

BESURAS HAGEULO

the whole world the "salvation and deliverance" of the true and complete Redemption.

*(From the talk of the First Light of Chanukah 5752 -
during the world-wide "publicizing the miracle")*

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
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Shagalov
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 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
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 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
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 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
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Shagalov
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602 North Orange Drive.

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Tel.: (323) 934-7095 * Fax: (323) 934-7092

<http://www.torah4blind.org>

e-mail: yys@torah4blind.org

Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,

Executive Director

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What was said previously is of particular relevance for our period, in which the hope and the "I believe every day that he will come" should be with greater strength and greater vigor, until we can physically see the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

* * *

The mitzvah that possesses a unique merit to hasten the Redemption is the mitzvah of tzedekah - "great is tzedekah for it hastens the Redemption."

Therefore it's clear that one should increase in the mitzvah of tzedekah. It's preferable if the increase in tzedekah occurs immediately, so that the Redemption (which comes through the mitzvah of tzedekah) should also come immediately.

Especially since "there is none... among us who knows how long,"² it may be that the only thing lacking to bring the Redemption is nothing more than the giving of several coins to tzedekah!...

As the Rambam expresses³ it in the form of a final legal decision: "every individual must see himself... and also the whole world as half meritorious and half liable... by doing one mitzvah he and the whole world together will be inclined to the side of merit, and bring about for himself and everyone salvation and deliverance." That is, the action of a single individual, adult or child, that gives a single penny to tzedekah, brings for himself and

1. *Bava Basra* 10a. See *Tanya* Chapter 37.

2. *Tehillim* 74:9.

3. *Hilchos Teshuvah*, chapter 3, halacha 4.

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Since we are already after all the requirements and the Redemption still has not yet come - it is most appropriate to be involved with "publicizing the miracle," to publicize to one's self and to others, and indeed everywhere, the miracles which G-d does for us, knowing this is connected with the true and complete Redemption!

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 23 Kislev,
Blessing of the Month Teves 5752)*

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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Volume I: *Bereishit*

•

In English rendition
with Introduction and Notes
by
Jacob Immanuel Schochet

VAYEISHEV
CHANUKAH*

וישב
חנוכה

A

I. The *Maggid* of Mezhirech interpreted¹ the first verse of *Vayeishev*, 'And Jacob dwelled in the land of his father's sojourning . . .' as follows:

Vayeishev Ya'akov (And Jacob dwelled)^a — Jacob was settled in, tarried,^b *be'erezt* (in the land) — in earthliness. Why would he do this? Because of *megurey aviv* (his father's sojourning) — in order to gather (reading *megurey* as an idiom of *oger bakayitz* — gathering in the summer²) the sparks of holiness which are to be found in material things, and to sublimate them to his Father in Heaven.

A settling and tarrying in earthliness constitutes a degradation, but only temporarily; in fact, precisely this descent leads to an enhancement and spiritual elevation.

And thus Scripture continues — *be'erezt kena'an* (in the land Canaan): Canaan refers to trading, as it is said 'there shall be no more a trafficker (*kena'ani* — Canaanite) in the House of the Eternal.'³ Trading involves the spending of money for a subsequent profit, as it is said

* [The festival of *Chanukah* occurs generally near the time of the *sidrot Vayeishev* and *Mikeitz*. These sections of *Likutei Sichot* thus have *sichot* which relate to *Chanukah* as well.]

1. *Or Torah*, *Vayeishev* (ed. Kehot, p. 18a-b).

a. [The conventional translation is offered in parentheses, followed by the extended meanings as interpreted by the *Maggid*.]

b. [The word *vayeishev* means 'staying,' 'tarrying' (see *Megilah* 21a).]

2. Proverbs 10:5

3. Zechariah 14:21.

It has been said many time of late, especially in the last few months, that according to all the signs our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption. Since all aspects of Divine service have already been completed, we stand now ready for the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, as an imminent and immediate reality.

...According to what was said above (and has been stated many times), that according to all the signs all necessary spiritual refinements have been accomplished, it's obvious why we are now ready for the Redemption.

* * *

Further, and this is essential: Recognition, acknowledgment and praising G-d for the miracles He performs, in addition to the concept of expressing gratitude, is relevant to **the coming of our righteous Moshiach in the true and complete Redemption**. For as the Gemara states:¹ G-d desired to make Chizkiyahu Moshiach... the attribute of Divine Justice said to G-d... Chizkiyahu for whom you did all these miracles (who was saved from Sancheriv and healed of his illness²) and didn't sing praises to You, You want to make him Moshiach?"

Obviously, in our context, publicizing the miracles which G-d has done in our times is relevant to bringing the true and complete Redemption in actual reality!

From this we can derive an essential lesson:

1. *Sanhedrin* 94:a.

