

IN HONOR OF
Reb Yaakov ben Chava שיח' Greenberg
on the occasion of his birthday,
Shabbat Parshat Vaeira, 26 Tevet, 5778
May he go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FRIENDS
Rabbi & Mrs. Yosef Yitzchok and Gittel Rochel שיח' Shagalov

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IN HONOR OF
Menachem Mendel שיח' Wiener
On the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah, 29 Tevet, 5778

AND IN HONOR OF HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS שיח' Wiener

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Va'eira, 5778
(Vol. 14)



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VAAD L'HAFOTZAS SICHOS
788 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213
5770 • 2010

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

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

by the

Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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Volume II: *Shemot*

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In English rendition
with Introduction and Notes

by

Jacob Immanuel Schochet

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR PARENTS

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Passed away on 7 Tamuz, 5738

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Passed away on 14 Elul, 5750

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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VA'EIRA

וַאֲרָא

A

I. The term *Torah* is an idiom of *hora'ah* (instruction).^a Thus every part of Torah, the narratives no less than the laws, offers instructions for all times and all places to the very end of all generations. This is the principle of the eternity of the Torah.

By virtue of this principle, even narratives and events related to a particular situation which presently no longer exists also offer instructions for every generation. If this is the case with all narratives of the Torah, how much more so with those relating to the exodus from Egypt.

The precept to remember the exodus from Egypt is a daily obligation,^b for the exodus is relevant to the daily *avodah* of man — as explained at length by the *Alter Rebbe* in *Tanya* (ch. 47) and *Torah Or.*^c Thus all the details of how the Israelites physically left Egypt, as recounted in the Torah, are guidelines for the manner in which the exodus from Egypt relates to us in the spiritual sense.

The physical exodus began with the ten plagues

world to come"⁵), when there will be a complete consumption of the fish⁶ (after completion of all the preparations on the eve of Shabbos) "from the flesh⁷ of **Livyosan**," and also the Shor HaBar and Yayin HaMeshumar.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vaeira, 28 Teves, Blessing of the New Month of Shvat, 5752 (b))

5. *Tamid* at the end.

6. [We may explain the comparison as follows: those who are likened to fish will be rewarded with a festive meal of the great fish, *Levyasan*, in the days of *Moshiach*. Translator's note.]

7. *Bava Basra* 75a.

a. [*Zohar* III:53a. See Introduction to *Lik. Sichot* (E), vol. I, p. XV and notes 22-25 *a.l.*]

b. ['. . . that you remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life;' Deuteronomy 16:3, and see *Berachot* 1:5 (12b). See also Rashi on Exodus 13:3, Maimonides, *Hilchos Keri'at Shma* 1:3; *Shulchan Aruch* of the *Alter Rebbe* 67:1.]

c. [See there the discourses on *Shemot* and *Va'eira*. See also *Likutei Torah*, *Shlach*, p. 48c and 50c^{ff.}]

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When it occurs that "one passes away¹ on the eve of Shabbos"² it becomes a "good sign"³ (if there is still any need for "signs") that the Divine service of the emissaries (*shlichus*), to refine and purify secular matters, has already been completed and perfected. This was done in a manner of "a wolf that tears" through "the offspring of Yosef" (my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation) who are compared to fish.⁴ Everything is prepared for the festive meal of the time to come ("a day that is all Shabbos and rest, in the

1. *Kesubos* 103b.

2. The passing of the venerable Chassid Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht on the eve of this Shabbos. See in the talk at length. (*publisher's note*).

3. When it says "a good sign **for him**," this describes not just a particular individual, but also describes his role as a member of the community of students and emissaries of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation.

