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Passed away on 24 Tamuz, 5783

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 Ha'azinu, Shabbat Shuvah
& Yom Kippur, 5784
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
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 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi**
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 עי"ה Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu**
Ekman
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AND IN HONOR OF
 שתיח' Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva**
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
 שיחיו Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel**
Shagalov

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נדפס ע"י בנם
 הו"ח ר' שמואל וזוגתו מרת מלכה שיינדל
 ומשפחתם שיחיו סטראל
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 הו"ח ר' שמואל וזוגתו מרת מלכה שיינדל
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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

•
Volume X: *Devarim*

•
In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

לעילוי נשמת

ר' נתנאל ב"ר אפרים ע"ה נסים

נפטר ביום ט"ז סיון ה'תשס"ה

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

ולזכות

זוגתו מרת דבורה בת אסתר תחיל' נסים

לאורך ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת

גואל צדק, ומתוך בריאות הנכונה

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נדפס ע"י ילדיהם

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ר' אפרים וזוגתו מרת מריטה שיחיו נסים

ר' דוד וזוגתו מרת אורה שיחיו בורק

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

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ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י ילדיהם

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ר' מרדכי יצחק וזוגתו מרת גיטל שיחיו אפסל

HAAZINU

UNDERSTANDING A PASSAGE IN THE SIFRI

On the verse,¹ “Give ear, O heavens and I will speak; listen, O earth to the words of my mouth,” the *Sifri* offers several interpretations, concluding as follows:

Another interpretation: “Give ear, O heavens.” This is stated because the Torah was given from the heavens, as it is written:² “You saw that I spoke to you from the heavens.”

“Listen O earth to the words of my mouth.” [The earth is mentioned, because] the Jews stood upon it when they said:³ “We will do and we will listen to all that G-d has spoken.”

Another interpretation: “Give ear, O heavens”; this is stated because they did not observe the *mitzvos* given them involving the heavens. The *mitzvos* given them involving the heavens are establishing leap years and determining the new months, as it is written:⁴ “They⁵ will serve you as a sign for the festivals, the days and the years.”

“Listen O earth”; this is stated because they did not observe the *mitzvos* given them involving the earth:

already exists "a king from the House of Dovid, expert in the Torah and involved in mitzvos like Dovid his father... and he will compel all Israel to walk in [the ways of Torah], strengthen its breeches and fight the wars of G-d" - who is the "presumed Moshiach" [b'chezkas Moshiach] - there will already be immediately the "confirmed Moshiach" [Moshiach vadai], who "does all the above and succeeds, builds the Temple in its place and gathers the dispersed of Israel... He will then improve the whole world so that it serves G-d in unity..."

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Shmos, 21 Teves 5752)

1. *Devarim* 32:1.

2. *Shmos* 20:19.

3. *Ibid.*, 24:7.

4. *Bereishis* 1:14.

5. The sun, the moon and the stars.

And from "the days of your life" at this time and in this place, without any interruption whatsoever, G-d Forbid, (even if he is already older than seventy years, etc.) every Jew will go immediately - totally and completely, "Reuven and Shimon descended, Reuven and Shimon arose,"⁴ - into the continuation of "all the days of your life.," into the days of Moshiach and the eternal life that then will be.

Practically, this means that the Divine service of the Jewish people now must be "to bring about the days of Moshiach." We must reveal that the situation of "coming to Egypt" in exile is in truth a situation of the "Redemption of Israel." [This is achieved] through his preparation of himself and others for the situation of "the days of Moshiach."

The above includes (particularly in conjunction with the day of passing of the Rambam⁵) strengthening and increasing the study of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, especially the Laws of King Moshiach,⁶ in the last two chapters of the "Laws of Kings" which conclude the *Mishneh Torah*.

In addition to one's own study of this, one should also influence other Jews around him (men, women and children) in a manner of "raising many disciples,"⁷ and many more will see and emulate them.

May it be G-d's Will, that through the resolution itself will come imminently and immediately the reward, the actual fulfillment of the Rambam's words at the conclusion of his work,⁸ that after there

leket,⁶ *shichachah*⁷, *peah*,⁸ *terumos*,⁹ tithes, the Sabbatical year, and the Jubilee year."

Another interpretation: "Give ear, O heavens"; this is stated because they did not observe all the *mitzvos* given them involving the heavens, nor did they observe all the *mitzvos* given them involving the earth.