2. Rashi's commentary there.

during these 192 years. This completion leads to the "end of days"¹⁸ (that is, the end of exile), which also implies the realization of another "end of days,"¹⁹ that is, the deadline for and the beginning of Redemption.²⁰

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 21 Kislev, 5751)

18. See *Zohar* 1:54, end of side a. Beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*. *Eicha Rabba* 2:6 - cited and elucidated in *Or HaTorah*, beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*.

19. [The word for "days" in Hebrew can be spelled with either a "mem" or a "nun": "Yamim" or "Yamin". The former, "Yamim," is connected to the left, the end of exile and removal of the negative. The former, "Yamin," is a phrase from the end of the Book of Daniel, connoting the right, and the revelation of the positive. See the sources in note 14 for elaboration. Translator's note.]

20. [The first "end of days" refers to the "end of the negative forces identified with the left" and leads immediately and automatically to a second, positive "end of days," the Redemption itself. Translator's note.]

'there is he that scatters and yet increases.'⁴

II. The guidance in this interpretation lies in the following:

One need not seek out *major* enterprises exclusively. Our task is to gather, to purify and elevate the sparks of holiness which are present in earthly matters. And this task one is to pursue for the sake of *Aviv* — his Father in Heaven. Israel is compared to a bee: 'Just as everything the bee gathers, it gathers for its owner, so too Israel — whatever they do, they do for their Father in Heaven.'⁵ It is not to be a service for the sake of receiving a physical or spiritual reward,⁶ but purely 'for the sake of his Father in Heaven.'

To rid oneself of ulterior motives, to assure that the *avodah* is pure, one must deal expressly with simple matters. When involved with sublime spheres such as reason and understanding, one may fall prey to ulterior motives; but this is not the case when involved in a simple service with simple matters.

The *Rebbe*, my father-in-law, once said⁷ that the simplicity of ordinary people unites them to the simplicity of the Divine Essence.^c And so here too: the simple *avodah* with simple matters is bound up in the simplicity of the Divine Essence. This indeed is the quality of

4. Proverbs 11:24.

[The term *Kena'an* thus substantiates the premise of *yeridah letzorech aliyah* — 'a descent for the purpose of an elevation' — stated in the preceding paragraph: the involvement with the material leading to an enhancement of the spiritual.]

5. *Devarim Rabba* 1:6. *Likutei Torah*, Re'ey, p. 28d.

6. *Torah Or*, pp. 11b and 18b.

7. *Sefer Hama'amarim* 5709, p. 205.

c. [I.e., the very Essence of Divinity which is a pure simplicity as opposed to a compound or sub-divisible unit, and as signified by the cardinal principle of the Unity (One-ness) of G-d; see R. Bachya ibn Pakuda, *Chovot Halevovot* I:8-9; Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah* I:7 (also *Principles of the Faith* — no. II; and *Moreh Nevuchim*, I:53 and 57).]

kabalat ol — of total submission, by virtue of which Jews are called the 'hosts of G-d';⁸ for the very nature of a soldier is the aspect of *kabalat ol*.

Hence this is the meaning of 'Jacob settled in the land of his father's sojourning': the aspect of 'his Father,' i.e., an *avodah* that is purely and exclusively for 'his Father in Heaven,' can be attained only by means of *eretz megurey* — a simple service without cunning, without sophistry. That is the only way to eliminate ulterior motives and to become bound up with 'his Father.'

III. And that is what Jacob teaches us. He busied himself with the task of *birurim* — the purification of the material and mundane. He went to Haran and worked with the flocks of Laban, truly exerting himself, as it is said, 'By day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes.'⁹ There was not only exertion, but also actual physical hardship.

By Torah-law no man has the right to harm or mortify his own body, for the body is not his private possession but belongs to G-d.¹⁰ Even so, the *Alter Rebbe* refers to this text to support the view that it is permissible to cause hardship to the body where that will serve a personal need (i.e., the gain of money, which in the spiritual sense is the aspect of *birurim*).^{10*}

Nevertheless, Jacob could have argued: 'Why should I descend to Haran?' To be sure, he could not remain together with Esau; but Esau could have been sent to Haran instead, and Jacob could have remained in Beer Sheba to learn in the academy of Shem and Eber!^d

8. Exodus 12:41. See *Hemshech Bati Legani 5710*, sect. 10f. [*Séfer Hama'amarim 5710*, pp. 124f. and 131f.]

9. Genesis 31:40

10. *Shulchan Aruch* of the *Alter Rebbe*, *Choshen Mishpat*, *Hilchot Nizkei Haguf*, par. 4.

