

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

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Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

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 ה. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
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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 II: *Shemot*

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In English rendition
with Introduction and Notes
by
Jacob Immanuel Schochet

A

I. The *Yerushalmi*¹ comments on the verse:^a 'This they shall give [every one that passes among them that are mustered, the half of a *shekel* . . .]': 'R. Meir said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, took a kind of fiery coin from beneath His *kisse hakavod* (Throne of Glory), showed it to Moses and said to him 'This they shall give' — i.e., like this they shall give.' For Moses was puzzled about the half-shekel and that is why G-d showed him.^b

Tossafot in *Chulin*² explains that Moses was not puzzled about what is meant by the half-shekel. He was puzzled by the Divine command: 'Every one shall give a ransom for his soul':^c how is it possible to give a 'ransom for his soul' when 'skin for skin, all that a man has he will give for his life'³ — and even then he will still not have given enough!^d

But this explanation leaves the following question: how was Moses' query about the possibility of ransoming the soul resolved by G-d showing him a fiery coin from beneath the Throne of Glory?

II. To understand this we must first consider the

1. *Shekalim* 1:4. [See also Rashi on Exodus 30:13.]

a. [Exodus 30:13]

b. [Cf. above, *Terumah*, end of sect. III; *Tetzaveh*, sect. VI; and the notes there.]

2. *Chulin* 42a, s.v. *Zot Hachayah*.

c. [Exodus 30:12]

3. Job 3:4. [See above, *Terumah*, note *jj*.]

d. [*Bamidbar Rabba* 12:3. See also *Tanchuma*, *Tissa*: 10 and 11.]

meaning of 'a coin of fire from beneath the Throne of Glory.' This concept involves three aspects: a) coin; b) fire; and c) Throne of Glory.

Coin: The *Gemara*⁴ defines coins as readily negotiable currency.

That is the difference between money and the equivalent of money. There can be differences of opinion in appraising the worth of commodities (the 'equivalent of money'). For those strongly desiring these commodities they are of great value; for those desiring them in lesser degree they are of lesser value; and there are others who may not need them at all. Coins, however, are readily negotiable currency because they have a determined value equal to all.

Fire: There is a well-known difference between fire and the other elements.^e The other elements gravitate downwards. To be sure, the element of *ru'ach* (air) does not move downward, but it remains static in its normative place among the lower spheres — 'and the *ru'ach* of G-d was hovering on the face of the waters^f and there it remained. Fire, however, ascends by its intrinsic nature to the point that one must develop means to hold the flame below and to keep it there to illuminate.⁵

Kisse hakavod (Throne of Glory): This concept divides into two: i) Throne; and ii) Glory. *Kisse* (Throne) is an idiom of *kissuy* (covering; concealment), as explained in various texts. The addendum of *kavod* (glory)

4. *Baba Metzia* 44a

e. [The term 'elements' here is not used in the narrow scientific sense of simple substances, but in the wider sense of the four basic substances of fire, air, water and earth 'from which the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world' (*Bamidbar Rabba* 14:12; *Zohar* II:24a; Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah*, end of ch. 3 and ch. 4).]

f. [Genesis 1:2]

5. See *Tanya*, ch. 19. *Bamidbar Rabba* 14:12.

[See also Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah* 3:10 and 4:2; *Moreh Nevuchim* I:72 and II:30.]

implies that the throne adds glory. For example, when a king sits on his royal throne, his glory is enhanced. It would seem, though, that these two aspects are contradictory. Glory or honor is an effect caused by some manifestation. When a king manifests his power, all are frightened and show respect or honor; but when he is hidden or concealed he does not arouse awe at all. How then can these two contradictory terms be conjoined?

The *Maggid*⁶ states that if the full intensity of the supernal brilliance were to radiate, created entities would not be able to absorb it; thus there is a need for concealment, to cover and hide the brightness. This is not a total concealment, but only of the intensity that creatures are unable to absorb.^g Thus there remains a manifestation of light which they are able to absorb, which illuminates them and causes them to glorify G-d.

