In loving memory of our dear grandfather
Reb **Yaakov Yitzchok** ben Reb **Chanina Shmuel** ע״ה **Bluth**
Passed away on Yud Kislev, 5729
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*
Dedicated by his grandchildren
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Shluchim of the Rebbe in Camarillo, California
* * *
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Passed away on 12 Kislev, 5772
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

An Anthology of Talks

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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directives include learning about the concepts of Redemption, in a way that will open the heart, eyes and ears. That is, one must understand, see and hear in the physicality of the world the true and complete Redemption in actual reality. One should learn the Torah of Moshiach (the inner aspects of Torah) in a way of seeing. All of the above is already prepared; one need only open the eyes to see it!

Also the custom of the Jewish people which is continually spreading in our time, to learn the subject of Redemption and Moshiach, in order to prepare himself and others even more for the revelation of the true and complete Redemption, as mentioned above.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeitze, 9 Kislev 5752)

b) and the 365 negative commandments corresponding to the 365 sinews (*Zohar*, volume I, 170b.)

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

•

Volume VI: *Bereishis*

•

In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

VAYEITZEI

YAAKOV AND HIS POSTERITY

Yaakov is described as "the chosen one of the Patriarchs."[1] Among the unique characteristics by which Yaakov can be distinguished from the other Patriarchs is the posterity which he left. "From Avraham descended Yishmael, and from Yitzchak descended Esav;"[2] i.e., their holiness did not encompass all of their children.

In particular, the Hebrew phrase translated as "descended," ממנו יצא, literally means "he went out from him," i.e., Yishmael and Esav withdrew their connection to Avraham and Yitzchak. With regard to Yaakov, by contrast, it is stated: "his posterity was perfect";[3] the holiness of Yaakov our Patriarch encompassed all his descendants.

It is true that with regard to Reuven, it is said:[4] "He profaned his father's couch." Our Sages, however, state[5] that this does not mean he committed a sin. "Whoever says Reuven sinned is surely speaking in error." Reuven was defending his mother's honor.

But the very fact that the Torah relates this incident in a manner which can be *interpreted* to mean that Reuven sinned indicates that with regard to his high spiritual plane, his action surely reflected a deficiency, as explained in the

1. *Bereishis Rabbah* 76:1; see *Zohar,* Vol. I, 119b, 147b, *et al.*
2. *Vayikra Rabbah* 36:5; see also *Pesachim* 56a; *Sifri* to *Devarim* 6:4, 32:9.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Cf. *Rashi, Bereishis* 35:22, *Divrei HaYomim* 5:1, *Shabbos* 55b.
5. *Shabbos, loc. cit.*

It's therefore understood that now the situation is already one in which the physical body, and even the physicality of the world, is completely purified and refined. It is a "vessel" receptive to all the spiritual lights and concepts, primarily the light[3] of our righteous Moshiach, the light of the true and complete Redemption.

And the only thing missing is that a Jew should open his eyes as he should, when he will see that all is ready for the Redemption! There is already the Shulchan Aruch (the Set Table); there is already the Livyosan, the Shor HaBor and the Yayin Meshumar.[4] The Jewish people already sit by the table, "the table of their Father"[5] (the Holy One Blessed be He), together with our righteous Moshiach. (As is stated in holy books[6] that in every generation there is "one descended from Yehuda who is qualified to be Moshiach"). In our generation this is the leader of our generation, my sainted father-in-law. And now forty years after the passing of my sainted father-in-law we also have already "a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."[7]

We must now only open the "heart to know" and open "the eyes to see" and open the "ears to hear." Likewise we must utilize all 248 physical limbs and 365 physical sinews in the learning of the inner aspects of the Torah, as revealed in the teachings of Chassidus and observing the directives of our Rabbeim and leaders.[8] These

3. *Zohar* section 3 34:b. Cited and explained in *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on the *Zohar*, section 3, p. 219 ff.
4. See *Brochos* 34:b. *Bava Basra* 75:a. *Vayikra Rabba* Chapter 13:3. And in other sources.
5. *Brochos* 3, end of side a.
6. Commentary of the Bartenura on *Megillas Rus*. And see also *Sha'alos U'teshuvos Chasam Sofer Choshen Mishpat* (vol. 6) at the end (section 98). And see *S'dei Chemed, Peas HaSadeh*, entry Aleph , Klal 70. And elsewhere.
7. *Tavo* 29:3.
8. In addition to learning Torah and observing mitzvos in general (the 248 positive commandments corresponding to the 248 limbs (*macos* 23, end of side

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The subject that is most urgent in our generation and our time is - the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. As has been mentioned many times of late, now all the requirements have already been concluded, we need only receive our righteous Moshiach in actual reality.