10*. *Ibid.*, and see there *Kuntres Acharon*, *ad loc.*, note 2.

d. [See above, *Vayeitze*, note b.]

concluded¹⁴ the service of the era of Exile, namely, the process of collecting and gathering the Divine sparks of the entire world (for which purpose G-d exiled Israel among the nations). (This includes collecting and gathering all the variations, represented by the phrase "kabetz-shanah" - for the word "shanah," (year) is cognate to the word "shinuy," (change) i.e., all the possible changes and variations of [divine sparks]).¹⁵

b) The Hebrew letters for the word 192, קצב, derive from the term "fixed time" or "cut off." This implies that the time for the dissemination of the fountains to the far reaches (as well as the spiritual achievements during this time), which commenced Yud-Tes Kislev 192 years ago, has finally reached the "cut off" period, at last been completed. Therefore we are ready for the realization of the promise that when the fountain [of Chassidus] will be disseminated to the farthest reaches, the master, the King Moshiach, will come.

This is one of the reasons for the publication of a special (and enlarged) edition of the *Tanya* (the "written Torah"¹⁶ of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus) and its distribution to everyone present, men, women and children, in conjunction with the "festival of Liberation of Yud-Tes Kislev - 192nd year"¹⁷ - to emphasize, in a concrete manner, one visible to even eyes of flesh, the completion of the service of disseminating the fountains to the farthest reaches

14. "kabetz" is in the past tense, and not "kovetz" (with an additional "vov" [the number six], which is in the present tense (implying that it could continue for another six months).

15. *Avodas HaKodesh* vol. IV, ch. 19. *Or HaTorah*, *Mikeitz*, 338, end of side b, and in other sources.

16. See *Igros Kodesh of Admor Maharayatz*, vol. IV, p. 261 ff. See there for cross references.

17. Text taken from title page of [this edition] of the *Tanya*.

breach."⁶ Our sages teach that after forty years one has the capacity to "fathom the mind of one's teacher,"⁷ that then one can acquire "a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear"⁸ the teachings learned forty years earlier. Similarly, the "dissemination of the fountains of Chassidus to the outside" followed the Biblical description of "and you shall spread forth to the west and east, north and south,"⁹ reaching even the most remote corners of the globe, breaking all the barriers. Therefore, as both the forty-year barrier to understanding and the barriers to the "dissemination of the fountains of Chassidus" have been breached, we are already prepared for the coming of our righteous Moshiach. Significantly, Moshiach is identified with Peretz,¹⁰ as our sages comment: "Peretz, this is Moshiach, as it says:¹¹ "The breacher [HaPoreitz] had arisen before them."¹²

* * *

On Yud-Tes Kislev of this year, 192 years will have elapsed since the liberation of the first Yud-Tes Kislev (5559-5751).¹³ The significance of the number 192 is that:

a) Rearranged, the Hebrew letters for 192 (קצב) form the word (קבץ) (collecting or gathering). This suggests that we have now

6. *Vayeishev* 38:29.

7. *Avodah Zarah* 5, beginning of side b.

8. *Tavo* 29:3.

9. *Vayeitzei* 28:14.

10. [*Peretz was a son of Judah. His name means "breach." Translator's note.*]

11. *Micha* 2:13.

12. *Agadas Bereishis end of ch. 63. See also Bereishis Rabbah, end of ch. 85 (and Rashi there): "this one who is greater than all the leaders will arise from you (that is, Moshiach, concerning whom it is said:) "the breacher arose before them."*

13. [*The anniversary of the liberation of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad. Translator's note.*]

Jacob, however, did not ask any questions. He left with *kabalat ol* to carry out his task of dealing with *birurim*. And while he did this with *kabalat ol*, it was also with eagerness and joy, as it is said, 'And Jacob lifted his feet.'¹¹ And thus, not only was there no degradation but on the contrary: his offspring, and everything he brought back with him from Haran, were perfect.¹²

This is the meaning of 'in the land of *Canaan*,' read as an idiom of trafficking: Jacob actually gained, because he purified all the *nitzotzot* (sparks of holiness) to be found with Laban — and even those to be found with Esau. In fact, by drawing forth the *makif* (transcendent, all-encompassing aspect) upon Esau, he even effected that '(Esau) kissed him' wholeheartedly.¹³ Moreover, the literal, material sense of *Canaan* as an idiom of trading was also retained: Jacob became very wealthy, much more than before.