This is also the meaning of a chair or throne in the simple sense. A chair is used for sitting, an act which involves self-lowering, degradation. When standing, one is higher; when sitting, one is lower. *Throne of Glory* thus signifies that G-d 'condenses' or conceals Himself (*tzimtzum*) and 'lowers' Himself to His creatures.^h

This interpretation is in fact indicated in the very letters of *kisse* — *kess aleph*:ⁱ the letter *aleph* — signifying the Light of the *En Sof*, blessed be He, the Infinite, *Alufo* (Master) of the Universe — is concealed in the *kess* (throne), and thus becomes revealed to the creatures.

This, then, is the meaning of *kisse hakavod*: a connection between the Almighty and creatures, the initial

6. *Or Torah*, Bereishit, sect. 2. See also *Torah Or*, Bereishit, p. 1b.

g. [Reference is made here to the principle of *tzimtzum* (explained in detail in *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, ch. II).]

h. [See *Torah Or*, Mishpatim, p. 77a; *Derech Mitzvotecha*, s.v. Tefilah, p. 256.]

i. [*Kess* means both concealment and throne.]

manifestation of the Light of the *En Sof* in creation. (This is also alluded in the well-known premise that the Throne of Glory is in the World of *Beriah* — which is also called *Olam Hakisse*, the World of the Throne.^j)

III. The manifestation of *kisse hakavod* elicits two differing responses among creatures: *ratzo* and *shov*.^k

Ratzo (*advance*): When creatures sense the wondrous greatness of Divinity which they are unable to absorb in their 'vessels' of either mind or the emotions of the heart, this evokes in them a drive of *ratzo* and longing — to transcend their vessels and limitations, desiring to become absorbed within Divinity.^l

A level altogether beyond *kisse hakavod* cannot evoke this *kelot hanefesh* (rapture of the soul). For as it is totally disproportionate to man it is impossible for its wondrous quality to be sensed. As for the level of *kisse hakavod*, however, it is possible to sense at least its wondrousness.

Shov (*retreat*): 'The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to have an abode in the *lower* [material] worlds.'^m G-d thus concealed Himself by means of the Throne of Glory in order to descend to His creatures.

The awareness of this will and intent of G-d evokes a response of *shov* — to be in a stance of *kabalat ol*, to observe Torah and *mitzvot* literally, in the lower physical world.

j. [See *Tanya*, ch. 39. 'The Throne of Glory is on high from the beginning' (Jeremiah 17:12), that is, it is the foundation for all subsequent creations (*Zohar* 1:113a). It is in the world of *Beriah* in which creation (*beriah*) becomes manifest, i.e., there is the first appearance of finite and limited creatures distinct from Divinity; see *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, ch. V, s.v. *Beriah*.]

k. [*Ratzo veshov* — advance and retreat (Ezekiel 1:14; cf. *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:8), signify two levels in the service of G-d as explained in the next paragraphs. See also *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. I, note 30.]

l. [See *Tanya*, ch. 50.]

m. [*Tanchuma*, Nasso:16. See *Tanya*, ch. 36.]

IV. The two moods of *ratzo* and *shov* are reflected in the terms 'coin' and 'fire.'

Ratzo is represented by fire, whose nature it is to move upwards: an advance and yearning to ascend. *Shov* is the coin — negotiable currency that is acceptable to all and of equal value to all.

The basic difference between *ratzo* and *shov* is as follows. The mood of *ratzo* is rooted in man's subjective feelings. Sensing the wondrousness of Divinity, superior and inaccessible to man's powers, evokes a *kelot hanefesh*, a powerful longing, surging of the soul. Obviously this expresses itself in different degrees, for that desire and yearning is relative to the individual's degree of understanding and sensing the superiority and wondrousness of Divinity in terms of his own will, intellect and emotions.

The *avodah* of *shov*, however, does not depend on the individual's appreciation of the transcendence and exaltedness of Divinity as compared to his own limitations. It is rooted in an acceptance of the yoke of G-d's sovereignty, the determination to carry out the Divine Will, and thus is equal in all people.

There is another allusion to the intrinsic relationship between 'coin' and *shov*: *matbe'a* (coin) is an idiom of *teva* (nature).

