

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER IN LAW & MOTHER

Mrs. **Rivkah (Rozanne)** bas Reb **Chaim** ע"ה **Stekler**

Passed away on 13 Kislev, 5786

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTER

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Shemot
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Shagalov

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
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 Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783
 ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
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BESURAS HAGEULO

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)

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 VII: *Shmos*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

SHMOS

WHAT'S IN A NAME

The second book of the *Chumash* is called *Shmos*, "names." It is given this title because the first verse begins:¹ *VeAleh shmos bnei Yisrael*, "These are the names of the children of Israel...." But since the entire book is called *Shmos*, we are forced to conclude that, aside from echoing its first verse, the name communicates the general theme of the book.²

In the first passage of *Shmos*, the names of those who descended to Egypt are listed. This raises an obvious question: These names had already been mentioned in *Parshas Vayigash*³ — in greater detail — in the description of the descent of the Jewish people to the land of Egypt. Why then are they mentioned a second time in *Parshas Shmos*? Moreover, even the mention of the names of Yaakov's sons in *Parshas Vayigash* appears redundant. Their names had already been listed several times. If the Torah had merely said, "Yaakov and his sons descended to Egypt," we would have known their names.

The *Midrash* states⁴ that the Torah mentions the names of the Jewish people to allude to the fact that throughout the

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

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

1. *Shmos* 1:1.

2. See *Midrash Tadasheh*, sec. 20, which states: "There is wisdom, understanding, and knowledge invested in all the holy books [with regard to] why they were written, and the names by which they are called." [See also *Tanya, Shaar Ha-Yichud V'haEmunah*, ch. 1, which states that the name of an entity communicates its life force.]

3. 46:8ff.

4. *Paneach Razah*, at the beginning of *Parshas Shmos*, in the name of the *Midrash* [See *Vayikra Rabbah* 32:5]. See also the commentary of the *Baal HaTurim*.

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.

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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.

210 years they lived in Egypt, they did not change their names. Just as they entered Egypt bearing Jewish names, they left bearing Jewish names; they did not change their names to fit the Egyptian culture. To emphasize this point, the Torah lists their names when they enter exile, and repeats them at the beginning of the book which describes their exodus.

This, however, does not explain why all the names of the tribes are mentioned. According to the *Midrash*, all that would have been necessary was to say that they did not change their names. Beginning the book with the verse: "These are the names of the children of Israel...", and then listing the names of the individual tribes points to a deeper intention, for every word in the Torah is carefully chosen.

THE STRENGTH TO PERSEVERE

On the verse:⁵ "These are the names of the children of Israel...", the *Midrash* comments:⁶

The Jewish people are comparable to the hosts of the heavens. Here, [with regard to the Jewish people,] the word "names" is used, and with regard to the stars, the word "names" is used, as it is written:⁷ He counts the number of the stars; "He gives names to them all."

And so, when the Jews descended to Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, counted them, and since they are compared to stars, He called them all by name, as it is written: "These are the names of the children of Israel..."

The *Midrash* thus emphasizes that G-d called the Jews by name to underscore their importance. For whenever Jews enter exile, there is a possibility that they will be nullified,

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

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

3. *Brochos* 12b.

5. *Shmos* 1:1.

6. *Shmos Rabbah* 1:3.

7. *Tehillim* 147:4.

absorbed into the host culture. By counting them and calling them by name, G-d insures that this will not take place.

To explain this in *halachic* terms: When a forbidden entity is mixed with more than 60 times its quantity of *kosher* food, the forbidden entity is considered *batul*, insignificant. There is, however, a *halachic* principle that a *davar shebiminyan*, an entity which is counted, will never become *batul*. The very act of counting it endows it with importance. Thus no matter what its ratio with regard to *kosher* food, its presence is never nullified.⁸

A similar concept applies with regard to any object with a name. One of the *mitzvos* of the Torah is *shichachah*, to abandon produce which one forgot to reap so that the poor may harvest it.⁹ If, however, one forgets to reap the produce of a tree with a specific name, one need not leave the produce for the poor. Since the tree has a name, it is never truly forgotten. For example, the *Mishnah* states¹⁰ that whenever an olive tree has a specific name, the laws of *shichachah* do not apply. Although it may appear that the owner of the tree has forgotten it, it has a name, and so has a permanent place in his thoughts. This represents an even greater degree of importance than a *davar shebiminyan*.¹¹