IV. The above provides a lesson for every Jew: *Vayeishev Ya'akov be'erezt megurey aviv* leads to *be'erezt kena'an*, because 'there is he that scatters and yet

11. Genesis 29:1. See *Bereishit Rabba* [70:8] and Rashi on this verse.

12. See *supra*, *Vayeitzei*, section VII.

13. Genesis 33:4. *Bereishit Rabba* 78:9. See *Torah Or*, *Vayishlach*, p. 26a.

[Jacob busied himself with an *avodah* of *birurim*, extracting and purifying the sparks of holiness concealed in material things. Just as the verse *Vayeishev Ya'akov be'erezt* . . . is interpreted to refer to the gathering of *nitzotzot*, so is the verse, 'And [Jacob] bowed down *artzah* (to the earth) seven times until he stepped near to his brother [Esau]' (Genesis 33:3). Here, too, the term *artzah* refers to the gathering of holy sparks 'until he stepped near to — and reached — his brother,' i.e., gathering even the good inherent in Esau, to the point that the brotherhood of Esau emerged into the open. 'And Esau ran towards him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him' (Genesis 33:4) — wholeheartedly. Jacob had drawn forth the inner goodness of Esau — extracting the 'inner' or 'spiritual' Esau — thus causing the *makif*, the supernal transcendence, to encompass both of them. (See also above, Noah, note *s*, on the term *makif*.)]

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

8

increases.' By scattering and descending, one gains spiritual and also material sustenance.

This *avodah*, moreover, culminates in 'until I come to my lord, to Se'ir.'¹⁴ For the *avodah* of *birurim* in which *kabalat ol* and enthusiasm penetrate to the very core of the soul, effects a Messianic redemption for that individual,¹⁵ which in turn prepares the way for the Messianic redemption for all — 'And saviors shall go up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Se'ir.'¹⁶

(From the Sicha of Shabbat Parshat Vayeishev 5717)

B

V. In *parshat Vayeishev* the Torah relates that Joseph was 'of handsome form and handsome appearance' and curled his hair.¹⁷ Because of this, 'the wife of his master lifted up her eyes to Joseph' and the subsequent events that led him to prison ensued.^e But even there, 'that which he did, the Eternal made to prosper.'^f

There are two aspects in this story: the first relates to Joseph — that he was 'of handsome form and handsome appearance'; and the second relates to the wife of Potiphar. Both of these aspects offer timeless instruction for the proper conduct of our day-to-day life as does all of the Torah.

VI. Scripture says with regard to Joseph — 'May the Eternal add to me *ben acher* (another son).'^g The *Rebbe*,

"These are the generations of Yaakov, Yoseph"¹ - The name Yoseph, which means "increase," alludes to the increase of the revelation and dissemination of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus by our Rebbes and leaders, successors of the Alter Rebbe, until my sainted father-in-law [Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak], the leader of our generation, the "Yoseph" of our generation. His primary focus was the realization of the deeper sense of the name "Yoseph": "may G-d increase another son,"² that is, to take the "other,"³ the "outsider," and transform him into an insider, a "son."⁴ This goal of transforming the "outsider" into an "insider" became even more pronounced when he arrived in this lower⁵ hemisphere (analogous to the descent of Joseph into Egypt). His arrival here facilitated the revelation of Chassidus (along with the dissemination of Torah and Judaism) to the entire world, even to the lowliest - the most spiritually remote - regions of the world.

In the forty years since his passing, we have experienced an increase in these efforts, an increase which finds expression in the verse, "paratzta alecha paretz," "you have broken through a

1. *Vayeishev* 37:2.

2. *Vayeitzei* 30:24.

3. [Because of the construction of the Hebrew sentence and the double meaning of the word "Acher" (both "another," in the sense of extra, and "other," in the sense of stranger), the phrase may be read in two ways: 1) "May G-d add (increase) for me another son," meaning, give me another son; 2) "May G-d add (increase) for me a son - an other (stranger)," meaning, make the stranger my son. Translator's note.]

4. Or *HaTorah* loc cit.

5. [A reference to the Western Hemisphere which in relation to the Eastern Hemisphere, where the revelation at Mount Sinai occurred, is considered lower. Translator's note.]

14. Genesis 33:14, and Rashi *ad loc.* [quoting *Midrash Rabba*: 'When will he go? In the days of the Messiah, as it is said, 'And saviors shall go up' etc.']

15. See *Igeret Hakodesh*, section IV.

[Cf. above, *Vayishlach*, section V.]

16. Obadiah 1:21.

17. Genesis 39:6, and Rashi *ad loc.*; *Zohar* I:189b.

e. [See Genesis 39:7 ff.]

f. [Genesis 39:23]

g. [Genesis 30:24]

in those days,' so now too, 'at this time',^y we are confident that speedily in our own days we shall merit the descent of the pure Sanctuary built on high to us.^z It remains only to prepare here a fitting place where it can be placed. Jewish youth, and 'Jewish' Jews of middle-age and advanced age, will then illuminate the Sanctuary and the world around them with a light that is not only enjoined as a *mitzvah* but also absolutely pure and absolutely holy. This in turn will effect the dwelling of the *Shechinah* verily 'below', so that this world which until now has been gross, or at least material, will itself become a sanctuary for the Divine Presence.

(From the Sicha of 3rd day of Chanukah 5714)



the *Tzemach Tzedek*, interpreted¹⁸ this as intimating that the *avodah* of Joseph was to transform *acher* (another)^h into *ben* (son);ⁱ in other words, to make *ba'alei teshuvah* — to make people return to G-d.