4. [This talk was delivered in honor of Rabbi Hecht. The name "Hecht" in Yiddish is the same as the word for fish (specifically, a pike). The Rebbe here discusses the connection between the family name ("Hecht") and eating fish on Shabbos. More precisely, the pike is a "fish that tears" (which is nevertheless kosher). The Talmud teaches that for every creature on dry land there is a corresponding creature in the sea. Thus the "hecht" (pike) corresponds to the wolf, since both are creatures that tear. The tribe of Binyomin is compared to a wolf, and the Rebbe points out that Binyomin tore for kedusha, that is, he "snatched" things from this world and elevated them to kedusha, holiness. The evening before Shabbos is, of course, a time for preparing the Shabbos meal, including fish, which is traditionally eaten on Shabbos. Furthermore, our Sages teach that one should add to the time of Shabbos, both its beginning and its conclusion, from the weekday. In other words, one should tear time from the week for Shabbos, just as a wolf tears. This indicates the conclusion of the Divine service of the six days of work, namely, the purification and elevation of the things of this world so that they will be included in the holiness of Shabbos. Therefore, fish is prepared before Shabbos (and this corresponds to the wolf's (Binyomin's) Divine service of "snatching"). The preparation of the fish before Shabbos (and the "tearing" of time from the week) result in the eating of the fish on Shabbos (the time of rest). Translator's note.]

which broke the pride of Pharaoh and the pride of Egypt. Today's *sidrah* deals with this subject by telling about the first plagues, beginning with those of blood and frogs.

II. The beginning of this *sidrah* tells of the severe oppression and *galut* in Egypt. It starts with the words 'And I have appeared to Abraham . . .'^d This was the Almighty's reply to Moses who (at the end of *parshat Shemot*) had asked, 'Why have You caused evil to this people . . . and You have not saved Your people.'^e

The *galut* was so severe, with so intense a darkness, that even Moses — the embodiment of the ultimate wisdom and intellect in the realm of holiness^f — could not comprehend it and asked, 'Why have You caused evil to this people?'

Even after Moses conveyed G-d's answer to the Jews — 'Therefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Eternal, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt' with all the four expressions of redemption^g — 'they did not listen to Moses through anguish of spirit and through hard work.'^h

d. [Exodus 6:3]

e. [Exodus 5:22]

f. [See *Rosh Hashanah* 21b: Fifty gates of understanding were created in the world and all were given to Moses save one . . . 'Kohelet sought to find out words of delight' (Eccles. 12:10), that is, Kohelet (King Solomon, who 'was wiser than all men'; I Kings 5:11) sought to be like Moses, but a *bat kol* (voice from Heaven) went forth and said to him: 'It is written uprightly even words of truth' (Eccles., *ibid.*) 'There arose not a prophet again in Israel like Moses' (Deuteronomy 34:10). Cf. *Zohar* III:223a: Solomon said, 'The level of *binah* (understanding) belongs to Moses; I will ask for the supernal *chochmah* (wisdom) which transcends his level.' Thus it is written 'I said I will be wise, but it was far from me' (Eccles. 7:23). But is it not written 'And G-d gave unto Solomon wisdom' (I Kings 5:9)? This refers to the lower *chochmah* (inferior to *binah*), while he wished to ascend from below upwards — and this was removed from him; for even *binah* is a level which cannot be reached by any man on earth except for Moses!]

g. [Exodus 6:6-7]

h. [Exodus 6:9]

Moreover, at the time there was an extraordinary manifestation of the Tetragrammaton (*Havayah*), as it is said, 'Therefore say unto the children of Israel, I am *Havayah*' — which constitutes a tremendous manifestation; nonetheless, this did not break the *galut*, 'and they did not listen to Moses . . .'

This rejection cannot be blamed on the messenger who conveyed G-d's words. That messenger was none other than Moses, of whom it is said, 'the *Shechinah* speaks from the mouth of Moses'^j — i.e., that even the physical body of Moses had become a channel and instrument for conveying G-d's words as they are.

[There is a basic difference between Moses and all other prophets.¹ All prophets had to divest themselves of their physical nature, because their bodies were unable to serve as instruments for prophecy; and even then they would prophesy by saying *koh* (like this, i.e., a mere resemblance). Moses, however, remained in his natural state, and he prophesied with the expression *zeh* (this is):²

i. [See above Shemot, note r.]

j. [See *Zohar* III:232a and 306b, and note 31 in English translation of *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. XXV. Moses had negated his self to the extent of becoming but a passive tool for the speech of the *Shechinah*; see *Tanya*, ch. 34.]