Thus, before the Jews went into exile, G-d counted them and called them by name. Although the Jews appear to have been forgotten in exile, as it is written:¹² "And Zion lamented, 'G-d has forsaken me, and the L-rd has forgotten me,'" since the Jews are an important entity, as reflected by the fact that G-d counts them and calls them by name, they will never

that we have already concluded all matters of Divine service and 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 אראנו - 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)

8. Beitzah 3b; Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 110:1.

9. Vayikra 19:9-10.

10. Pe'ah 7:1.

11. For the law that a *davar shebiminyan* never becomes *batul* is a Rabbinic ordinance (Ramah, Yoreh De'ah, loc. cit.), while the concept that the laws of *shichachah* do not apply to a tree with a name is a point of Scriptural law (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Matanos Aniyim 5:23)

12. Yeshayahu 49:14.

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.

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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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,

become nullified or abandoned. For G-d will never forget them.

For this reason, although at the outset, the *Midrash* compares the Jews to the hosts of heaven as a whole, the proof-text mentions the stars. For the stars possess an advantage over the sun and moon, about which it is written:¹³ "The moon will be humiliated and the sun ashamed." The stars — and the Jewish people for whom they serve as an analogy — will shine forever.

As mentioned on several occasions,¹⁴ all the interpretations of a verse share a connection. This holds true with regard to the two views mentioned above. Calling the Jews by name made them a significant entity which can never become nullified. This in turn endowed them with the strength to persevere. They were able to endure the Egyptian exile, and emerge bearing the same names as when they descended.

IN THE IMAGE OF G-D

Another concept can be derived¹⁵ from the verse: "These are the names...." The *Midrash* teaches:¹⁶

With regard to the wicked, it is written: "Goliyus was his name,"¹⁷ "Nevel was his name,"¹⁸ i.e., their personal names preceded the word "name." With regard to the righteous, by contrast, it is written: "His name is Kish,"¹⁹ "His name is Saul,"²⁰ "His name is Yishai,"²¹ i.e., the word "name" precedes their individual name.

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

13. *Ibid.* 24:23.

14. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Toldos* in this series.

15. See *Or HaTorah*, the beginning of *Parshas Shmos*.

16. *Rus Rabbah* 4:3; see also *Bamidbar Rabbah* 10:5; *Esther Rabbah* 6:2.

17. *I Shmuel* 17:4.

18. *Ibid.* 25:25.

19. *Ibid.* 9:1.

20. *Ibid.*:2.

21. *Ibid.* 17:12.

The righteous resemble their Creator. For with regard to G-d as well, it is written:²² “My Name, יה-וה, I did not make known to them.”

A similar pattern is followed in this week’s Torah reading, which begins: “These are the names” and only afterwards states those names “Reuven, Shimon, Levi....” Here too, it is demonstrated that “the righteous resemble their Creator.”

There is also a connection to the two interpretations of the *Midrash* mentioned previously. The Jews are described using stars as an analogy, and did not change their names because they are a nation of righteous men²³ who resemble their Creator.

ONLY A GLIMMER

The above concepts can be clarified by understanding the inner meaning of a name. The Divine light which descends to bring the world into being can be considered as G-d’s name. To clarify the analogy: A name is merely a glimmer of the entity which it identifies. For example, there is the saying,²⁴ “The name of the king is called upon them,” i.e., it is only the name, and not the essence of the king, by which his country is known.

A name does not relate to a person’s essence. It merely serves as a medium through which one person can establish a relationship with another. Similarly, with regard to G-d, His name relates to the creation — a realm apart from Himself. For Himself, He has no need of a name; He is holy and separate. At this level, created beings have no commonalty with Him.

Similar concepts apply with regard to the Jewish people. Jewish souls share a bond with G-d’s essence, for they are “an

dom from foolishness”¹⁵ — is it possible to adjust one’s *tefillin*, subjugating one’s heart and mind to G-d. And this will cause “all the nations of the earth (including the gentile within each person, and the gentile nations at large) to see and fear you.”¹⁶

(Adapted from *Sichos* of the 2nd Night of Pesach, 5720)



22. *Shmos* 6:3.