Joseph was able to do so by virtue of his being 'of handsome form and handsome appearance': he himself was handsome (beautiful) in every respect, with positive precepts as well as with negative precepts. (Numerous sources¹⁹ explain that the term *to'ar* [form] relates to the positive precepts, and the term *mareh* [appearance] relates to the negative precepts.) That is how he was able to impress others and transform 'other-ness' into 'son-ness.'

In this may be found a lesson for every one, since every one is enjoined to be concerned not only with himself but also with others. In order to be effective with others, one must remember the principle of 'first adorn yourself, and then adorn others.'²⁰ When one is personally of 'handsome form and handsome appearance' then can he be effective with others.

This is *not* to say, of course, that one should postpone the concern for another until after attaining ultimate perfection for oneself. That is definitely not the case. One must become involved with others, without delay, regardless of one's personal status.

However, one must also remember to work on his own development, to correct his own deficiencies. Indeed, the correction of personal faults is as relevant to another as it is to oneself. For when one is deficient and neglects to correct his faults, the other will sense this and resist being

y. [A paraphrase of the Liturgical phrase, 'Who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time.']

z. [Unlike the first two Sanctuaries, the third *Bet Hamikdash* (of the Messianic era) is built by the Almighty Himself and will be lowered from Heaven to earth. See *Zohar* I:28a, II:108a, *et passim*; Rashi on *Sukah* 41a, s.v. 'i namy'.]

18. Or *Hatorah, Bereishit-I*, Vayeitze, p. 220a.

h. [*Acher* as a noun means 'another,' 'a stranger,' which as a byname signifies a defection from Torah, as in *Chagigah* 14b.]

i. [*Ben* (son) signifies a closeness to G-d and Torah, as in *Avot* III:14 and *Bereishit Rabba* 82:8.]

19. See *Vayehi Omen* 5627

20 *Baha Metzia* 107b

influenced, and thus one cannot be as effective as one ought to be.

There must, therefore, be an acute awareness of the grave responsibility to correct personal faults, for the failure to do so will prove harmful to others as well as oneself. The greatest efforts must be exerted on one's own form and appearance, because this involves not just one individual but a multitude.

VII. The following lesson, furthermore, may be derived from the incident with the wife of Potiphar:

Our sages tell us that the wife of Potiphar acted out of pure motives.²¹ She foresaw that she would be the ancestress of children by Joseph, but she erred in not knowing that these children would be born to her daughter and not to her.

This teaches us that something may appear, and actually be, altogether incongruous with holiness, though 'internally' — in terms of intent — it is pure and seeks to establish and contribute to holiness.¹

The *Alter Rebbe* discusses in *Tanya*²² the possibility

21. See Rashi on Genesis 39:1 [quoting *Bereishit Rabba* 85:2].

j. [The wife of Potiphar foresaw that she and Joseph would share the same descendants, and thus she rationalized her actions to be warranted in spite of the immorality involved. Her vision of the future, however, was but hazy and incomplete: she did not foresee that Joseph would marry her daughter Osnat (Genesis 41:45).

In any case, there is no basis whatever for the legitimization of her reasoning to the effect that the end hallows the means. The Providential end and intent will somehow be realized, but man himself is always limited and restricted in his actions by his moral imperatives and may not violate these: 'What have you to do with the mysteries of the All-Merciful? You are to do what you were commanded, and let the Holy One, blessed be He, do that which pleases Him!' (*Berachot* 10a)

The practical lesson to be derived from this passage, as explained in the paragraphs following, is merely that one must always seek to recognize the Providential intent in the events actually happening — regardless and notwithstanding the possibly immoral and illegitimate motives of the human element. (Cf. also above, *Vayishlach*, end of note p. and below, note k.)]

22. *Igeret Hakodesh*, section XXV; [see there note 81 in the English translation].

who agrees with us. Here there is a rabbi who agrees with us, and also an elderly Jewish man or woman on our side.' This encourages and strengthens them to resist the temptations all around them.

All credit is due those who teach the students, unimpressed by obstacles, and continue with that particular method of education; and also the activists for education who do not spare of their soul, body and financial resources — giving all they can, and in the course of time they will give beyond their ability — only in order to sustain unmarred education in the spirit of pure *yirat shamayim*.

XVI. One must set out to 'Educate the child according to his way' without any compromises. For that is the lesson taught us by *Chanukah*: they did not seek to employ even leniencies allowed by the *Shulchan Aruch*; they said, 'we wish to have a miracle, because we desire a pure sanctuary, a pure *menorah*, and pure oil.' The subsequent radiance will then be commensurate.