1. See Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah* 7:6.

[and also his Principles of the Faith in *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Sanhedrin ch. 10, principle 7. See also R. Joseph Albo, *Ikkarim* III:17.]

2. *Sifre* and Rashi on Numbers 30:2

[*Zeh* signifies a clear vision of the object as it is — cf. above, Shemot, note k. Only Moses had a prophetic vision of this kind. Moreover, all prophets were filled with fear and consternation, and became physically weak when receiving their messages (see sources cited in note 1). Thus Scripture relates that they would even strip off their clothes, divesting themselves of all physical trappings under the influence of the spirit of prophecy (see I Samuel 19:24, and the commentaries of Redak and Ralbag *ad loc.*). Their normal physical states could not absorb the overwhelming effects of the spirit of prophecy (see *Kuntres Uma'ayon* 26:1; *Bati Legani* 5710, ch. 5, and references cited there). Moses was the only one who had reached a level of perfection (by means of total self-negation) that even when inspired by prophecy he would remain in his natural state.]

into three periods that parallel the three general periods throughout all the generations (before the giving of the Torah, the giving of the Torah, and the days of Moshiach). These are indicated in the three parshas: Shmos, Vaeira and Bo:

The first period, forty years (5640-5680), was during the leadership of **his father**, when the finishing touches of the process of the spreading of the Wellsprings commenced, particularly through the establishment of the Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim (which was administered by his only son). This followed the pattern and is analogous to the Divine service of **the Patriarchs**, who prepared for and introduced the concept of the giving of the Torah.

The second period includes the thirty years of **his leadership** during his lifetime in this world (5680-5710). During this period his unique innovation in his role as the leader of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus was his spreading of the wellsprings outward - outward in the most literal sense - to the extent that during his last ten years (the completion and perfection of his Divine service) the innovation in the spreading of the wellsprings outward reached the lower hemisphere (wherein the giving of the Torah did not occur). This followed the pattern and is analogous to the innovation of the giving of the Torah.

In the third period, the continuation of the leadership after his elevation from the physical (from the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the eleventh year (5711⁷), the spreading of the wellsprings outward increased, with greater strength and greater vigor, into all corners of the world, until the Divine service was completed and perfected. Everything is already prepared for the festive meal of the future - the days of Moshiach.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vaeira, 28 Teves, Blessing of the New Month of Shvat, 5752 (a))

7. See the pamphlet from the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vaeira 5750, note 99 (*Sefer HaSichos* 5750, vol. 1, p. 255-56.)

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The tenth of Shvat ("the tenth is holy,"¹ in every month, and all the more so the tenth day of the eleventh month²) is the day of passing of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation.

The concept of a day of *hilulo*³ is explained by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya:⁴ "all his deeds, his Torah and his Divine service that he performed throughout his life... reveals itself and shines in a revelation from above to below... affecting salvation in the midst of the land." Further and fundamental, this includes giving strength for a continued **growth** with greater force and greater vigor after his passing, as a result of his **sowing** "all his deeds and Torah and Divine service that he performed throughout his life."⁵ [This continues] until the flowering of the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach in this generation (the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption), according to the testimony of the leader of our generation that all the appointed times have already passed, and all is ready for the festive meal of the future, a table prepared with the festive meal of Livyosan, Shor HaBar and Yayin HaMeshumar.

One might say that the era that commenced with the day of *hilulo*, the tenth of Shvat (the seventy years of life he lived in this world, and continuing for more than forty years⁶) can be divided

1. *Bechukosai* 27:32.

2. [See below #65 for the significance of the eleventh month. Translator's note.]

3. [*Hilulo* literally means "wedding," and is used to refer to the reunion of a soul with its Maker. Translator's note.]

4. *Iggeres HaKodesh*, sections 27 and 28.

5. See *Iggeres HaKodesh* there: "And in the *chakal tapuchin kadishin* ["orchard of the holy apples," i.e., the Garden of Eden] **are implanted** most sublime lights... growths in the second degree."