All the more so in our generation and our time, when according to the signs of our Sages of blessed memory (in the tractate *Sanhedrin*, in Midrashim and in many places) we are actually on the verge of the Redemption.

As mentioned many times recently, that after our many great achievements and Divine service throughout the generations, and specifically after the Divine service of our Rebbeim and leaders through the Divine service of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, all necessary spiritual purifications have been accomplished.

This also includes the spiritual purification of "Aisev [Esau] is Edom."[1] Aisev is already completely spiritually purified, as we see how the nations at this time (in the exile of Edom[2]), which stem from "Aisev is Edom," conduct themselves as benevolent governments. Such conduct has spread to other nations, as we have seen, especially of late.

1. *Vayishlach* 36:1.

2. *[The Jewish people have endured four exiles, each named after the dominant country or culture of the time. These were the Egyptian exile, the Babylonian, the Greek and the Roman. Edom is the Biblical ancestor of the Roman people, whose empire still persists both in a spiritual sense and in a physical sense in the domination of European civilization and its derivatives. Translator's note.]*

works of our Sages[6] and in the teachings of *Chassidus,* beginning with the *Baal Shem Tov*.[7] Nonetheless, Reuven received Yaakov's entire spiritual heritage — indeed, to a greater degree than his brothers, as it says:[8] "greater in position and in power." Even in his decline, he is described[9] as "Yaakov's firstborn."

(This is a position of status, as reflected in our Sages interpretation[10] of the command:[11] "Honor your father and mother." The Hebrew statement employs the word את which our Sages interpret as "including the elder brother," i.e., the honor due one's elder brother is an extension of the honor due one's father. R. Chayim Vital explains[12] that the primary dimension of the father's spirit is invested in his eldest son. Thus by honoring the eldest son, one is honoring the father.)

The uniqueness of Yaakov's posterity enables us to comprehend the statement of the *Talmud:*[13] "The beauty of Yaakov is comparable to the beauty of Adam, the first man." Within Adam were included all the souls of the subsequent generations. Therefore every one of his deeds affected mankind in its entirety. As such, the spiritual decline he suffered through the sin of the Tree of Knowledge brought about a decline in all subsequent generations. For this reason, there

6. See *Yevamos* 121b, and the interpretation of the phrase (*Tehillim* 50:3): "It is tempestuous around Him." Note the explanation in *Kuntres U'Mayon,* ch. 15.
7. See *Toldos Yaakov Yosef,* the conclusion of *Parshas Lech Lecha,* the *maamar* entitled *Im Ruach HaMoshel,* 5695, and the stories related in the foreword to that *maamar* concerning the Mitteler Rebbe and the *Tzemach Tzedek* (*Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim,* Vol. II, p. 712ff).
8. *Bereishis* 49:3.
9. *Bereishis* 35:23. See the gloss of *Rashi,* (based on *Bereishis Rabbah* 82:11), which follows the view of Rabbi Elazar HaModa'i (*Bereishis Rabbah* 98:4).
10. *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 83a. *Sefer HaMitzvos* of the *Rambam,* General Principle 2. See *Kesubos* 103a.
11. *Shmos* 20:12.
12. *Likkutei Torah* (of the *AriZal*), *Parshas Vayeira* (28a), *Shaar HaMitzvos, Parshas Yisro.*
13. *Bava Metzia* 84a; see also *Zohar,* Vol. I, 35b.

are righteous men who died "because of the counsel of the serpent,"[14] i.e., the only reason they were forced to leave this world is the sin of Adam, the first man.