At *Chanukah* the Almighty saw to it that all the different kinds of adversaries were delivered into the hands of 'those occupied with Your Torah.'^v Thereafter they consecrated the Sanctuary with lights which still radiate for us until this day.^w For even as the sun sets and ever-growing darkness descends upon the outside world, Jewish homes are bright, increasingly bright,^x — the light being augmented every evening.

And just as 'He performed miracles for our ancestors

v. [Liturgy for *Chanukah*: 'You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the arrogant into the hands of those occupied with Your Torah.']

w. [See above, end of *Vayishlach*.]

x. [On the first night of *Chanukah* one light is lit, and thereafter they 'increase progressively' — adding one light every night.]

In recent years we have seen how all those who years ago adopted a philosophy of compromise, thinking it would attract the youth (and reasoning that those already observant will remain so), have in fact lost the very youth they sought to guide on that path of compromise. Moreover, they also weakened those young people under their influence who had regarded themselves as thoroughly religious. On the other hand, those who ten, fifteen or twenty years ago followed the principle of not yielding even a detail, particularly in education, have been successful.

XV. All those involved body and soul with *kosher chinuch* (proper Jewish education), and all those who support it financially, literally strengthen it. They are sometimes confronted: "Listen here, why do you insist on supporting a *yeshivah* which cultivates *batlanim* (unpractical persons), incapable of dealing with worldly affairs, one with a beard and another wearing a *kapote* (long frock-coat). You will be responsible for raising people who will not know how to move when they go out into the world."

Even so, these supporters have sufficient strength not to be impressed by such arguments. In fact, the argument itself intimates to them that the very pressure to tear them from their involvement proves that both truth and the rescue of the Jewish people are rooted precisely in their involvement. Thus not only will they not diminish the support — by body, soul, money, or all three of these — but on the contrary: from now on they will work for it with still greater energy.

This resolve on their part also strengthens the students themselves. For they may be asked: 'Your friends, too, receive a Jewish education, but without that kind of zeal and punctiliousness. Why is it necessary for you to be so ardent in religious observance?' And they can respond: 'Here there is a business-man, and there a wealthy person,

of a Jew immersed in prayer being disturbed by a heathen. He states that not only should the Jew not be affected, but on the contrary, the disturbance itself should cause him to strengthen himself to pray with yet greater devotion 'from the depths of the heart.'

This requires further consideration. For if the Providential intent is to arouse the Jew to pray with greater devotion,^k why is it that a *heathen* disturbs him, a fact which seems to suggest a contrary purpose?^l

However, even the heathen himself, in his very core and source (everything being rooted in holiness) knows and senses^m that he must contribute to the purposes of holiness. But as this intent evolves through the external medium of a heathen on this earth — the antithesis of holiness — it manifests itselfⁿ in a contrary way. The ultimate intent, however, remains to contribute to a strengthening of holiness.

The *Maggid* of Mezhirech thus explained,^o along similar lines, the narrative of Laban's pursuing Jacob.^p Laban's pursuit was ultimately to serve the [Divine] purpose of contributing additional words to the Torah; for as this narrative is included in Scripture, a whole passage was added to the Torah.^q

k. [The *Alter Rebbe* explains in *Igeret Hakodesh*, *ad loc.*, that one must view the disturbance, like everything else in life, to be Providential: 'Everything is in the hands of heaven except for the fear of Heaven,' and 'The Omnipresent has many deputies' to achieve His purpose; see there at length.]

l. [The heathen that disturbs is obviously not thinking of holiness; he thinks of his own purposes which may very well be malicious as well.]

m. [At the very least, and likely only, on his sub-conscious level.]

n. [On the conscious level and as an empirical act.]

o. [Or *Hame'ir*, *Vayeitze*, in comment on Genesis 31:23; see also *Or Torah*, *Hossafot*, par. 5.]

p. [Genesis 31:22ff.]

q. [Here too, Laban on the conscious and empirical level was obsessed with his own, evil intentions to pursue and capture Jacob. On the Providential level, however, as far as the ultimate (to him unconscious) Divine intent is concerned, his action served to enhance and contribute to Torah, to the realm of holiness.]

This offers us an instruction relating to every *he'lem vehester* (concealment and obstruction) of the Divine service. In reality, from the perspective of the essence and source of everything, there is no adversary to holiness. In fact, everything is conducive to holiness, except that in being channeled through certain media it may manifest itself in a contrary fashion. In essence, however, it is an aid and contribution to holiness.

Man must not fool himself; he must avoid the mistake made by that heathen [on his conscious level].^r He must realize that 'No evil descends from on High';²³ that is, there are no concealments and obstructions in reality, and all he sees and experiences is ultimately a help for holiness.^s Obstruction thus need not cause any weakness, but should actually stimulate a greater power and strength.