23. *Yeshayahu* 60:21.

24. See *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 13 אדון עולם.

15. *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 56.

16. *Devarim* 28:10; see *Berachos* 6a.

This matter was once discussed in the presence of the *Tzemach Tzedek*. When it was said that the Alter Rebbe broke the lid off his snuff box, the *Tzemach Tzedek* objected, saying “My grandfather did not break things. He did not break himself, nor did he break other things.” Rather, the *Tzemach Tzedek* explained, there was probably a thin shaft connecting the lid to the snuff box, and his grandfather simply removed the shaft.¹²

The *Tzemach Tzedek* was absolutely positive that the Alter Rebbe had not broken the lid. As he stated, he knew his grandfather would not break even an inanimate object.

All the stories about *tzaddikim* serve as directives for us in our Divine service. The above story teaches that without breaking anything — not oneself, not others, not even an inanimate object — it is possible to obtain an article that enables one to adjust one’s *tefillin*, the intent of *tefillin* being to subjugate one’s heart and mind to G-d.¹³

What is the symbolic meaning? That we do not have to break ourselves in order to subjugate our minds and hearts to G-dliness. All that is necessary is to remove the shaft which ties the G-dly soul to the animal soul.

For there are times when the animal soul approaches the G-dly soul and tries to convince it to do something other than what is mandated by the subjugation of heart and mind. The animal soul will say: “Don’t worry, what I’m offering you is within the realm of holiness.”¹⁴ At that time, the connection between the two must cease.

A person must know clearly which advice comes from the G-dly soul, and which advice comes from the animal soul. Only when one has the proper understanding — “the free-

12. *Sefer HaSichos* 5696, p. 130.

13. *Shulchan Aruch* and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, ch. 25; *Tanya*, the beginning of ch. 41.

14. See the latter portion of the *Sichah* of *Parshas Shmos* in this series.

actual part of G-d.”²⁵ Therefore other created beings cannot fully appreciate a Jewish soul.

“The righteous resemble their Creator,” and “Your nation are all righteous.”²¹ Just as only G-d’s name, i.e., merely a glimmer of His essence, is en clothed in the world, so too, it is only a glimmer of a Jew’s soul which is en clothed in his body.²⁶ For the body is not able to contain the soul in its entirety.

This is also alluded to in the verse, “These are the names of the children of Israel who entered the land of Egypt.” It is only “the names” — a glimmer of the Jews’ souls — which experienced “Egypt,” i.e., the boundaries and limitations of this material world. The soul’s essence, by contrast, does not enter exile.

The fact that the soul itself cannot be confined empowers the glimmer which is en clothed in the body to resist being affected by the concealment and veiling of G-dliness that characterizes exile. The soul thus remains perfect despite the fact that the body in which it is en clothed has descended into exile.

AN INTERACTIVE BOND

The dynamic is two-fold. That element of the soul which remains unconfined by the body empowers the glimmer en clothed in mortal flesh. Conversely, the Divine service accomplished by the “en clothed” glimmer is able to elevate the soul’s essence.

The purpose of a soul’s descent into this material realm is the ascent which such a descent makes possible. As is well known,²⁷ this ascent is made, not only by the glimmer

25. *Tanya*, ch. 2.

26. See *Berachos* 10a, which states: “Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, invests Himself in the Word, so too the soul invests itself in the body.”

27. See the *maamar Zeh HaYom*, 5709, sec. 2-3 [*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709, p. 4ff].

enclothed in the body, but also by the essence of the soul as it exists in the spiritual realms. This essence rises to a level that it could never have attained without the Divine service of the glimmer enclothed in flesh.

The reason that the glimmer, the name, of a soul can elevate its essence is because the name *invokes* that essence.²⁸ Thus when we call a person by name, he responds with his entire essence. And as is well known, when a person is unconscious, one of the ways to awaken him is to whisper his Jewish name in his ear. This will arouse the essence of his soul and draw down energy to reanimate the body.