Similarly, Yaakov possessed "the beauty of Adam," i.e., he also included within him the souls of all subsequent generations. As such, all his positive achievements affected his descendants as well — for "a positive attribute is more powerful than the attribute of retribution."[15]

EMPOWERING HIS DESCENDANTS

The stories in the Torah are not merely chronicles of history, but rather lessons in our Divine service.[16] This is particularly true with regard to "the deeds of the Patriarchs," which serve as "a sign for their descendants."[17] From the above explanations, it is apparent that all the events which the Torah describes in the life of Yaakov contain even greater significance, for their ripples are felt in the souls of the entire Jewish people; they were all included in his soul.

The Torah's narratives concerning Yaakov serve as pointers and empowerment for the souls of his descendants as they are revealed in this physical world. Indeed, the directives derived from these narratives have a greater relevance than those derived from the narratives concerning Avraham or Yitzchak.

A MISSION AND ITS FRUITS

In *Parshas Vayeitzei,* the Torah relates that Yaakov left Beer Sheva in *Eretz Yisrael* to journey to Lavan's home in

14. *Shabbos* 55b.
15. *Yoma* 76a.
16. See *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 53b.
17. *Or HaTorah, Parshas Lech Lecha.* See also the *Ramban*'s Commentary to *Bereishis* 12:6, which states: "Everything which occurred to the Patriarchs is a sign to their descendants." See also the *Ramban*'s Commentary to *Bereishis* 12:10.

BESURAS HAGEULO
The Announcement Of The Redemption

7

Maimonides writes:

"In that era[1] there will be neither famine nor war..."

A foretaste of this peaceful state can be realized even in the last moments of exile. For even as "the nations are provoking one another," and "The king of Persia provokes the Arabian king... and all the nations are in turmoil and terror," the Jewish people are experiencing a state of tranquillity and peace, since "G-d says to them 'My children, do not fear. Whatever I have done, I have done only for your sake... the time for your Redemption has arrived." Furthermore, "The 'King Moshiach' - the Redeemer of Israel - "stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash... and says, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived.'"[2]

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei, 7 Kislev, 5751)

1. Rambam, conclusion of his work *Mishneh Torah*.
2. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez* 499.

disseminating the inner dimensions of the Torah — will bring about *Mashiach*'s coming.[53] *Mashiach* will not nullify the existence of the material world. Instead, he will show that it is a receptacle for G-dliness. At that time, even physical flesh will openly appreciate G-dliness, as it is written:[54] "The glory of G-d will be revealed, and together, all flesh will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken."

(Adapted from *Sichos Lag BaOmer,* 5710)

53. See the answer given the Baal Shem Tov by *Mashiach* in the famous letter of the Baal Shem Tov (printed in *Ginzei Nistoros Or Yisrael,* p. 22, and in the introduction to the text *Likkutei Amarim,* by the Maggid of Mezeritch). See also the *sichah* of *Parshas Shoftim* in this series, and the sources mentioned there.
54. *Yeshayahu* 40:5.

Charan. As he began his journey, "he encountered the place."[18] Afterwards, the Torah relates that he arrived at Lavan's home, where he worked for 20 years, married, and raised his family. And the *parshah* concludes by describing his return to *Eretz Yisrael*, at which time he was "met by angels of G-d."[19]

As mentioned above, all these events are relevant and serve as directives for every Jew. The mission of every Jew is to leave *Eretz Yisrael*, and "the tents of Shem and Ever,"[20] i.e., the environment of Torah scholarship, for the intent of study is "to bring to deed." This involves "going to Charan," a place associated with the arousal of G-d's anger,[21] i.e., it is necessary to go to the very hub of the world. There one will encounter Lavan the Aramite, and one's service will involve elevating the sparks of holiness which he possesses. It is in such an environment that a Jew must establish "perfect progeny."

If a person follows this course of action, the "journey to Charan" will not involve a genuine descent. Instead, "the man [will have] prodigious success"[22] in both material and spiritual matters. And ultimately, as one returns to *Eretz Yisrael,* he will be "met by the angels of G-d."