Moshe called two witnesses for the Jewish people that will exist forever. He told [the Jewish people]: "I am a mortal. Tomorrow, I will die. If someone will come and say 'We did not accept the Torah,' who will deny the claim? Therefore, I am calling as witnesses two witnesses who will exist forever."

According to this version of the text, the final statement, that Moshe called the heavens and the earth as witnesses against the Jewish people, appears not as a new interpretation (for it is not prefaced with those words), but rather as a summation of the entire passage. The previous interpretations are not conflicting. Instead, each one reflects a different approach to Divine service, underscoring a perspective that is not highlighted by the other. Then after mentioning all these interpretations, the *Sifri* concludes by stating that Moshe called the heavens and the earth as witnesses.

For this reason, in his commentary on the Torah, *Rashi* — and it is well known the extent to which the Rebbeim lauded *Rashi's* commentary, for it brings out the Torah's inner dimensions — quotes only the final concept, which summarizes and includes all the other interpretations.

4. *Vayikra Rabba*, chapter 32:5. See there for cross references.

5. [*The Rambam passed away on 20 Teves. Translator's note.*]

6. This is how it is titled in the Venice edition of 5284 and 5310.

7. *Avos*, chapter 1, *Mishneh* 1.

8. *Laws of Kings*, end of chapter 11.

6. The prohibition against picking up an individual sheaf which has fallen (*Vayikra* 23:22).

7. The prohibition against returning to take a forgotten sheaf (*Devarim* 24:19).

8. The obligation to leave a corner of the field unharvested (*ibid.*).

9. The portion of the crops which must be given to the priests (*Bamidbar* 18:12).

DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION

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There are several difficulties with the above passage. Firstly, what is the difference between the second and third interpretations cited above? There are some who claim that the inclusion of the third interpretation is a textual error.¹⁰ But the fact that it is included in ancient manuscripts and early printings of the *Sifri* does not support that contention.

There are slight textual differences between the two interpretations. In the second, the various *mitzvos* that involve the heavens and the earth are singled out. This is not the case in the third interpretation. Moreover, the third interpretation mentions “all the *mitzvos*... involving the heavens,” and “all the *mitzvos*... involving the earth.” Implied is that all the *mitzvos* have a connection to the heavens and the earth.

To understand the passage correctly, it is necessary to appreciate the implications for our Divine service contained within each of the interpretations. According to the second interpretation: What is the implication of the fact that some *mitzvos* are associated with the heavens and others with the earth? And according to the third interpretation: What is the implication of the concept that all the *mitzvos* share a connection to both the heavens and the earth?

There is another difficulty. According to the second interpretation — that “Hear O heavens” refers to the *mitzvos* involving the heavens, and “Listen O earth” refers to the *mitzvos* involving the earth — it would appear that for these *mitzvos*, there is only one witness — either heaven or earth. This is problematic, for Torah law requires two witnesses.

There is, moreover, a difficulty common to all three interpretations. The Torah and its *mitzvos* were given by G-d, who is incomparably higher than the heavens and the earth. Therefore, when attempting to inspire Jews to observance, it would seemingly have been more appropriate to emphasize

We have already mentioned many times the words of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that aside from the fact that already “all the appointed times have passed,”¹ the Jewish people have already done teshuvah and already everything is completed, even including “polishing the buttons.” We only need G-d to open the eyes of the Jewish people so that they should see that the true and complete Redemption already exists, and we are sitting already by the prepared table at the festive meal of Livyosan, Shor HaBor,² etc.

Therefore it's understood... in this generation and at this time, after every requirement has been accomplished (as mentioned above), one has the complete assurance in the Torah that there will certainly be “(You will remember the day of your exodus from the land of Egypt) all the days of your life... to bring about the days of Moshiach.”³

There is no need for any interruption, G-d Forbid, between “all the days of your life” and “the days of Moshiach” (which has been the situation for the Jewish people in all the generations **before** our generation). Rather, “all the days of your life” for every Jew, living physically as a soul in a body, includes in the simple sense (also) “the days of Moshiach.” This is without an interruption, since the Redemption is actually coming imminently and immediately at this instant and in this place (even if the condition is one of night, “coming to Egypt”). Thus the last moment of exile and the very last instant of exile become the first moment and the very first instant of Redemption.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. See *Bava Basra* 74b ff. *Pesachim* 119b and in other places.

3. *Brochos* 12b.