This also reflects how “the righteous resemble their Creator.” For through the Divine service of the Jewish people in this world — where only a glimmer of G-dliness shines forth — satisfaction is generated for G-d Himself. And so our Sages speak²⁹ of G-d: “Pleasure is aroused before Me, that I spoke and My bidding was fulfilled.”

AN INDIVIDUAL JOURNEY

Our Divine service in this world is to refine our bodies, our animal souls, and the portion of the world which is granted to each of us. This implies that we need not be affected by the difficulties and concealment of G-dliness brought about by the body and the animal soul. Instead, we most forcefully devote ourselves to matters of the soul — the study of Torah and the observance of *mitzvos*. These are goals which all Jews share.

Moreover, every individual has a personal mission. He must refine and transform his body, his animal soul, and his portion of the world, making them a vessel for G-dliness. Each person’s mission is unique, for everyone is entrusted with a specific type of Divine service.

28. *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709, p. 17.

29. *Sifri*, *Bamidbar* 15:7, 28:8.

same abundant joy which was expressed at the Alter Rebbe’s passing in 5573 is felt again, and indeed, in a more elevated manner.⁸

BEYOND LIMITS

With regard to happiness, it is said:⁹ “Happiness breaks through barriers.” For happiness enables a person to overcome his limits. May G-d grant all those who share a connection with the Alter Rebbe the potential to break through the barriers which hamper them, both in material and spiritual matters. May the blessings they receive be expressed without impediment, following the pattern: “His word runs most swiftly.”¹⁰ This includes those who share a spiritual connection to the Alter Rebbe because they follow his paths in deed, speech, and thought, and those who share a genealogical connection, for “a father endows his son...”¹¹ regardless of the son’s level, simply because he is his son.

May G-d grant that all of these continue to follow the Alter Rebbe’s paths in thought, speech, and deed in their day-to-day life. In particular, may they learn *Chassidus* — for this is what the Alter Rebbe sacrificed himself for — and follow Chassidic customs and paths.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Va’eira*, 5717)

WITHOUT BREAKING ANYTHING

The Alter Rebbe owned a silver snuff box which lacked a lid. The reason is that the lid was shining silver, and so the Alter Rebbe would use it as a mirror to see that his head *tefillin* were properly positioned.

and is associated with the same Torah reading as it was in 5573. See the *sichah* for *Yud-Tes Kislev* in this series.

8. See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 14, which explains that every year, a new light which has never been revealed previously shines forth.

9. *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5657, p. 223ff.

10. *Tehillim* 147:15, explained in *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshas Korach*.

11. *Ediyos* 2:9.

The same spiritual influences expressed on the first occasion an event took place are repeated every year.⁵ Therefore a *tzaddik's yahrzeit* is a day of rejoicing.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ALTER REBBE'S PASSING

Although the reoccurrence of a positive event brings happiness, the happiness produced by a *new* event is much greater.

With regard to the souls of most *tzaddikim*, the happiness accompanying their passing is not that which attends a new event, even at the time of their passing. For most souls of the present generation are not “new souls.” They are reincarnated souls, which have lived previously on this earthly plane. Therefore the ascent these *tzaddikim* achieve at the time of their passing is not a cause for tremendous rejoicing, for it is an event which occurred previously. In their previous lifetimes, they also achieved an ascent at the time of their passing. It is true that after every incarnation, the soul reaches even greater peaks, but since the soul has already experienced an ascent of this nature, the repeated achievement is not a reason for great celebration.

The Alter Rebbe's soul, by contrast, was “a new soul,”⁶ a soul which had never descended to the world before. Therefore his passing was an occasion for joy unparalleled by the passing of other *tzaddikim*.

As mentioned previously, every year the spiritual influences associated with past events are expressed in the same manner as they were originally. Every year⁷ on 24 Teves, the

5. See *Lev David* (from the *Chida*), ch. 29, based on the *Ramaz*, *Tikkun Shovavim*; see also the commentaries to the *Mishnah*, *Gittin*, the conclusion of ch. 3, and the responsa of R. Y. Irgis (printed at the conclusion of *Mavo Pesachim*), ch. 5.

6. *Sichas Chai Elul*, 5705 (*Likkutei Dibburim*, p. 473).