When sensing this, and with determination truly resolving to adopt this perspective, all concealments and obstructions will be nullified by that truth. For through man's realization of this truth — that everything possesses a Divine spark and that everything contributes to holiness — he effects in the very obstruction itself an awakening and uncovering of its own holy spark, and its ultimate purpose to contribute to holiness will become manifest even here in this material world.

VIII. This, then, is the lesson of the statement of our Sages that the wife of Potiphar acted out of pure motives:

There are two approaches to a case of *he'lem vehester*: one is to battle the obstruction, that is, to regard

r. [See above note l.]

23. See *Bereishit Rabba* 51:3. [Cf. above, *Bereishit*, note 12.]

s. [In other words, one should not simply take things at their face-value but search for, and apply, the Providential intent. See the discussion of 'Whoever flares into anger is as if he worships idols,' in *Igeret Hakodesh*, beginning of section XXV.]

his present state and condition this trifle may determine whether he will be 'righteous and inscribed and sealed for everlasting life,' or, Heaven forbid, be of the wicked which Scripture³² refers to as 'an everlasting abhorrence.'³³ And all because of a thread of hair!

For those who lack sufficient strength or sufficient perception to determine whether this is the very detail which determines their stature, today, as truth becomes ever more evident, we have a criterion from the side opposed to spirituality:

We can see the opposition standing fiercely, prepared to lose millions of dollars and even numerous people, losing support from all quarters, but determined to the point of irrationality not to yield on a minor detail. There is a lesson here for us, not to compromise on details which they try to persuade us are trifles; for this may be the 'shoe-string at a time of religious persecution.'³⁴ It is the very thread of hair which determines whether one will remain a Jew in the course of time!

XIV. Additional evidence for the significance of a 'hairthread' is to be found in the fact that our present troubles started, as our sages said, from 'Whoever flatters another — (or according to another version: 'whoever flatters the wicked) — will ultimately fall into his hands.'³⁵

32. Daniel 12:2.

33. *Rosh Hashanah* 16b.

[Cf. above, *Bereishit*, note 8, quoting *Kidushin* 40b to the effect that a single act may determine man's status one way or the other.]

34. *Sanhedrin* 74a-b.

[When there is an official persecution of Judaism even the most insignificant religious custom or habit — for example, Jews may tie their shoestrings differently than do gentiles — must be defended at all costs, having regard to the higher principle at stake.]

35. *Sotah* 41b. (The first version appears in our regular editions of the Talmud, and the second one in *Eyn Ya'akov*.)

We need a generation of young Jews in *This World*, Jews healthy and alive spiritually and thus also healthy and alive physically. Such as these will be able to conquer this world not only for themselves, i.e., making their share of it into a sanctuary for the Almighty, but also for the generation of the middle-aged and elderly.

XIII. There are details which do not appear to matter very much, and to be of no more than miniscule — a hairbreadth's — significance. But this may just be the very hairthread of which the *Gemara* says that it is the root of the total *yetzer hara*: 'To the wicked (the *yetzer hara*) has the appearance of a hairthread.'³¹

How is it possible for a Jew to become a *rasha*, wicked, Heaven forbid? After all, every Jew wants to abide by the Divine Will;^u how then can he perform actions against G-d to the point of being called wicked?

The reason is simply that (the *yetzer hara*) appears to him like a hairthread. He thinks a certain matter to be a trifle, and at times it may indeed be insignificant. But in

the case of capital offenses, has a portion in the World to Come, and refers to Joshua VII:19-25 as a proof-text: Joshua confronted Achan and caused him to confess. From Joshua's reprimand 'Why have you troubled us (*achar-tanu*)? The Eternal shall trouble you *this day*' — we derive that *this day* (in This World) Achan shall be troubled but not in the World to Come.

A Jew is still called an *Israel*-ite though he sinned, and is assured a share in the World to Come; nonetheless, his sin may degrade him, like Achan, to the status of an *achur* — the status of a spiritual cripple.]

31. *Sukah* 52a.

[See also *ibid.*: 'R. Assi said, The *yetzer hara* is at first like the (frail) thread of a spider, but ultimately (Rashi: when man yields to it a little, it grows ever stronger (until)) it becomes like cart-ropes.' Cf. also *Likutei Sichot*, vol. II, p. 321, on a similar maxim cited in *Shabbat* 105b.]

u. [Cf. Maimonides, *Hilchot Gerushin* II:20: '(Every Jew) desires to be of Israel, and desires to abide by all the commandments and to keep away from transgressions; it is only his *yetzer (hara)* that has overwhelmed him.' See also R. Moses Alsheich, *Torat Moshe* on Leviticus 25:35, in comment on *Avot* V:4.]

it as a true concealment and obstacle and to exert all efforts to fight it; the second and preferred approach is to recognize that in essence it is factually an aid to holiness, and thus to awaken and disclose its true nature to manifest itself so that the very obstruction will actually augment the light of holiness.