The *Zohar*[23] contrasts Yaakov's departure for Charan with his departure for *Eretz Yisrael*, and explains: Before Yaakov went to Charan to work and raise his family, it is written: "he encountered the place." Although he had studied much Torah in the School of Ever, it was he who journeyed to and sought out "the place," i.e., the place

18. *Bereishis* 28:11.
19. *Bereishis* 32:2.
20. The leading Torah academies of the age, where Yaakov studied before departing for Charan (*Rashi, Bereishis* 25:27, 28:9).
21. *Rashi,* the conclusion of *Parshas Noach;* see *Zohar,* Vol. I, p. 147a.
22. *Bereishis* 30:43. See *Likkutei Torah,* the beginning of *Parshas Shelach; Toras Chayim,* the *maamar* entitled *Vayishlach Yaakov*, sec. 4.
23. *Zohar,* Vol. I, p. 165a.

where G-dliness was revealed. Moreover, the revelation came only in a dream.

After completing his mission in Charan, he was "met by angels of G-d," the angels — and G-d Himself, as it were[24] — sought *him* out. And this revelation did not come in a dream, but while he was awake.

(The *Midrash*[25] states that Yaakov was met by 600,000 angels or 1,200,000 angels. The *Zohar,* the inner dimension of the Torah, reveals the inner dimension of this experience, and explains that it was G-d Himself who was revealed to him.)

Similar concepts apply with regard to every Jew. As long as he is "in *Eretz Yisrael,"* i.e., involved in matters of holiness, with his own concerns, he may be able to scale great heights, but he can never attain the peaks to which he can ascend after his "journey to Charan," working with the world, drawing other Jews close to their heritage, making them Jews, as it were.

And when a person "leaves *Eretz Yisrael*" to go out and work in the world and with other Jews, he is imbued with strength from above to carry out his mission. This is alluded to by the phrase, "he encountered the place."

Afterwards, when he has accomplished his mission, through his Divine service he will draw down a higher light — for the "arousal from above" that follows an "arousal from below" is superior[26] — and he is "met by the angels of G-d."

(Adapted from *Sichos Gimmel Cheshvan,* 5721)

24. See *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 298a.
25. *Bereishis Rabbah,* the conclusion of *Parshas Vayeitzei.*
26. See *Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim* 22b ff.

each other. They would, however, be allowed to cross for commercial reasons.[49]

What purpose does the mound serve?

To refine material existence, Yaakov had to go to Lavan in Charan to elevate the sparks of G-dliness enclothed there. Nevertheless, Yaakov must know that there is a boundary separating him from Lavan. He must realize that, with the exception of this mission, he should have nothing to do with Lavan. A Jew may be involved with worldly matters, but must also separate himself from such concerns. This protects him, and enables him to proceed with confidence, knowing that dealing with Lavan will not cause his own downfall. On the contrary, it is through these activities that he will transform the world into a receptacle for G-dliness, as reflected in the verse:[50] "G-d has taken away the cattle of your father and has given it to me."

RECONCILING THE SPIRITUAL WITH THE MATERIAL

The power to carry out the Divine service associated with this boundary — to involve oneself in worldly matters while remaining separated from worldly concerns and in this manner, to make the world a receptacle for G-dliness — comes from the study of *Pnimiyus HaTorah,* the Torah's inner dimensions.[51] For it is the study of *Pnimiyus HaTorah* which leads to the understanding that "there is nothing else apart from Him"[52]; the world's entire existence is G-dliness.

This also explains why our efforts to "spread the well-springs of *Chassidus* outward" — publicizing and

49. *Midrash Rabbah* 75:15; *Rashi, Bereishis* 31:52.
50. *Bereishis* 31:9.
51. In this context, it is explained that the verse "until this mound" (גל) in Hebrew alludes to *Lag B'Omer. Lag B'Omer* is the "giving of the Torah" for *P'nimiyus HaTorah,* the holiday which celebrates the revelation of this form of wisdom. See the *maamar* entitled *U'Sefartem Lachem,* 5666.
52. *Devarim* 4:35.

Reuven and Yissachar were tribes which produced the heads of Jewish courts,[46] and the Sages upon whose rulings the *halachah* is based.[47]

When a Jewish child is trained from the earliest ages onward to sense that he is different from other children, when he grows older, he will not seek to learn from other children his age. Instead, he goes away — as Yaakov our Patriarch did — and studies G-d's Torah. Even his ordinary speech should be comprised solely of words of Torah, as reflected in the interpretation of the command:[48] "And you shall speak of them."