7. This receives greater influence in the year in which this *sicha* was printed, 5723, for this year marks a milestone, the 150th anniversary of the Alter Rebbe's passing. Also, this year 24 Teves occurs on the same day of the week

To highlight the individual nature of these endeavors, the Torah mentions not only “the children of Israel,” but the particular *names* of Yaakov's children. For a Jew's name reflects the pattern through which a soul's connection to the body is expressed. The soul itself is nameless; it is only through its connection with a body that it adopts a specific motif. Since every human body is unique, every Jewish soul adopts a unique pattern, and is thus given a name of its own. This name alludes to its particular mode of Divine service.

Through “the names of the children of Israel” — outlining the Divine service required of every Jew in refining his body, animal soul, and portion of the world — the purpose of the descent to Egypt is accomplished, and the soul ascends to higher peaks.

THE MESSAGE IN THE NAME SHMOS

On this basis, we can understand why the entire book is referred to as *Shmos*, for this name expresses the theme of the entire book. The first book of the Torah, *Bereishis*, is referred to as “The Book of the Just,”³⁰ because it describes the lives of the Patriarchs, who personified justice. They were on a spiritual level that precluded the possibility of exile.

Although Yaakov also descended into Egypt, he did not experience the bitter nature of the Egyptian exile. Indeed, the *Midrash* states³¹ that as long as Yosef was alive, the Jews were not oppressed by the Egyptians. The rationale for this is that the spiritual level of the Patriarchs was above exile. And since Yosef represented “the posterity of Yaakov”³² — i.e., he communicated Yaakov's spiritual influence to lower levels — as long as Yosef was alive, it was impossible for the Jews to be oppressed. Only after Yosef died, in the time of “the children

30. See *Yehoshua* 10:13, as interpreted by *Avodah Zarah* 25a.

31. *Shmos Rabbah* 1:4.

32. See *Bereishis* 37:2, as interpreted by the *sichos* of *Parshas Vayeishev*, and *Parshas Vayechi* in this series.

of Israel” (i.e. in the era when Yaakov’s influence was not felt as palpably) did the oppression begin. At that time was initiated the Divine service implied by the verse “And these are the names of the children of Israel...,” for it is these endeavors which brought about the redemption.

Accordingly, the name *Shmos* relates to the general theme of the book. For it alludes to the Divine service carried out by the Jewish people in exile, emphasizing that:

a) only the name, a glimmer of the soul’s essence, descends into exile. The essence of the soul remains above exile, and endows the glimmer with power to complete its task, and

b) our mission is to involve those elements related to our names, i.e., a person’s own body, his animal soul, and his portion of the world. These endeavors lead to the “exodus from Egypt,” and allow the essence of the soul to ascend. The crowning phase of this sequence is to make “a Sanctuary” of which it is said:³³ “I will dwell within.” As interpreted by *Chassidus*,³⁴ this means “within each and every individual.”

APPRECIATING THE DIRECTIVES FOR OUR OWN DIVINE SERVICE

As with all the narratives of the Torah, the *parshah* of *Shmos* contains a lesson relevant in every generation and place. Even in the most difficult phases of exile, a Jew must realize that he need not become intimidated, and certainly he need not despair, heaven forbid. For the essence of his soul is never in exile, and nothing can conceal it. Moreover, this essence empowers a Jew as he exists in this realm not to be daunted by the exile, and to carry out his mission to refine his body, his animal soul, and his portion of the world.

33. *Shmos* 25:8.

34. See *Basi LeGani*, 5710, sec. 1.

CHOF DALED TEVES

WHY WE REJOICE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF A TZADDIK’S PASSING

One of the reasons that the anniversary of a *tzaddik*’s death is considered a day of rejoicing¹ is that when a *tzaddik* dies, the purpose of his soul’s descent into a physical body has been accomplished.

To explain: The intent of the descent of the soul to this earthly plane reflects the paradigm of “descent for the sake of ascent.”² Through the Divine service it accomplishes while in a body — the study of Torah and the observance of *mitzvos* — a soul can ascend to a higher level than that on which it existed before its descent. Although in its non-corporeal state, the soul is “hewed out from below the throne of glory,”³ and is “pure,”⁴ these spiritual heights cannot be compared to the peaks it reaches through its Divine service on the material plane.