These two interpretations of the term *matbe'a* are related. The fact that a coin is negotiable currency, and has a determined value, is independent of the personal feelings of the person using it. It is the very *nature* (*teva*) of the coin, the effect of the very characteristics of the material of which the coin is made, etc. Its value, therefore, is equal for a multitude of people who otherwise will differ in everything else. This is the idea of *shov* and *kabalat ol* in which everyone is equal, and it derives from the recognition that the Almighty desires, as it were, an abode in the lower realms — in the world, in physicality and the forms of nature.

V. The ultimate intent is that there be a 'coin of fire' — a unison of coin and fire.

It is in the *nature* of man that an action motivated by his own feelings is done vigorously and enthusiastically. (This is an additional reason for *ratzo* being designated as 'fire': because of the vitality and excitement inherent to fire.) An act performed by virtue of *kabalat ol*, however, lacks blazing energy and vitality.⁷

As said, however, there must be a 'fiery coin', both qualities joined together: *matbe'a* (coin), i.e., *kabalat ol*, and yet with enthusiasm and absorbing energy. This energy or vitality must be not in things which the individual wants, but in things following acceptance of the yoke of G-d's sovereignty.

VI. How can one achieve a harmonious conjunction of these opposing qualities? This is indeed beyond human ability. Nonetheless it is possible because G-d reveals Himself to mankind and G-d can 'bear opposites.'ⁿ

This then is the meaning of 'a coin of fire from beneath the Throne of Glory.' The fiery coin comes from beneath the *kisse hakavod*, which signifies the initial manifestation of G-dhood in created beings, as stated above.

Speaking specifically in terms of the souls of Israel, *kisse hakavod* signifies the essence of the soul that is hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory^o and contains the minute spark of the Creator.⁸ This allows for an *avodah* of a 'coin of fire.'

VII. We can now understand how the fact that 'the

7. Cf. *Lik. Sichot*, vol. II, Sukot, p. 426f.

n. [See above, *Tetzaveh*, sect. IX.]

o. [See above, *Yitro*, note o.]

8. *Etz Chaim*, sha'ar Derushei Tzelem, ch. 1; cited in *Likutei Torah*, Re'ey, p. 27a.

Holy One, blessed be He, showed him a fiery coin from beneath the Throne of Glory' resolved Moses' puzzlement about the possibility of the soul being ransomed.

Sins and blemishes, even the sin of the golden calf, affect only external, manifest elements of the soul. The essence of the soul, however, remains forever intact 'and remains faithful to Him, blessed be He, even at the time that the sin is committed.'⁹

Avodah of 'coin of fire,' therefore, the conjunction of *ratzo* and *shov* — which has its source 'beneath the *kisse hakavod*,' the essence of the soul — effects atonement, i.e., cleansing, even for the external levels; it removes all blemishes and, in fact, renders him as acceptable as he was before the sin.¹⁰

VIII. In the context of this explanation of the principle of the half-shekel, we can understand some specific laws related to the half-shekel:

a) The law requires that 'the rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than the half of a shekel.'^p If someone is wealthy, however, why should he not be permitted to contribute more? Moreover, the half-shekels were used to purchase communal sacrifices,^q and the law stipulates that 'if a rich person brought the offering of a poor person he has not fulfilled his duty';¹¹ why then should the wealthy not be permitted to contribute more?

This is clarified by the explanation above. The difference between the rich and the poor is only in terms of externals. When going beyond external qualities, let alone in terms of essence, 'all are of a kind and all have one

9. *Tanya*, end of ch. 24.

10. *Igeret Hateshuvah*, ch. 2.

p. [Exodus 30:15]

q. [See above, *Terumah*, sect. IV.]

11. *Nega'im* 14:12

[*Yoma* 41a-b].