6. For then "a person reaches the level of his teacher" (*Avodah Zara* 5, beginning of second side) because "G-d gave you a heart to understand, eyes to see and ears to hear" (*Tavo* 29:3).

for his physical body had become a channel and instrument for conveying the actual word of G-d as it is.]

In addition, there also was a reference to the merit of the patriarchs, when the Almighty said 'And I appeared [unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob]' — the patriarchs. A reference to the merit of the patriarchs is a protecting influence, as we find in the *Mishnah*³ that [in the Sanctuary] they would say 'The whole east is alight, even unto Hebron' — 'in order to mention the merit of those buried in Hebron'^k which confers special spiritual assistance in the service of the Temple-offerings in general and of the *tamid* (continual daily offering) in particular.

Moreover: this reference to the merit of the patriarchs was made by the Almighty Himself, indicating an especially great assistance.

Thus there were a number of auspicious conditions: (a) a manifestation of the Tetragrammaton and of the four expressions of redemption, and (b) this revelation was conveyed through Moses; (c) a reference to the merit of the patriarchs, and (d) this reference was made by the Almighty Himself. Nonetheless, all these did not affect the children of Israel to the point of breaking the *galut*, and they would not consider the possibility of redemption.

The children of Israel failed to see this possibility not only from a visual (empirical) perspective — i.e., the strongest form of verification, but also in the form of 'hearing' — i.e., rational understanding and apprehension,⁴ as it says 'and they did not listen . . .'

3. *Yoma* 3:1 (28a); *Tamid* 3:2 (30a).

k. [*Yerushalmi*, *Yoma* 3:1, quoted by Rashi on *Yoma* 28b (s.v. *iba'it eyma*).]

4. See *Torah Or*, Vayechi, p. 45a-b, *et passim*.

[on the distinction between a visual perception (indicating proximity between the seer and the seen) and auditory perception (indicating distance,

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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III. All this is stated at the beginning of the *parshah*. Further on, however, we are told of the plagues by means of which the *galut* was broken, notwithstanding its intense severity.

This offers a lesson for everyone's daily *avodah* of a spiritual exodus from Egypt:

One must disregard the intense severity of the personal *Mitzrayim* (Egypt). This may be an 'Egypt' within the realm of holiness, that is, an *avodah* based on mind and reason, an *avodah* necessarily subject to fixed limitations.¹ Alternatively it may be an 'Egypt' in the realm opposed to holiness, that is, when there is no *avodah* at all, not even an *avodah* based on mind and reason. Whichever way, the approach of an '*avodah* of the plagues' enables him to break the power of Egypt and to achieve a redemption for his soul.

IV. The first plague to break the Egyptian *galut* was that of blood: the waters — of the Nile — were changed into blood. Water is a substance that is cold and moist.⁵ Coldness generally symbolizes the opposite of holiness. Holiness stands for vitality, as it is said in *Avot deR. Nathan*:⁶ 'The are called alive — enumerating first the Holy One, blessed be He, and then all those that are attached to the Almighty. Life, vitality, brings with it warmth. Coldness, on the other hand, is the opposite of warmth, the opposite of the vitality of holiness.

separation, with sound being the only point of contact). Cf. *Mechilta*, Mas. Bachodesh, end of ch. 2: 'He who hears cannot be compared to him who sees.' See also Rashi on Exodus 20:19.]

1. [*Mitzrayim* is interpreted as an idiom of *meitzarim* — boundaries, restrictions, straits. Any *avodah*, even if it be proper and correct (thus of *kedushah*), that is restricted by the boundaries of reason or any other limitation, is a state of *mitzrayim*. Reason itself is a restriction, for it cannot be involved in the *avodah* of the essence of the soul.]

5. See Maimonides, *Hilchot Yessodei Hatorah* 4:2.

6. Chapter 34:10

In times like these, when the nations are in conflict with one another, the Jewish people have the special assurance from the A-mighty that, "My children, have no fear, all that I have done, I have done solely for your sake,"¹ - in addition to the multitude of promises mentioned in the Torah to the effect that "Behold, He does not sleep nor slumber, the guardian of Israel"² and that "I am with him in distress,"³ and "G-d will redeem Israel from all of its distress,"⁴ (and only after that "He will redeem Israel from all of their sins"⁵) etc. etc.