10. Therefore, it is set off by parenthesis in many printings of the *Sifri*.

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)

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.

that the Torah and its *mitzvos* were given by Him. Indeed, this concept is emphasized in the blessing recited before Torah study, which praises G-d "who gave us *His* Torah," and the blessing recited before the performance of a *mitzvah*, which praises G-d "who gave us *His mitzvos*." These blessings do not mention the fact that the Torah was given from the heavens, or that it was given to the Jews on the earth.

It is true that the verse "Give ear, O heavens... listen O earth..." also implies¹¹ that if the Jewish people observe the Torah and its *mitzvos*, G-d will employ the heavens and the earth to reward them. Is this, however, the appropriate means of encouraging observance?

This question is reinforced by the fact that *Parshas Haazinu* is always read in the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*, or in the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos. During this time of year, when a Jew's Divine service should emanate from the inner dimensions of his soul, surely he should be concerned with matters above reward.

OF HEAVEN AND OF EARTH

As mentioned on several occasions,¹² the Divine service a Jew is asked to perform involves the fusion of two opposites. We must serve G-d with simple faith and *kabbalas ol*, which stem from the essence of the soul and transcend our understanding. But our Divine service must also involve our conscious powers of intellect and emotion. They too must perceive G-dliness.

The bond which the essence of the soul shares with G-d must be extended into the realm of the conscious powers, so that we will serve G-d with more than simple faith. We will

11. As mentioned in *Rashi's* commentary to the verse.
 12. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, and *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1216.

also be able to understand G-dliness, love Him, and hold Him in awe.

This concept applies not only to the Divine service mandated by the Torah and its *mitzvos* at large, but also to our endeavors to turn to G-d in *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* comes from the inner dimensions of our being. It must, however, permeate our conscious powers as well. This is the implication of the Ten Days of *Teshuvah* — that *teshuvah* must permeate all 10 powers of our soul.¹³

The microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm. Just as a person draws down the essence of his soul into his 10 conscious powers of intellect and emotion, so too G-d's essence must be drawn down into His revealed levels, which are associated with the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

This concept is alluded to in the Ten Commandments, which begin:¹⁵ *Anochi Havayah¹ E-lohecha* (“I am G-d, your L-rd”). *Anochi* refers to G-d's essence, “which cannot be confined to a name, nor can it be alluded to by a letter or even by the point of a letter.”¹⁶ The essence of a Jew is bound to the level of *Anochi*.

Havayah is one of the names of G-d, and yet it is a name which reflects His essence, and which is at one with that essence. Mankind relates to this level through the conscious powers of intellect and emotion.

E-lohecha is a form of the name *E-lohim*, which indicates how G-d contracts Himself and limits His manifestation

are presently standing ready to greet our righteous Redeemer [Moshiach]. This is particularly true now that we have reached the milestone of forty years⁸ concerning which the Torah says, "G-d gave you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁹ Additionally, we are now situated in the fifty first year [5751], which in Hebrew forms the acrostic (It shall be a year of) wonders which I will show him [נפלאות אראנני - Niflaos Avenu].

The Jewish people should, therefore, be encouraged and their spirits uplifted by declaring that G-d says daily, and literally, anew, that, "**I have indeed remembered you,**" and that your righteous Moshiach "stands behind the wall"¹⁰ and that "this one is coming."¹¹ Accordingly we should prepare ourselves to greet him by increasing our observance of Torah and Mitzvos, **in consonance with the ruling of the Rambam**¹² (whose anniversary of passing is the 20th of Teves, the night after this Sabbath), that through "one Mitzvah, one can favorably alter the balance for oneself and for the entire world, causing oneself and them salvation and deliverance."

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Shemos, 19 Teves 5751)

like Moses." See also *Zohar* 3:273a. *Tikkunei Zohar* 69 (112, beginning of side a. 114, beginning of side a). *Tanya* chapter 44. Ibid. *Iggeres HaKodesh*, elucidation of sec. 27, end.

8. [I.e., forty years since the passing of the Previous Rebbe, a milestone which enables us to fully realize the intention and depth of the teachings that were said forty years earlier. - Translator's note.]

9. *Tavo* 29:3 [Moses said this to the Jewish people who were about to enter into the Promised Land, explaining that they were now capable of realizing that which they were taught by G-d forty years earlier. Translator's note.]

10. *Shir HaShirim* 2:9.

11. Ibid 8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (ch. 2:8(b)).

12. *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

13. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 46d. This concept is also reflected in the reading of *Parshas Nitzavim* on the *Shabbos* before Rosh HaShanah. That *parshah* begins: "You are all standing together," referring to the essence of the soul which includes all the soul's 10 powers. Then it mentions 10 levels, referring to the 10 conscious powers of the soul. The implication is that the essence must permeate all these 10 conscious powers.

