can be translated both in the present tense as well as in the past tense. Translator's note.]

3. *Va'eschanan* 4:35.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

one's service will be in a manner that "All of your deeds are for the sake of Heaven,"⁴ and "Know Him in all of your ways,"⁵ but also the worldly matters themselves are G-dliness. Although the "secular" still exists, and they remain "your deeds" and "your ways," they become infused with a holy objective. One does not even begin to "detect" any other existence, because, "there is nothing else but G-d..."

This might provide us with a rationalization for the bizarre delay of the Redemption. The reason is that Jewish people have lacked the integrity in the level of Divine service that is: "I was not created **except** for serving my maker."⁶ Only with this understanding can one attain the Redemption that will be characterized by the type of Divine service in which "there is nothing else besides Him." However, this impediment has now also been removed and "everything is (therefore) ready for the feast," a reference to the feast of the Leviathan and the Wild Ox and the preserved wine⁷ that will occur during the true and complete Redemption, imminently and in actuality.

...According to our sages,⁸ the verse, "Do not touch My **anointed ones** (Meshichoi),⁹ refers to the children who study Torah."

4. *Avos* Chapter 2, Mishneh 12. Rambam *Hilchos De'os* end of chapter 3. *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, sec. 231.

5. *Mishlei* 3:6. See Rambam and *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* there. *Shulchan Aruch, Admor Hazoken*, sec. 156, par. 2.

6. *Mishneh* and *Beraisa*, end of *Kiddushin*. This is the version in the manuscripts of the Talmud (Collection of manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud, Jerusalem, 5724) of the foregoing *Mishneh* and *Beraisa*. *Melech Shlomo* there, too, cites this version in his commentary on that *Mishneh*. See also *Yalkut Shimoni, Yirmiyahu, remez* 276.

7. See *Berachos* 34b. *Bava Basra* 75a. *Vayikra Rabbah Parsha* 13:e and in other sources.

8. *Shabbos* 119b.

9. *Divrei Hayamim* I, 16:22.

BESURAS HAGEULO

One of the explanations of this statement (in addition to those provided by the commentators) is that the education of school children has to be in a manner that the children are completely permeated and absorbed with the ideal of Moshiach. Just by looking at a Jewish child, what should one see? - Moshiach!

His entire being is "Moshiach" - i.e., the realization of "You have been shown... there is none beside Him."

...The idea is even more pronounced with respect to the school children of our generation who are called (and endorsed by Jewish leaders as) "Tzivos Hashem-the Army of G-d:"

The name Tzivos Hashem signifies that the children are totally devoted and subordinated to G-d, as (and even more than) the devotion of "soldiers" to their "general." It follows that Jewish children of our generation - boys and girls - possess in an even more revealed measure the status of Moshichoi, i.e., G-d's own anointed ones. This provides for the preparation and introduction that leads to the impending revelation of the general Moshiach of all Jews, with the true and complete Redemption.

And "As in the days that you left Egypt I shall you wonders:"¹⁰ all the "Tzivos Hashem departed from the Land of Egypt,"¹¹ so, too, the "Tzivos Hashem" of our generation will depart from the present exile to the true and complete Redemption.

(From the talks of the night of Simchas Torah before Hakofos, 5752)

10. *Michah* 7:15.

11. *Bo*, 12:41.

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