It is a certainty that "He will not sleep nor slumber, the Guardian of Israel," wherever Jews may be situated - even in the Diaspora, and all the more so in the Holy Land, characterized by our Holy and true Torah as, "A land which G-d our G-d's eyes watch over from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."⁶

...And as was stated, the A-mighty notifies and proclaims to Jews wherever they are situated, particularly in the Holy Land, "My children, have no fear."

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vo'eira, 26 Teves, Mevorchim Shvat [Blessing of the month of Shvat], 5751)

1. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, Remez* 499.

2. *Tehillim* 121:4.

3. loc. cit. 91:14.

4. loc. cit. 25:22.

5. loc. cit. 130:8. [*This is a reference to the fact that G-d will bring the Redemption even before we fully atone for our sins. Translator's note.*]

6. *Ekev* 11:12.

and thrust from man's domain, *kelipat nogah* will of itself attain its sublimation.¹⁷

This will bring about the personal redemption in the individual soul and then the general redemption, so that speedily in our own days 'I will show them wondrous things as in the days of your going out from the land of Eygpt.'^w

(Adapted from the Sichot of Shabbat Parshat Va'eira 5718)

In practical terms: The very first thing one must break is coldness. All matters opposed to holiness have their roots in a state of coldness toward holiness. The first plague, therefore, related to water — i.e., coldness.

V. The plague affecting the waters occurred with 'the waters which are *in the river*,'⁷ i.e., the Nile-river.

There are two kinds of water, analogous to two kinds of coldness: There is (a) coldness (indifference) towards worldly matters — which derives from holiness; and (b) coldness towards matters of holiness — constituting the root of all *kelipot* (shells; evil), as stated above. It is likewise so with water. There are (a) waters which come from above, as it is said 'and drinks water of the rain of heaven'^m — analogous to the coldness deriving from holiness; and (b) waters 'under the earth' — analogous to the coldness of *kelipah*.

The waters of the Nile were of the second kind; thus we find the expression 'the waters of the Nile rise',⁸ because they do not come from above, but from under the earth.

These waters of the Nile — i.e., the coldness toward holiness — constitute the idolatry of Egypt which caused all sorts of evil. Thus when the pride of Egypt was to be crushed, the first to be broken were the waters of the river — the aspect of negative coldness.

VI. The first plague converted those waters into

17. *Tanya*, ch. 37

w. [Michah 7:15.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that just as the galut of Egypt and the redemption from Egypt relate to the totality of the Jewish people, so likewise they relate to every individual. In this context he interpreted the verse 'Draw near to my soul, redeem it' (Psalms 69:19) that there is a personal redemption which ought to precede the general redemption; in fact, the individual's personal redemption will bring of itself the general redemption, the coming of the Messiah, speedily in our days. See *Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov*, Bereishit, par. 166 and note 143, and Shemot, par. 5-6 and note 4.]

7. [Exodus 7:17, 20] See *Zohar* II:28b.

[The *Zohar* notes that on the one hand G-d commanded that all the waters of Egypt — their streams, rivers, ponds and pools — are to be smitten to become blood (Exodus 7:19); but it would seem physically impossible for one man to do so. Moreover, Scripture also states that *only the river* was smitten, not mentioning any other bodies of water. However, the reference is to the River Nile, for out of this all other rivers, streams, ponds and pools are filled, so that Aaron needed but to strike that river alone.]

m. [Deuteronomy 11:11]

8. *Agadat Bereishit*, ch. 42; Rashi on Genesis 47:10

blood. Blood indicates vitality, as it is said 'for the blood is the life-force.'ⁿ Thus 'All the waters that were in the river were turned into blood':^o the coldness was changed into vitality, for 'from the forest itself is taken the axe with which to fell it.'⁹

This explains why originally¹⁰ it was said that the waters of the river turned into blood 'upon the dry land.' What purpose is served by adding 'upon the dry land'? But as dry land lacks even the quality of moisture — which symbolizes *deveikut* (attachment; conjunction) — there was the special effect of even this dryness turning into vitality.