When are these peaks reached? At the time the soul completes the mission for which it was sent to the material plane. This is the reason the passing of *tzaddikim* is considered an occasion for joy. For a *tzaddik* surely completed the mission with which he was charged in its entirety.

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1. There are other texts which explain why this concept does not apply to all *tzaddikim*.
 2. Cf. *Makkos* 8a. See the sources given in the index to *Likkutei Torah*, entry *neshamos*, sub-entry, *yeridah tzorech aliyah*.
 3. See *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 113a.
 4. Morning blessings, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 6; see *Likkutei Torah*, the beginning of *Parshas Haazinu*.

This initiative was the hallmark of a power that knows no bounds, the power of *mesirus nefesh* which transcends reason. Its expression involved redirecting the power of the G-dly soul to its proper place.

And this leads to freedom. As the *Tikkunei Zohar* states,⁶³ this includes “freedom from foolishness.” A person gains a genuine appreciation of what comes from the G-dly soul, what comes from the animal soul, and what comes from even lower sources of influence.

This freeing of the powers of the G-dly soul from exile is the spiritual counterpart of the exodus from Egypt. And this in turn is the catalyst which brings the actual redemption.

(Adapted from *Sichos* of the 2nd Night of *Pesach*, 5719, 5720)



63. *Tikkun* 56.

This is a mission of tremendous import, enabling the essence of the soul to ascend to a higher rung, and ultimately bringing about the indwelling of G-d's presence on earth as will be revealed in the ultimate Redemption. May it take place in the near future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shmos*, 5719)

THE FOCUS OF A JEW'S LIFE

A Jew's true vitality is not reflected in his material life, but in his spiritual life.³⁵ In this vein, although “[the meaning of] a verse never extends beyond its simple interpretation,”³⁶ the words:³⁷ “And they embittered their lives,” can also be understood to mean that the tasks which the Egyptians made the Jews perform embittered their spiritual life.

This is somewhat difficult to understand. One can readily comprehend how “harsh labor with mortar and bricks”³⁸ can darken one's material existence, but how can it have such an effect on one's spiritual life? True, back-breaking labor presents a challenge to one's study of the Torah and observance of *mitzvos*. The verse, however, does not speak of challenges, it speaks of the Jews' lives being “embittered.” How is it possible for physical oppression to embitter spiritual life?

DEFINING PURPOSE

This question can be resolved by considering a law which applies to Jews sold into servitude. It is forbidden to make such a servant perform *avodas perach*, “oppressive labor.”³⁹

35. See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 27, which states that the life of a *tzaddik* — and “your nation are all *tzaddikim*” (*Yeshayahu* 60:21) — is “faith, love and fear of G-d.” This applies to all Jews; when a person realizes this potential and lives as a *tzaddik*, his life centers solely on these three attributes.

36. *Shabbos* 63a.

37. *Shmos* 1:14.

38. *Ibid.*

39. See *Vayikra* 25:46.

The *Rambam* defines⁴⁰ the term as “work that has no limit, and which is performed without any purpose.” In the gloss to that *halachah*, the *Hagahos Maimoni* explains that this definition is derived from the description of the *avodas perach* which the Jews performed in Egypt.

The concept of “work that has no limit, and which is performed without any purpose” makes it possible to understand how the Egyptians embittered the Jews’ spiritual life. When a Jew involves himself in material affairs according to the directives of the Torah, his efforts are limited and purposeful. For the Torah has instructed that Jews involve themselves in material affairs only to the extent that they create a vessel to receive G-d’s blessings. As it is written:⁴¹ “And G-d will bless you in all you do.” Man must “do,” but his doing merely creates a vessel; the key to success is G-d’s blessing.

And of course, there are limits to the amount of energy one invests in earning a livelihood. This is alluded to in the Chassidic interpretation⁴² of the verse:⁴³ “You shall eat the labor of your hands” — that our labor should be performed by “our hands,” i.e., the external and lower facets of our personalities. Our uniquely human potential should be free for other concerns.

Moreover, one’s involvement in business should also have a time limit, so that there is enough leisure for communal prayer, fixed times for Torah study, and the like.