(From the Sicha of 19th of Kislev 5718)

C

IX. We find two contrary aspects in the context of *Chanukah*:

(a) Some texts²⁴ state that the word *Chanukah* is an idiom of *chinuch* — consecration or dedication. This sense of the word appears plainly in the expressions of *chanukat hamizbei'ach* (the consecration of the altar), and *chanukat bet hamikdash* (consecration of the Sanctuary), each of which signified a beginning: a new beginning for the Divine service (in the Sanctuary in general, and of the altar and *menorah* in particular) — thus an aspect of *chinuch*.^t

(b) The miracle of *Chanukah* consisted of 'finding a flask of pure oil, sealed with the seal of the High Priest.'²⁵ By Torah-law it would have been permissible to light the *menorah* (in the Sanctuary) even with oils that had been defiled, for 'impurity is overridden — or permitted — in the case of a community.'²⁶ Nevertheless, to manifest His

24. See Commentary of *Maharsha* on *Shabbat* 21b.

t. [Dedication or consecration, and education or training, are all appropriate renderings of the Hebrew word *chinuch*, all indicate beginning, inauguration; see Rashi on Genesis 14:14.]

25. *Shabbat* 21b.

26. *Pessachim* 80a.

[When the whole community is impure, the impurity is temporarily overridden on account of communal need (as, e.g., the offering of the Passover-sacrifice; see *Pessachim* VII:4 and 6, and the discussion in the *Gemara* folios 76b ff. and 79a ff.), and according to another opinion it is entirely permitted as though there were no prohibition at all against it.]

love for Israel, the Almighty performed a miracle which not only made it possible to *begin* anew the observance of the *mitzvah* [of lighting the *menorah*] – but also enabled it to be in the most ideal manner without recourse to legal allowances, not even such as are fully consistent with the *Shulchan Aruch*.

This indicates that a matter relating to holiness should be done *ab initio*, right from the very beginning of the consecration, in absolute perfection, in the most ideal manner.

X. The same applies, and most particularly so, to the *chinuch* (education) of boys and girls. From the very beginning, from early childhood on, we must give them *Yiddishkeit in toto*, without any compromises or legal discharges.

One cannot assure that 'even when he is old he will not depart from it'²⁷ by waiting until the child will mature and step into the world and only then informing him that he must struggle and must not be affected by obstructions and impediments, and inspire him to *mesirat nefesh* if necessary. If we really desire that he prevail over all difficulties even 'when he is old,' we must begin to instruct him when he is still a *na'ar*, a child, as noted in this verse.

That is why the sages of Israel strove and exerted every effort to see that the *chinuch* (education) of Jewish boys and girls be in unmarred sanctity. They fought for every detail; they fought against any compromise, even on such details which are not apparently significant, because they knew that the years of education affect the boy or girl for the rest of his or her life. They knew that the children must be strengthened with appropriate weapons to prevail in all the battles they will have to wage in the course of their lives.

27. Proverbs 22:6 ['Educate the child according to his way, even when he will be old he will not depart from it.']

Man is compared to a tree: 'For man is a tree of the field.'²⁸ Making a scar on a fully-grown tree leaves a mark only on that actual spot, and causes no further damage. But when we scar the seed to be planted, there is a strong possibility that the whole tree will be crippled.

XI. The same holds true in the matter of *chinuch*, education:

For a middle-aged person who has already passed the half-way mark of life, a compromise he may feel compelled to make will affect a relatively short period of time. For example, if one has lived consistently for forty years without compromises, subsequent failures and compromises for even a year, need not doom him. The previous forty years confer upon him the capacity again to resist and to overrule the compromise, and to continue with complete *Yiddishkeit*.

But young people raised on compromises are deprived of enthusiasm and zeal for *Yiddishkeit* for the rest of their lives. The scar and defect inflicted on their soul during their youth may, Heaven forbid, render them 'crippled' Jews, deformed individuals.

XII. To be sure, 'a Jew though he sinned is still called *Israel*.'²⁹ Nonetheless, there are such which the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* refers to as 'troubled in This World,' though fortunately they are still assured of the World to Come.³⁰

28. Deuteronomy 20:19, and see *Ta'anit* 7a.

29. *Sanhedrin* 44a.

[*Israel* is the name of honor for the people when faithful to G-d; even so, though they may have sinned 'the title of their sanctity still applies to them' (Rashi, *ad loc.*). Cf. Responsa of *Rashba*, nos. 194 and 242.

The term *Israel* thus is not only a relative term describing the achievement of a specific quality (as in Genesis 32:29); it is the *to'ar atzmi* – a term denoting the very essence of every Jew regardless of the fact that he may have sinned. See at length *Likutei Sichot*, vol. IV, pp. 1208-9.]

30. *Sanhedrin* 43b.

[The *Mishnah ad loc.* rules that a sinner who confesses his sin, even in