VII. Among the four categories of inanimate, vegetative, animate and articulate beings, their closeness to holiness is proportionate to the vitality they possess; for, as stated, holiness means vitality. Thus inanimate matter is furthest removed from holiness, followed by vegetative matter, and then the animate entities. It is likewise with the four worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Assiyah*: *Assiyah*, the realm in which evil is predominant, is analogous to inanimate matter; and so forth in sequential order.

Water and blood represent coldness and warmth as present in inanimate matter. Animate beings, too, have the trait of coldness, in particular those that were created from water. In the context of the ten plagues this applies to the frogs — 'and the river shall swarm with frogs,'^p— just as when the fish were created during the Six Days of Creation.¹¹ Thus frogs are seen to swim, as related in the

n. [Deteronomy 12:23]

o. [Exodus 7:20]

9. *Sanhedrin* 39b (following the version in *Tanya* ch. 31).

10. Exodus 4:9

p. [Exodus 7:28]

11. *Shemot Rabba* 10:2

[G-d said to Pharaoh: You said 'Mine is the river,' but I will show you

XII. The sequence of first blood and then frogs was indeed a supernal order, 'from Above downwards.' However, as all narratives of the Torah offer instructions for man's *avodah* throughout all generations, we are taught here that our own sequence, too, must start off with 'do good.'

The *Rebbe Maharash* thus used to say: "People say that if one cannot go from below one must go from above. I say that from the start one should go from above!"

Moreover, the order should be immediately to aim for ever higher, towards revealing an immensity of light which of itself will cause darkness to be dispelled.

XIII. Analogous to the principle stated above is the distinction between *galya deTorah* (the revealed — exoteric — part of Torah) and *pnimiyut haTorah* (the inner — esoteric — part of Torah).

Galya deTorah follows an order of 'from below upwards,' from the simple to the complex. In *pnimiyut haTorah* there is a reverse order, beginning with *or* (light). In these latter times especially, *pnimiyut haTorah* has been revealed and is taught to everyone, without demanding the conditions and preparations that used to be prerequisites to the study of *pnimiyut haTorah*.^u

Today *pnimiyut haTorah* is learned with everyone, with emphasis on complete dissemination in accordance with the well-known parable of the *Alter Rebbe* about the jewel in the king's crown.^v

This indeed is the way to be freed from Egypt, the way of revealing and disseminating *pnimiyut haTorah*, by beginning with the ardor and enthusiasm for holiness — blood, which of itself effects the repulsion of evil.

As the three impure *kelipot* are completely repulsed

u. [See *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, Foreword to Third Ed. esp. sect. IV-VI.]

v. [See *The Great Maggid*, pp. 115-119.]

The aim of the *yetzer hara* is to cool the feelings of Divine excitement and to effect a coldness, an indifference, to holiness. This is the root of the impurity of Egypt.

In order to rid oneself of 'Egypt' one must remember that first comes 'blood' — ardent involvement with holiness.

Just as one must generate within oneself the ardor for holiness ('blood'), one must also effect a coolness towards mundane affairs ('frogs'). These are the two aspects of *turn from evil* — 'frogs,' and *do good* — 'blood.' By means of these two approaches and their amplifications one is freed from Egypt.

XI. The general order in *avodah* is first *turn from evil* and then *do good.*^t In this context there is a well-known simile: When desiring to build a home for a human being, one must first remove all dirt and rubble. Only then can one bring in beautiful vessels and prepare a dwelling fit for royalty.