This will also make a person’s activity “purposeful.” For if business activity is carried out according to the Torah’s directives, it will serve as an appropriate vessel for G-d’s blessings.

40. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Avadim* 1:6.

41. *Devarim* 15:18.

42. [*Likkutei Torah*, *Shelach*, p. 42d.] See the explanation of this concept in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. I, *Parshas Vayakhel*, and in the *sichah* to *Parshas Vayeitzei* in this series.

43. *Tehillim* 128:2.

Unfortunately, there are “souls that have lost their way”⁶⁰ — people who ignore the mission with which they have been charged, and instead involve themselves in matters intended for others. These could be businessmen from whom it is demanded that they give *tzedakah*. How do they reply? They explain that they are too busy, they must prolong their prayers, and devote themselves to intense study. And directly afterwards, they’ve got to run to their business. And thus they have no time to give *tzedakah* or do a favor.

In the same vein, there are *yeshivah* students who so dedicate themselves to *tzedakah* projects that they ignore the fixed times established for the study of Torah. The confused souls put their spiritual energies into following a path of service not their own.

Although the “too busy” businessman and the “too kind” *yeshivah* student are each engaged in holy endeavors, their souls’ purpose is not being met; for them, involvement in these misguided activities “embitters [their] life,” for it uses the energy of their G-dly souls for objectives outside its proper scope, and indeed such mistaken activity interferes with the accomplishment of that purpose.⁶¹ This is perhaps why such aberrant behavior lasts only a short time.

THE AWARENESS OF FREEDOM

To offset these forces which “embittered [the Jews]’ lives,” the Jews obeyed G-d’s command:⁶² “Select and take sheep... for the *Pesach* sacrifice.” It is this which generated the merit for the exodus. For bringing this sacrifice involved taking the false deity of the Egyptians, a sheep, and slaughtering it before the Egyptian’s eyes.

60. *Sefer HaSichos* 5704, p. 154.

61. See *Tsafos*, *Kesubos* 17a, entry *mivatlin*.

62. *Shmos* 12:21.

employ it for purposes other than the Divine service destined for him. This too can hamper one's spiritual progress.

There is a specific mission for which every soul descends to this world. When the *yetzer hora* wants to hinder a person's Divine service, it won't necessarily tell the person to ignore Divine service entirely, for there are those who will not listen to such enticement. So the *yetzer hora* instead encourages such people to devote themselves to a path of service which is not their own.

In general, Jews are divided into two categories:

a) Torah scholars, and in particular *yeshivah* students, whose fundamental thrust is the study of Torah. They must also perform deeds of kindness (in both the material and spiritual sense), thus spreading the wellsprings of *Chassidus*. Such kindness is intrinsically related to success in Torah study, for our Sages have taught:⁵⁶ "If one says, 'I will be devoted solely to Torah,' he will not even possess Torah." And thus a Torah scholar must always couple his endeavors with deeds of kindness.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, his primary focus remains the study of Torah.

b) Businessmen, whose primary focus is the observance of *mitzvos*, and in particular, the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, which is the paradigm of all *mitzvos* that involve deed.⁵⁸ In this way, he spreads the wellsprings of *Yiddishkeit*, Torah and *Chassidus*, which is a spiritual expression of *tzedakah*.

But when it comes to holiness, all our different attributes are interrelated, and thus businessmen must also have fixed times for the study of Torah to complement their efforts in the realm of *tzedakah*.⁵⁹

56. Yevamos 109b. See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 266, note 7.

57. See also the *Sichah* of *Parshas Vayigash* in this series.

58. See *Tanya*, ch. 37.

59. See *Sichas Chai Elul*, 5722 [*Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IX, p. 346].

If, by contrast, a person invests his mental energies in business; i.e., he thinks deeply and seeks crafty plans and cunning devices to make a profit, his efforts will be "work that has no limit, and which is performed without any purpose." These endeavors will not bring profit, as reflected by the verse:⁴⁴ "Nor do the wise possess bread." For a person's livelihood is granted by G-d; human craft and cunning will not bring anything more; on the contrary, they may cause one's portion to be reduced.⁴⁵

Nor will such efforts have a limit, for a person who relies on such devices will know no restraints. Look at him at work. The evening has come; all his workers are homeward bound. It's time to close the shop, but he is still preoccupied, worrying about his business.