14. *Havayah* refers to the name ה-ו-ה-י, which, because of its great holiness, is not pronounced as its letters would ordinarily be sounded.

15. *Shmos* 20:2.

16. *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 80b.

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All of the signs mentioned by our sages indicate that we are currently situated **at the very end of the period of exile**. We have "passed all the deadlines."¹ We have also performed Teshuvah [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption]. Indeed, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, declared (several decades ago) that we have already concluded all the service [necessary for Redemption], including the "polishing of the buttons,"² and we now stand ready ("All of you stand ready") to greet our righteous Moshiach.³

* * *

Despite the difficult and protracted final exile, which has lasted more than 1,900 years (in stark contrast to the duration of the Egyptian bondage which lasted 210 years), the nature of "the Children of **Israel**" has essentially **transcended exile**. Thus, every additional moment we remain in exile is a form "having **now come** into Egypt,"⁴ "as if they had that very day entered into Egypt."⁵

The Jewish people, therefore, stand with firm faith and conviction that G-d will immediately fulfill his promise that "I have indeed remembered you"⁶ by bringing the genuine and complete Redemption, especially when hearing from the Moses of our generation,⁷ my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that we have already concluded all matters of Divine service and

according to the structure of creation. Mankind relates to this level through deeds of observance.

Similarly, in the world at large, the level of *Havayah* relates to the heavens, while the level of *E-lohim* relates to the earth.

On this basis, we can understand why Moshe wanted to inspire the Jews to the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* by calling to the heavens and the earth. By calling to the heavens, Moshe wanted to spur the Jews to serve G-d with their "heavenly powers" of intellect and thought, and by calling to the earth, he sought to evoke Divine service on the level of speech and deed.¹⁷

THREE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

The three levels of soul mentioned above: the essence, "the heavens," and "the earth," are reflected in three different modes of observance. "The earth" is given expression in the actual deeds of the *mitzvos*, "the heavens," in the study of Torah, and the essence of the soul in the thrust to *teshuvah*. (Because these three modes of observance are expressions of holiness, however, each one includes the others.)

On this basis, we can comprehend the passage from the *Sifri* cited at the outset. Each of the three interpretations in the *Sifri* refers to one of these paths. The first interpretation, stating that the Torah was given from the heavens, reflects primarily the importance of "the heavens," our intellectual comprehension¹⁸ of G-dliness. Nevertheless, the Torah also

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. Talk of Simchas Torah, 5689.

3. Cf. *Hayom Yom*, among others, 15 Teves.

4. *Shemos* 1:1.

5. *Shemos Rabbah*, beginning of our Parsha (8:14), *Tanchuma*, loc. cit. 3.

6. *Shemos* 3:16.

7. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7: "There is no generation in which there is none

17. *Ibid.*, *Devarim* 64c.

18. This is why the first interpretation mentions "the Torah [which] was given from the heavens," while the second interpretation highlights "the *mitzvos*... involving the heavens." Through intellectual comprehension, one can grasp merely a ray.

Conversely, with regard to the *mitzvos*, even the intent which "the heavens" contain exists solely so that the deed will be carried out with vitality. It is the actual deed that draws down G-d's essence. The intent of the *mitzvah* is only for this essential influence to be expressed in a revealed manner.

has an element that relates to deed — the study of Torah in speech, as reflected in the mention of “the earth.” Similarly, it also relates to the commitment of simple faith and *kabbalas ol*, as reflected in the mention of the Jews’ commitment “We will do and we will listen.”

The second interpretation focuses on the *mitzvos*, for “deed is most essential.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, the *mitzvos* also include an element which relates to “the heavens,”²⁰ as reflected in the *mitzvos* of calculating leap years²¹ and the like.

Moreover, in each *mitzvah* there is an aspect of “heaven” (the intent of the *mitzvos*) and an aspect of “earth” (the actual deed).²² Needless to say, the influence of the soul’s essence is also present, for all *mitzvos* must be fulfilled with *kabbalas ol*.

Thus the two witnesses, the heavens and the earth, are present with regard to every *mitzvah*, for the performance of every *mitzvah* involves both “the heavens,” the intent motivating the *mitzvah*, and “the earth,” the actual deed. Moreover, the two are not divorced from each other, or there would be only one witness for each. Instead, within the deed is the intent, and the intent is deeply felt, so that it will surely be expressed in deed.