Father . . .¹² For an *avodah* relating to the essence, therefore, all are equal.

b) The contribution of the half-shekel was to be made with actual money, and not with money's worth.¹³ This is so because an *avodah* relating to the essence — in which, as said, there are no distinctions — must be specifically with cash, a 'coin that is readily negotiable currency' to all alike.

c) The half-shekels were used to purchase only communal sacrifices and not private sacrifices.¹⁴ Among private sacrifices there are distinctions, and the rich who brings the offering of the poor has not fulfilled his duty. Communal sacrifices reflect the unity and comprehensive totality of the Jewish people, of all Jews together constituting one complete structure.^r

d) With regard to the *mishkan*, the half-shekels were used only for the *adanim* (sockets) of the *mishkan*, and not for the boards or curtains.^s For the boards and curtains each one contributed according to his generosity, because the boards and curtains are related to the external

12. *Tanya*, ch. 32

13. *Bechorot* 49b

14. See above, *Terumah*, sect. IV.

r. [*Mechilta deRashby* on Exodus 19:6 ('They are as one body and one soul . . . If one of them is affected all of them feel it . . .'); *Yerushalmi, Nedarim* 9:4; *Vayikra Rabba* 4:6; *Zohar* III:122a. See *Igeret Hakodesh*, end of sect. XXII; *Derech Mitzvotecha*, s.v. *Ahavat Yisrael*, ch. 2; *Lik. Sichot*, vol. I, No'ach, sect. VI. Cf. also below, note oo.]

s. [At the beginning of this *parshah* there is an allusion to three contributions (see Rashi on 30:15), just as at the beginning of *parshat Terumah* (see above, *Terumah*, sect. I). Two of these were by way of a census, every one contributing exactly one half of a shekel — one offering for making the sockets of the *mishkan* and the other for the purchase of communal sacrifices — and the third a voluntary gift from each according to his own generosity. The discussion so far dealt with the annual contribution for the purchase of communal sacrifices, but by analogy the half-shekel for the *adanim* relates also to our context.]

qualities which are subject to individual distinctions.^t This is not the case with the *adanim*, the very foundation of the *mishkan*, which in the service of G-d signify the aspect of *kabalat ol*.¹⁵

IX. After the destruction of the Sanctuary, *tzedakah* substitutes for the half-shekel.¹⁶ One of the auspicious times to give *tzedakah* is every morning before prayer,^u as our sages said, 'He gave a coin to the poor and then prayer.'¹⁷

The relationship between prayer and *tzedokah* is as follows:

(a) 'The prayers were instituted to correspond to the daily sacrifices'¹⁸ which were *communal* offerings.

(b) Prayer is the foundation of the whole day's *avodah* (for it is the very first thing of the day's entire *avodah*).^v It involves the totality of man even to the extent of what the *Sifre* calls the 'wringing out of the soul.'^w Clearly then, *tzedakah* — which involves 'the entire vital soul . . . his soul's life . . .'¹⁹ — is related to prayer.

t. [The boards and curtains signify man's soul-powers, thus are *external* in relation to the very core or essence of the soul and subject to differentiations from one individual to the next. See above, *Terumah*, sect. VIII and X.]

15. See above, *Terumah*, sect. VII-XI.

16. See *Sha'arei Teshuvah* on *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chayim, sect. 694.

u. [*Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chayim, 92:10. See *Lik. Sichot*, vol. IX, pp. 292 and 345, and the references cited there.]

17. *Baba Batra* 10a

[See *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. VIII and XII; *Likutei Torah*. Tavo, p. 43c.]

18. *Berachot* 26b

v. [See *Lik. Sichot*, vol. I, No'ach, sect. V; and above, *Tetzaveh*, note k.]

w. [*Sifre* on Deuteronomy 6:5: 'You shall love the Eternal your G-d . . . with all your soul,' . . . i.e., even to the point of wringing out your soul. Cf. *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. I.]

19. See *Tanya*, ch. 37.

[There is no precept in which the vital soul is vested to the same extent

X. Just as the half-shekel signifies the conjunction of 'coin' and 'fire,' so also *tzedakah*.

Tzedakah means to give your money to the poor. The acquisition of money is comparable to the aspect of 'fire,' either because of the personal exertion in earning it or, at the very least, because with it he could have purchased his necessities of life; either way, man is fully engrossed in it with fervor and zeal.²⁰

This money he now gives to a poor person who has nothing of his own; that is, he gives it to him without any cause and reason for the donation,²¹ but exclusively out of a sense of *kabalat ol*. (If there had been a reason for the donation it would not be an act of pure charity; also, the recipient would not be then a 'poor person who has nothing of his own,' for he has some claim to the donation.)