Moreover, when he finally comes home, instead of setting a fixed time for study, learning both *Nigleh* and *Chassidus*, he is still busying running around — either actually running around, or mentally spinning. Even when he goes to sleep, "[his] thoughts come to [him] on [his] bed;"⁴⁶ he is still planning strategy. As a result, even when he sleeps, his dreams revolve around his business.⁴⁷

A similar trap lies in wait for Torah scholars. Although their energies are not concentrated on business, they may be centered on honor and reputation. If someone makes a remark about such a person which is not entirely to his liking, he becomes upset. After all, he is a Torah scholar, and must defend the honor of the Torah. And since "the righteous resemble their Creator," he must follow G-d's ways. Just as G-d rewards man "measure for measure,"⁴⁸ so must he settle accounts with the one who belittled him. Moreover, since the honor of the Torah is involved, he must pay that person back

44. *Koheles* 9:11.

45. See *Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 107b.

46. *Daniel* 2:29.

47. See *Berachos* 55b.

48. *Nedarim* 32a et al.

with a double and perhaps even a manifold measure. This is what concerns him, and this is what he thinks about all day.

At night, when he makes a *cheshbon hanefesh*, thinking over his spiritual endeavors, his reputation and the affronts done to it are his focus. And needless to say, his vindictiveness affects his dreams as well.

Of course, there are material concerns which are purposeful. For example, thinking about guarding one's physical health is a valid activity. Since "maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the paths of G-d,"⁴⁹ good health is necessary for one's Divine service.

This is especially true when a person studies *Chassidus* and knows the Baal Shem Tov's interpretation⁵⁰ of the verse:⁵¹ "When you see a donkey... fallen under its load,... you shall surely help unload it."

The Baal Shem Tov explains that donkey (חמור, in Hebrew) refers to our material concerns (חומריות) and more particularly to the body. Our approach should not be to break or ignore the body, but to lift it up. This is especially true with regard to a Jewish body, for a Jewish body is chosen by G-d Himself, as it were.⁵² Since a Jew's body is so dear, he must care for it. This concern is a material activity with a purpose.

Crafty business dealings and the pursuit of honor, by contrast, are "work that has no limit, and which is performed without any purpose."

49. Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos De'os* 4:1. See the discussion of this quote in the notes to the *Sichah* of *Parshas Vayeishev* in this series.

50. Cited in *HaYom Yom*, entry Shvat 28.

51. *Shmos* 23:5.

52. *Tanya*, ch. 49. See also *Sichas Simchas Torah*, 5669 (*Toras Sholom*, p. 120ff).

ABOVE ALL LIMITS AND PURPOSE

On this basis, we can appreciate what the Torah means when it says the Egyptians embittered our spiritual life. For the Egyptians endeavored to tap the unique spiritual potential possessed by the Jews and use it for their own purposes.

To explain: Everything which G-d created was made with a limit, and with a specific intent. What is the only thing capable of "work that has no limit"? Our G-dly souls, for the soul is connected with G-d's essence, which is truly unlimited. And because of that connection, the soul is granted unbounded powers.

Moreover, this potential also transcends any sense of purpose. For example, every Jew possess a potential for *mesirus nefesh*, self-sacrifice that transcends the limits of reason.⁵³ This reflects a *positive* version of "work without a purpose," for such Divine service is performed without any concern for reward. Indeed, it is *avodah lishmah* in the fullest sense.⁵⁴

It is possible, however, to employ this limitless power of the G-dly soul for evil purposes. "They consider darkness as light, and light as darkness; they consider the bitter sweet, and the sweet bitter."⁵⁵ This leads to back-breaking work, "work that has no limit, and which is performed without any purpose." And this embitters the spiritual life of the G-dly soul.

IN TOUCH WITH ONE'S PERSONAL MISSION

We can also appreciate these concepts on a higher plane, i.e., a person can use his spiritual vitality in the sphere of holiness rather than for worldly matters, but nevertheless

53. See *Tanya*, ch. 18.

54. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, the conclusion of *Hilchos Teshuvah*; *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshas Re'eh*, p. 24d.

55. *Yeshayahu* 5:20.