The third interpretation emphasizes the thrust of *teshuvah*. For that reason, it speaks about “not observing all the *mitzvos*” that involve the heavens and the earth — a lack in both intent (“the heavens”) and deed (“the earth”). *Teshuvah*, which stems from the inner dimensions of the soul, expresses the inherent virtue of the Jewish people — a quality that

19. Cf. *Avos* 1:17.

20. This refers to also to *mitzvos* that involve deed, not only to the “duties of the heart,” such as the love of G-d and the awe of Him.

21. Even the deed of these *mitzvos* involves “the heavens.” Nevertheless, this involves “the heavens” as they are included in the realm of *mitzvos*, which as a whole is considered “the earth.”

22. Therefore the deed generates garments for the soul in the lower *Gan Eden* (“the earth”), while the intent generates garments in the higher *Gan Eden* (“the heavens”).

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 ונפלים* - “supports the falling” - is similar to the expression mentioned before - *בבל מלך מלך* - “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.]

stands above the Torah and its *mitzvos*.²³ For this reason, *teshuvah* has the power to wipe away all blemishes caused by lack of observance.

Although *teshuvah* primarily involves the inner dimension of the soul, it also relates to "the heavens and the earth," the lower aspects of our spiritual makeup. Nevertheless, in this motif, the "the heavens and the earth" are not seen as distinct entities, for through *teshuvah*, the essence of the soul shines, and on that level, all the soul's powers are as one.

DRAWING DOWN G-D'S INFLUENCE

By making the heavens and the earth witnesses for the Jewish people, Moshe prevented them from sinning (as Rabbi Yochanan teaches:²⁴ A person will never sin when he knows that someone is watching). Moreover, it encourages all three thrusts: Torah study, the observance of *mitzvos*, and *teshuvah*.

The month of Tishrei gives us the strength for our Divine service in the year to come. Since all influence is conveyed through the Torah, it is in this month that we read *Parshas Haazinu*, which draws down²⁵ this spiritual influence. And this in turn assures us of G-d's blessings as conveyed by the heavens and the earth throughout the year.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Haazinu*, 5723)



23. This is reflected in our Sages' statements (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4) that G-d's thoughts for the Jewish people preceded His thoughts of the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

24. *Berachos* 28b.

25. See *Tanya*, the conclusion of ch. 37.

YOM KIPPUR

THE ESSENCE OF THE DAY

The *Talmud* relates¹ the following difference of opinion with regard to G-d's pardoning of our sins on Yom Kippur:

Our Sages maintain that "Yom Kippur atones only for those who repent," while Rebbe [Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi] states: "Whether or not one repents, Yom Kippur atones," because "the essence of the day brings atonement." The *Halachah* is decided according to our Sages.²

It is not that the Sages differ with Rebbe [Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi] and feel that "the essence of the day" is not powerful enough in its own right to bring about atonement. On the contrary, they also maintain that it is "the essence of the day" which atones.³ For with *teshuvah* alone, a person cannot reach the level of atonement attained by virtue of "the essence of the day."

The difference between Rebbe and our Sages is one of mechanics: how is it possible for the atonement brought about by the essence of the day to be achieved? Rebbe maintains that when Yom Kippur comes, the power of "the essence of the day" is so great that even when a Jew does not repent, his sins are washed away.

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1. *Shavuos* 13a.
 2. *Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:3; *Hilchos Shegagos* 3:10; cited by the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 607:16.
 3. This is reflected in the fact that the *Rambam* (*loc. cit.*:3-4) uses the expression "the essence of Yom Kippur atones," although he accepts the position of our Sages.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

11

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

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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.

prayers take the place of the sacrifices. As such, it is our prayers which today express this connection.

To explain: Yom Kippur is the only day of the year on which we are obligated to recite five different prayer services. These five services reflect the five levels of the soul: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah*, and *yechidah*.²⁹ *Neilah*, the fifth prayer service, which is recited only on Yom Kippur, thus reflects the level of *yechidah*, the aspect of the soul which is bound to G-d with singular oneness. At this level, nothing besides G-d and the souls of Israel is of concern.

This is the meaning of the word *neilah* — that the gates are locked; no one else is allowed in. The Jewish people are alone with G-d.

This degree of connection is revealed in the *Neilah* prayer.³⁰ In a more general sense, however, it applies throughout the day of Yom Kippur,³¹ for Yom Kippur is “a day on which five prayer services are required.” Although each service has its time (the evening service, the morning service, etc.), the entire day is “a day on which five prayer services are required,” i.e., the fifth level, the level of *yechidah* shines throughout the day.