In this manner, he will mature and, like Yaakov, marry and involve himself in the world at large. He will establish a family, and work to support it. Even at this time of his life, such a person will have fixed periods for Torah study every day. And when he is involved with his material concerns, he will "recite *Shir HaMaalos,"* showing that he relies totally on G-d.

As a consequence, all his business affairs will be conducted according to the Torah's guidelines.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev,* 5711, and *Sichos Simchas Torah,* 5715)

DRAWING BOUNDARIES

We can now understand another aspect of the *parshah*. The conclusion of the *parshah* relates that Yaakov and Lavan set up a mound of stones to mark the border between them, and agreed that neither would cross this border to harm

46. See the gloss of *Rashi* to the opening verse of *Parshas Korach*.
47. See *Yoma* 26a, and the *maamar* entitled *Bayom HaSheini,* 5727.
48. *Devarim* 6:7. See the interpretation of this command in *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:5-7.

WHERE YAAKOV AND LAVAN CONTENDED

The above discussion communicates the general message of the Torah reading. Nevertheless, as explained above, *every event* in Yaakov's journey to Charan, and everything that happened to him there, holds lessons for us in our Divine service.[27]

To focus on one of these points: On the verse,[28] "He slept in that place," the *Midrash* comments:[29] "Here, he slept. But in the 14 years in which he hid [studying Torah] in the School of Ever, he did not sleep." Alternatively, the *Midrash* states: "For the 20 years during which he stayed in the house of Lavan, he did not sleep." This is reflected by the verse:[30] "Sleep was snatched from my eyes." Indeed, he did not even lie down at night.

The second interpretation is problematic. We can understand why Yaakov did not sleep while he was in the School of Ever; he was studying Torah. But why did he have to display such self-sacrifice while working for Lavan?[31]

Based on the above, this concept can be understood: the purpose of Yaakov's journey to Charan and his activities there was to refine the world, to elevate the sparks of holiness that existed in Lavan's domain. And due to his commitment to this goal, he did not sleep at all. For at all times, he had to fortify himself against the designs of Lavan, who sought to foil Yaakov's efforts to refine his environment.

27. See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. I, *Parshas Vayeitzei*.
28. *Bereishis* 28:11.
29. *Bereishis Rabbah* 68:11.
30. *Bereishis* 31:40.
31. See *Bava Metzia* 93b, which follows the perspective of Rabbah (*ibid.* 93a) and explains that Yaakov offered Lavan's sheep an extra measure of protection. Even the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* 303:11) which does not follow the perspective of Rabbah and is more stringent, requiring a shepherd to take greater care than an ordinary person, would not require a shepherd to remain awake at all times. See the Alter Rebbe's *Kuntres Acharon* to *Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Nizkei Guf ViNefesh,* note 2.

Lavan told Yaakov:[32] "The daughters are my daughters; the sons are my sons; the flocks are my flocks." What was Lavan's contention against Yaakov? What point was Lavan making? And what argument do Lavan's spiritual heirs offer Yaakov's descendants?

Lavan told him: "You are an elderly Jew, and can do as you like. You're part of the old world, anyway. Go study the Torah day and night, who cares? But the children, that's another story! They're part of the modern world. They're my children. Why do you want to impair them? If you continue in your path, they will not be able to adjust to the world.

"You want to teach them *Yiddishkeit*. All right, but do it in a modern way, with new methods. Don't make them into good-for-nothings."

And similarly, when it came to the sheep, Lavan told him: "I don't interfere in the way you study or pray, that's your domain. But business is *my* realm. 'The sheep are mine.'

"You've got to do things my way. If you want to make a profit, you can't be so careful about the prohibitions against deceit, against taking away another person's livelihood, and the like. If you follow the Torah path in business, it's hard to make a living."

To counter this approach, it was necessary for Yaakov to lose sleep, indeed, not even to lie down. Such self-sacrifice was necessary not only for studying in the School of Ever, but also for his family and material concerns — those matters to which Lavan had a claim. That's what Yaakov meant when he said:[33] "I worked for you 14 years for your daughters, and six years for your flocks," i.e., with painstaking labor, I made sure that everything concerning these matters was conducted according to the Torah. In this

32. *Bereishis* 31:43.
33. *Ibid.*:41.

time of the wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field." On this verse, *Rashi* comments: "This reflects the praise of Yaakov's children. Although it was harvest time, they did not steal anything and bring home wheat or barley. Instead, they took an ownerless plant that grows wild, about which no one would care."