Tzedakah, therefore, is an aspect of a 'coin of fire': he takes his own fire — his vitality (embodied in the money of the donation), and transforms it into a 'coin,' an act of *kabalat ol*.

Moreover, the *kabalat ol* itself is imbued with vitality and feeling, for the law stipulates that one must appease and comfort the poor^x — the aspect of feeling. This feel-

as in the commandment of *tzedakah*. In all other commandments only one faculty of the vital soul is embodied, and only at the time of the actual performance of the precept. In the case of charity, which a person gives out of the toil of his hands, all the strength or energy of his vital soul is embodied in the execution of his work by which he earned that money. When he gives it to charity, therefore, his whole vital soul is involved and sublimated. Even when one does not depend on his toil for a livelihood, he could use his funds to purchase necessities of life, etc. for his vital soul. By contributing his funds to charity, therefore, he is in effect giving his soul's life to G-d.

Both prayer and *tzedakah* thus involve the totality of man's life or soul.]

20. See *Yoma* 85b.

['No man will hold himself in check where his money or property is concerned' but defend it actively.' Cf. Rashi on Exodus 22:1.]

21. Cf. *Lik. Sichot*, vol. II, Tavo, p. 396f.

x. [See *Baba Batra* 9b; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah*, 249:3-4. Cf.

ing, however, is not because something is owed to the poor, but because of *kabalat ol*.

In this sense, then, *tzedakah* is referred to as a coin of fire, because of the two reasons that a) he submits his own vitality to *kabalat ol*, and b) the *kabalat ol* itself is imbued with vitality.

As the conjunction of these opposites is effected by virtue of *kabalat ol* and the essence of the soul, as stated above, it becomes a 'ransom for the soul' — 'your sin redeem with charity':²² all sins are atoned, including the sin of the golden calf which is analogous to the sin of the Tree of Knowledge²³ and caused a withdrawal of the *Shechinah*.²⁴ *Tzedakah* effects atonement for all sins so that he is again fit to appear before the King: '[By way of *tzedek*] I will see Your Countenance,'^y i.e., an indwelling of the *Shechinah*, as it is written:^z 'And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell among them'^{aa} — i.e., in every single one of Israel.

(Adapted from the Sichot of Shabbat Parshat Shekalim 5717)

Yerushalmi, Pe'ah 8:9, and *Vayikra Rabba* 34:1: 'Scripture does not say, 'Happy is he who gives to the poor,' but 'happy is he who considers the poor' (Psalms 41:2).]

22. [Daniel 4:24]

See *Igeret Hateshuvah*, ch. 3; etc. Cf. *Mechilta* on Exodus 21:30.

23. *Zohar* I:52b

[See above, *Terumah*, sect. III].

24. *Bereishit Rabba* 19:7, with regard to the sin of the Tree of Knowledge

[see above, *Terumah*, note g];

by analogy, then, this applies to the sin of the golden calf as well.

y. [Psalms 17:15]

z. [Exodus 25:8]

aa. [See above, *Beshalach*, note x.]

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

69

In our generation - the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption - after the tremendous amount of "our efforts and Divine service" of the Jewish people throughout all the previous years and generations, and now even the last purification has been accomplished, now the main emphasis must be first of all on completing, concluding and perfecting the Divine service - to bring the "Gimmel" - the third stage of the true and complete Redemption, in actual reality!

(From the talk of Tuesday night, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Shabbos Kodesh, Parshas Ki Tisa, 14-18 Adar Rishon, 5752)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND
Reb **Yosef Yisroel** ben Reb **Sholom** ע"ה **Rosner**
Passed away on 7 Menachem-Av, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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Reb Avraham Shalom ben Reb Moshe ע"ה Alperin
Passed away, on 24 Adar I, 5763

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Horav Binyomin ben Reb Chaim Avrohom ע"ה Mentz
Passed away on 27 Adar I, 5776

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DEDICATED BY HIS CHILDREN שיחיו

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb Moshe Boruch ben Reb Yakov ע"ה Fishman
Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei, 27 Adar, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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