(Adapted from the *maamar* entitled *Vichol Adam*, 5723, and *Sichos Simchas Beis HaShoevah*, 5723)



29. *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 86b.

30. For that reason, the fundamental aspect of the atonement of Yom Kippur is granted at the conclusion of the day (See *Taanis* 26b; *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 39d). See also *Kuntres HaAvodah*, sec. 5, which speaks about “special times, e.g., the time of sounding the *shofar*, and *Neilah* on Yom Kippur.”

31. We find a parallel to this phenomenon with regard to *Shabbos* — this is indeed fitting, because Yom Kippur is described (*Vayikra* 23:32) as *Shabbos Shabbason*. *Shabbos* is characterized by the quality of *oneg*, “delight.” This applies to *Shabbos* as a whole. Nevertheless, the ultimate level of *oneg*, the level described as *raaveh dichol raavin*, is revealed at the conclusion of the day. See the *Siddur Im Dach, Derushai Seudos Shabbos*.

Our Sages, by contrast, maintain⁴ that for the atonement brought about by the essence of the day to be effective, it must be accompanied by *teshuvah*. This *teshuvah*, however, is no more than a preparatory step, for the atonement brought about by the essence of the day is far more encompassing than that brought about by *teshuvah*.

On this basis, we can also understand our Sages’ comment⁵ on the verse:⁶ “Seek G-d when He is to be found”: “These are the 10 days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.”⁷ On one hand, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are included in the sum of these 10 days, for without them there would not be “Ten Days of Repentance.” Simultaneously, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur stand above the 10 days, which are described as being “between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.” For the essential aspects of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur transcend the Divine service of *teshuvah*.

The essence of Rosh HaShanah is the crowning of G-d as King.⁷ The essence of Yom Kippur is the atonement brought about by the essence of the day — an endowment granted every Jew from above, independent of his striving to do *teshuvah*.

THREE LEVELS OF CONNECTION

Atonement means more than withholding punishment for a person’s sins. The implication is that all blemishes and scars brought about by the sins are washed away from the person’s soul.⁸ And in a consummate sense, *teshuvah* means not only

4. Note *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Eglah Arufah*, which explains our Sages’ position slightly differently.

5. *Rosh HaShanah* 18a.

6. *Yeshayahu* 55:6.

7. See the *sichah* for Rosh HaShanah in this series, where this concept is explained.

8. *Tanya, Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, ch. 1.

that no trace of sin is left, but that the sin itself is transformed and considered a merit.⁹

When a Jew returns to G-d with remorse over the sins he has committed, we can understand how this dynamic operates. His feelings of regret tear away the pleasure he experienced at the time of sin, and this purifies and washes away the traces of evil from his soul.¹⁰

What's more, the distance created by sin spurs the soul to a greater thirst for G-dliness. For this reason, after *teshuvah*, the sin can be considered a merit.¹¹

But when atonement is brought about by “the essence of the day,” how can it result in such a process of purification? It is possible to understand that such atonement will prevent punishment, but how can it purify our souls?

This question applies even according to our Sages, for they postulate that the atonement of Yom Kippur has a more encompassing effect than the Divine service of *teshuvah*. Surely, this question applies according to Rebbe, who maintains that Yom Kippur brings about atonement even without *teshuvah*.

The above question can be resolved by coming to appreciate the various levels of connection our souls share with G-d. There is one level which is dependent on our observance of G-d's commandments. It is established by a person's acceptance of the yoke of heaven, and his willingness to do what G-d asks of him.

There is a second and deeper level of connection, one which is reflected by the fact that even a Jew who has broken G-d's commandments and cast off the yoke of heaven will feel

9. *Yoma* 86b.

10. See *Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 38b, which describes this as the process of purging “the soul of the *kelipah*”, and the act of confession as “destroying the body of the *kelipah*.”

11. *Tanya*, ch. 7.

est level of angels.²⁵ When the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies, not even the angels may be present.

What does this imply? That Yom Kippur involves the essential bond between G-d and the Jewish people, as represented by the High Priest who serves as their agent; “Israel is alone with G-d.”²⁶

Moreover, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the era of the Second *Beis HaMikdash* as well, when the Holy Ark was not there. Implied is that the High Priest entered into a bond with G-d that is above even the level of engraved letters in the Torah.²⁷

There is a level of *teshuvah* mandated by the Torah and a level of *teshuvah* above the Torah.¹⁶ The difference between the two is that the *teshuvah* mandated by the Torah reflects a revealed level of the soul and of G-d. It is true that even the level of *teshuvah* mandated by the Torah is above the level of the Torah itself. For that reason, *teshuvah* can atone for blemishes in the observance of the Torah's *mitzvos* — including even the *mitzvah* of Torah study.