Rashi's words: "This reflects the praise of Yaakov's children" indicates that the surrounding people did not conduct themselves in this manner. Nevertheless, Yaakov's children knew that their conduct must be different. Every dimension of their behavior reflected the Torah's path of holiness. Yaakov had structured his home in a manner that distinguished it from the homes around him.

There is no need to follow the prevailing modes of society. Children must know that their father and mother are different from other parents. Other women dress in clothes that do not necessarily reflect a strong commitment to *tzniyus,* but their mother dresses according to the highest standards of *tzniyus*. Other fathers do not refrain from deceiving a client in business, but their father does not attempt to deceive anyone, and instead conducts his business scrupulously.

Even when a child is very young and cannot appreciate every aspect of the Torah's path of holiness, he will be able to sense that his home is different from all others. Such a child will not model his conduct on that of the children around him. When he sees that other children are conducting themselves improperly, he will conduct himself differently. When he sees that they take from other people's fields, gathering not only wild, ownerless plants like mandrakes, he understands that he should not act this way; he knows these aren't the types of friends he should have.

Such is the conduct that produces a tribe of Reuven and a tribe of Yissachar (who was born as a result of the events which ensued due to Reuven's discovery of the mandrakes).

Moreover, even when a person is involved in his business concerns, they should be only "the labor of your hands,"[41] i.e., they should involve only our hands, the superficial dimensions of our being. One's mind, by contrast, should be concerned with a chapter of *Mishnayos,* a passage of *Tanya,* or a verse in *Tehillim.*

In addition, while conducting one's affairs in the business world, it must be obvious that one is different from other people, as it is written:[42] "I [Moshe] and Your people will be distinguished from all the nations on the face of the earth." A Jew must always stand out from his environment by virtue of his holy conduct, i.e., "Know[ing G-d] in all your ways."[43]

GROWING UP IN YAAKOV'S FOOTSTEPS

This emphasis on holiness must be especially evident in the methods by which children are educated. Education begins in the manner in which the home is run. Needless to say, one's home should be different from the homes of the gentiles. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient, as one's home should also be on a higher level of holiness than those of the majority of Torah-observant Jews. For in many of these homes, the prevailing attitudes resemble those of the world at large.[44] Instead, it is the Torah — *Yiddishkeit* and holiness — which should permeate every dimension of the home.

This also is reflected in the conduct of the Patriarchs, and in particular in the home environment established by Yaakov. It is written:[45] "And Reuven was walking during the

For this reason the prayers are given the status of a Torah statute (*Taanis* 28a). This is not the place to elaborate on this issue.

41. *Tehillim* 128:2. See the explanation of this concept in *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. I, *Parshas Vayakhel.*
42. *Shmos 33:16.*
43. *Mishlei* 3:6; see *Berachos* 63b.
44. See *Sefer Meiras Einayim, Choshen Mishpat* 3:13.
45. *Bereishis* 30:14.

way, he refined the sparks of holiness that were in Lavan's domain, and drew down G-dliness into these material affairs.

THE KEY TO EMPOWERMENT

The above also enables us to understand the continuation of the abovementioned passage from the *Midrash,*[28] which states: "What did he say [during the night while guarding Lavan's flocks]?" and responds: "The 15 psalms beginning with *Shir HaMaalos* in the Book of *Tehillim,"* as reflected in the verse:[34] "*Shir HaMaalos:...* Let Yisrael say." Yisrael refers to our Patriarch Yisrael.

Alternatively, the *Midrash* states that he would recite the entire Book of *Tehillim,* as it is written:[35] "And You, O Holy One, are enthroned upon the praises of Yisrael." Yisrael refers to our Patriarch Yisrael. He would relate G-d's praises, the Book of *Tehillim.*

On the surface, it is difficult to understand the *Midrash's* question: "What did he say?" What Yaakov did at night is obvious: he guarded Lavan's sheep. But it is also obvious that Yaakov would not sacrifice himself to this extent merely to guard sheep. Obviously, his intent was to elevate sparks of holiness. The *Midrash* was asking: What empowered Yaakov to carry out this mission? How was it possible that while being involved with lowly matters such as tending Lavan's sheep, he was able to maintain his own spiritual level and elevate the entities in Lavan's domain as well?