Nevertheless, the *teshuvah* mandated by the Torah reflects dimensions of the soul and of G-d which are revealed. The *teshuvah* which transcends the Torah, by contrast, points to how the soul is bound up with G-d's essence, and is above all revelation.

In the time of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Jews' essential bond with G-d was revealed through the entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies. Our Sages teach²⁸ that our

25. *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 2:7. See, however, *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 43a. See also *Tanya*, ch. 39. (Note also the *Raya Mehemna* cited there; (this apparently refers to the *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 225a) and the *Eitz Chayim* (apparently, *Shaar* 50, ch. 7).)

26. *Zohar* III, p. 32a.

27. [In the Holy Ark, were contained the Tablets on which the the Ten Commandments were engraved.]

28. *Berachos* 26b.

observed: fasting,²⁰ refraining from work, and celebrating the holy day.

For this reason, the *Talmud* states¹ that even Rebbe, who maintains that the essence of the day atones even without the influence of *teshuvah*, agrees that this does not apply with regard to transgressions of the commandments applying to Yom Kippur itself. If a person does not fast on Yom Kippur, the essence of the day does not bring about atonement for him. Since it is the essence of the day which causes the person's failure to fast to be considered a sin, that same factor cannot serve as the agent of atonement.²¹

WITHIN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The above concepts are also reflected in the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur. One of the fundamental elements of the service was his entry into the Holy of Holies. Concerning this entry, it is written:²² "No man shall be in the Tent of Meeting." The *Jerusalem Talmud* states²³ that this applies even to those about whom it is said:²⁴ "the likeness of their face is like the face of a man," i.e., the Holy *Chayos*, the high-

20. See the *maamar* entitled *Vihu KiChasan*, 5657, sec. 17, which states that the self-mortification of Yom Kippur taps a higher level of G-dliness than *teshuvah*.

21. To cite a parallel concept: "An accuser cannot itself become a defender." See the comments of the *Tzofnas Paneach* to the *Rambam, Hilchos Yibbum* 4:20.

A question may, however, be raised from the interpretation (*Tanya, Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, ch. 11) of our Sages' statement (*Yoma* 85a): "One who says: 'I will sin and then repent,' is never given the opportunity of repenting." Although he is not "given the opportunity," if he presses the matter and *creates* an opportunity, his *teshuvah* is accepted.

It is possible to say that this differs from the present situation, because the *teshuvah* of a person who "presses the matter" is on a higher level. This, however, is not the place for extended discussion of this matter.

22. *Vayikra* 16:17.

23. *Yoma* 1:5. See also the *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 15b and Vol. I, p. 208b, and the conclusion of the *maamar* entitled *VeChol Adam* cited above.

24. *Yechezkel* 1:10.

remorse and turn to G-d in *teshuvah*. Because *teshuvah* comes from a level of connection which is deeper than that established through the observance of the *mitzvos*, it has the power to correct and wash away the spiritual blemishes caused by sin.¹² Sin weakens the soul's connection to G-d, and *teshuvah* restores it.

Nevertheless, even this inner connection has a certain limit, as it is manifest in the process of *teshuvah*.

There is a third, and even deeper level: the bond shared between the essence of the soul and G-d's essence. This bond knows no measure at all, nor is there any process through which it is manifest. It is therefore above even *teshuvah*.

This level of connection cannot be established through our activities and Divine service, for all mortal activities, however lofty, have a limit. Instead, it is an innate, natural connection stemming from the fact that every Jew possesses a soul which is "an actual part of G-d from above,"¹³ and even while encloded in the body, it "clings and cleaves to You, its oneness affirming Your oneness."¹⁴

Since this level of connection is above all measure and form, it cannot be established through our Divine service, and cannot be weakened by a lack of service or even by sin.

This is the meaning of the phrase "the essence of the day brings about atonement." On Yom Kippur, the Jews' essential bond with G-d is revealed, and this washes away all blemishes.

(As mentioned above, the difference between the views of Rebbe and the Sages hinges on whether or not *teshuvah* is necessary for this level to be revealed. They both agree that it

12. Similarly, in the spiritual realms, *teshuvah* reaches a level above G-d's desire for the observance of the *mitzvos* (*Likkutei Torah, Vayikra*, p. 26c, *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Vidui U'Teshuvah*).

13. *Tanya*, ch. 2.

14. *Sukkos* liturgy, *Seder Tehillat HaShem*, p. 327.

is not *teshuvah* which effects the atonement of Yom Kippur, but rather that atonement stems from the essence of the day.)

On that level of the soul where sins have an effect and can cause a blemish, atonement must be achieved through man's conscious turning to G-d in *teshuvah*.¹⁵ This arouses a deeper connection with G-d, which breaks through any obstacles that might prevent such a bond. The atonement brought about by Yom Kippur, by contrast, comes through the revelation of a bond which never allowed for the *possibility* of a blemish.¹⁶

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

It thus follows that the beginning of the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*, Rosh HaShanah, and the conclusion of these days, Yom Kippur, both relate to the connection of the essence of the soul to G-d, which transcends the service of *teshuvah*. On

15. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Vaes'chanan* in this series, which states that because the soul of a person who repents reaches a level higher than that of a perfect *tzaddik*, one might conclude that the blemish brought about by sin also brings the soul to a level higher than that realized by a *tzaddik*.

16. These two levels of *teshuvah* and Yom Kippur reflect the differences between the Torah's response to a sinner (*Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim, Remez 702; Yerushalmi, Makkos 2:6*): "Let him bring a guilt offering, and thus receive atonement," and that given by the Holy One, blessed be He: "Let him turn in *teshuvah* and receive atonement." (See also the letter of Tishrei 8, 5712 printed in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 135a.)

Although the course of action suggested by the Torah also involves *teshuvah*, the agent of atonement is the sacrifice. The *teshuvah* causes the willful sins to be considered unintentional, and a sacrifice can bring about atonement for unintentional sins. (See the *maamar* entitled *VeChol Adam*, delivered by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, sec. 4 — *Or HaTorah, Devarim*, p. 1557ff.)

Moreover, such atonement is not complete, for the *teshuvah* mandated by the Torah relates to the will of the Torah, but reflects "the depth of the will," or "the master of the will" (see the *sichah* for Rosh HaShanah in this series). This is possible because the Torah relates to the middle vector, which reveals levels which transcend the spiritual cosmos. It does, however, relate to those limits, and thus has a measure. The *teshuvah* prompted by the Holy One, blessed be He, stems from an essential delight which is above the will entirely, like the *teshuvah* of Yom Kippur. This level has no limits. It atones for even purposeful transgressions, and indeed, transforms them into merits.

Rosh HaShanah, this is expressed through our coronation of G-d and His choosing of us, and on Yom Kippur it is expressed in the atonement brought about by "the essence of the day."¹⁷

Rosh HaShanah is a three-dimensional holiday, because in addition to this essential quality, the day is also characterized by *teshuvah* and a specific *mitzvah*, the sounding of the *shofar*. Similarly, Yom Kippur possesses these three dimensions: the expression of the essence of the soul, as evidenced by the fact that the essence of the soul brings about atonement, the *teshuvah* of Yom Kippur, for Yom Kippur is also one of the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*, and the *mitzvos* performed on Yom Kippur: the fast and also the *mitzvah* to repent and confess.¹⁸

NOT TO DISTURB THE CONNECTION

There is another parallel between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. As mentioned with regard to Rosh HaShanah,⁷ the "mitzvah of the day," sounding the *shofar*, also gives expression to the Divine service of *teshuvah* and of crowning G-d.¹⁹ So too with regard to Yom Kippur, the expression of the essence of the soul in the atonement brought about by "the essence of the day" finds an echo in the *mitzvos*

17. The connection between the Divine service of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur is expressed by the conclusion of the middle blessing of the *Shemoneh Esreh* on Yom Kippur, which praises G-d as "the King who pardons and forgives," implying that the pardon granted on Yom Kippur follows the acceptance of G-d's Kingship on Rosh HaShanah.

18. See the *Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah 2:7*, which states: "Everyone is obligated to repent and confess on Yom Kippur." Significantly, the *Rambam* states this law in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, and not in *Hilchos Sh'visas Asor*, which records the laws we must fulfill on Yom Kippur. For this obligation, though one of the laws of Yom Kippur, is above the level of *mitzvos*. It thus parallels the aspect of *teshuvah* associated with the sounding of the *shofar*, which is mentioned in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, and not in *Hilchos Shofar*.

19. See the communal letter for Rosh HaShanah, 5724, printed in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1354ff.