And to this question, the *Midrash* replies that he recited:[36] "*Shir HaMaalos:* I lift my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come?" The Hebrew word מאין,

34. *Tehillim* 124:1.
35. *Ibid.:* 22:4.
36. *Ibid.:* 121:1.

translated as "from where" also means "from nothingness." Both the simple and the extended meaning of the verse are relevant. The simple meaning reflects Yaakov's realization that with his own power, there was nothing he could do. So he sought help from Above. And the extended meaning shows that he understood the way to draw down this Divine assistance — through utter selflessness. He would rely only on G-d, as the psalm continues:[37] "My help is from G-d," and this Divine support empowered him to refine the sparks of G-dliness that existed in Lavan's domain.

Through his efforts, he revealed that G-d is "the Maker of heaven and earth."[36] Not only is G-d Master of the heavens, (i.e., spiritual concerns, the Torah which Yaakov studied in the School of Ever), He is also Master of the earth, the worldly concerns which Yaakov encountered in Charan ("the place which aroused G-d's anger"), the environment of Lavan.

FOLLOWING YAAKOV'S EXAMPLE

The particular elements of the narrative concerning Yaakov also serve as directives for our Divine service. In our involvement with worldly matters, we must take twofold precautions:

a) Before "going to Charan," a person must immerse himself in the study of Torah and in prayer, without any involvement in worldly concerns. Thus while Yaakov stayed in the School of Ever, he was totally absorbed in the study of Torah. And before leaving for Charan, "he encountered the place," i.e., he made a commitment of prayer.[38]

b) Even when a person is "in Charan," and "working for Lavan," he must be involved in Divine service, through

37. *Ibid.*:2.
38. See *Berachos* 26b.

reciting *Tehillim* and the like.[39] This is what elicits Divine assistance in carrying out the mission for which Divine Providence has sent one to Charan.

Moreover, this pattern should also be followed in a Jew's everyday life. At the beginning of the day, before he becomes involved in his business concerns, a Jew should devote a formidable block of time to prayer and study. The first thing a Jew should do when wakes up is *daven*. After *davenning,* everyone should set aside a fixed time to study Torah.[40] Only after becoming satiated with prayer and study should one involve oneself with business.

39. See the collection of letters printed at the conclusion of *Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak,* p. 202; *HaYom Yom,* entry 9 Adar I.
40. See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 155:1, which states that one should fix a time immediately after prayer for the study of Torah.

    The fact that Yaakov did not follow this order — on the contrary, he began by studying Torah in the School of Ever, and only afterwards, "encountered the place," made a commitment of prayer — does not raise a question.

    As explained in *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Berachah* (96a), the Torah studied before prayer is merely an outgrowth of the sublime *Chochmah*. Through the *yichudim* established in prayer, the revelation of the sublime *Chochmah* itself is drawn down into the Torah, and not merely its outgrowths.

    From this statement, we can appreciate that the advantage of having prayer precede the study of Torah applies only after the giving of the Torah. From the standpoint of the Torah, it was only at the giving of the Torah that the potential was granted to draw down its essence, and not merely its ethereal dimensions (see *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* to *Shir HaShirim* 1:3). And from the standpoint of prayer, it was only at the giving of the Torah that the decree preventing the lower creations from ascending to the spiritual realms was rescinded (see *Shmos Rabbah* 12:3).

    This was not true during the era of the Patriarchs. (See the *maamar* entitled *Imras Havayah Tzarufah, Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntresim,* Vol. I, p. 352.) At that time, Divine service could not rise above the spiritual source of the created beings. And thus — in that age — there was an advantage to the Patriarchs' Torah study (and in particular, that of Yaakov, who was identified with this mode of Divine service) above their prayer. (This applies even to the study of Torah before prayer.) For their Torah study drew down at least an ethereal dimension of sublime wisdom.

    On the surface, however, it would appear that the above is not true. For the Patriarchs instituted the prayer services. Indeed the prayers (even those recited after the giving of the Torah) were instituted by the Patriarchs (*Berachos* 26b).