This is the normative order, on our level of growth and development, 'from below upwards.' In the heavenly order of 'from Above downward,' however, there is a reverse order: first there is the *do good* and then the *turn away from evil*; there are revelations which effect that one turns away from evil. As the plagues came from Above, first there was blood, (do good) and only then frogs (turn away from evil).

and terms constitute the very essence and life-force of everything, these objects thus come into being (see *Tanya*, Sha'ar Hayichud Veba'emunah, ch. 1 and 12; *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect XXV.) The substratum of vinegar thus is a mere combination of letters. This combination can just as readily be changed into a different compound to convert the vinegar into oil. Cf. also *Or Hatorah*, Pinchass, p. 1093.]

t. [Psalms 34:15: 'Turn away from evil and do good.' See *Tanya*, ch. 30, and beg. of ch. 41.]

Gemara and *Midrash*¹² that for a scorpion to cross a river he is put upon a frog who will carry him across.

[A scorpion, too, is by nature a cold being, in fact manifesting the very essence of coldness;¹³ nonetheless, it is not an integral part of water, thus not the very opposite of fire, and unable to swim. Frogs, on the other hand, are creatures of water¹⁴ — the very opposite of fire.]

VIII. We can now understand why Scripture states of the frogs that they would also go up 'into your ovens.'^q Of what significance is this detail?

To be sure, our sages note that this passage teaches us about the self-sacrifice of the frogs:¹⁵ the Almighty commanded them to go throughout the land of Egypt, and thus they went even into the ovens. But this leaves the question of why we do not find the same with the gnats and wild beasts (in subsequent plagues).

In the context of the afore-said, the lesson is clear. This was an act of *mesirat nefesh* to the utmost degree: frogs which derive from water ['and the river shall swarm . . .'] went into burning ovens, that is, into fire — the extreme opposite of themselves.

IX. The frogs came to strike the whole domain of Pharaoh.

In carrying out their mission they demonstrated the sublime or holy coldness toward physical and material things. That is why the frogs went into 'your ovens and

whether it is Mine or yours. My plague shall come upon it and I will decree that it bring forth frogs. Just as in the beginning of things when I decreed 'Let the waters swarm' (Genesis 1:20) they performed My bidding, so will the Nile perform My decree.]

12. *Nedarim* 41a; *Kohelet Rabba* ch. 5, on Eccles. 5:8.

13. *Avodah Zara* 28b

14. *Shemot Rabba* 10:3

q. [Exodus 7:28]

15. *Pessachim* 53b; see also *Zohar* II:29b.

into your kneading-troughs.' They went there in order to extinguish the heat and false exaltation of *kelipah*. For warmth, too, can be found in the realm opposed to holiness.

It was stated earlier that *kelipah* per se is coldness. But in order to allow the possibility of free choice, *kelipah* requires something that is akin to holiness — at least to the degree of the similarity between a monkey and man.' *Kelipah*, too, therefore, has an aspect of heat: inflamed involvement with mundane matters.

X. All this teaches us the following for our own *avodah*:

In order to leave, and rid ourselves of, the impure 'Egypt,' one must introduce warmth and vitality into everything relating to holiness; for coldness is the beginning of all sorts of evil.

This applies as well to leaving the 'Egypt' of holiness, i.e., an *avodah* based on reason and understanding. But obviously our principal concern is with leaving the 'Egypt' of impurity.

One may wonder: Why all the commotion about the lack of enthusiasm for holiness? After all, for as long as one refrains from wrongdoing what does it matter that there is no enthusiasm for holiness?

r. [Following the principle of 'G-d has made one thing opposite the other' (Eccles. 7:14), every aspect in the realm of holiness has a corresponding opposite in the 'other side,' in the realm of *kelipah* or impurity. Thus corresponding to the ten *Sefirot* in the realm of holiness, there are ten analogous aspects in *kelipah* (*chessed* of *kelipah*; *gevurah* of *kelipah* etc.); *Zohar* III:41b and 70a, and see *Igeret Hakodesh*, sect. II, notes 16-17, and sect. XXV, notes 62-63. Just as there is a commendable coolness or indifference, so there is an evil coolness or indifference; and just as there is a commendable warmth or excitement, so there is an evil warmth or excitement. The analogy between the two opposites allows for an action of choice. (For the analogy between a monkey and man, see *Zohar* II:148b (cf. also *Zohar* III:268b and 284b) and *Bi'urei Hazohar* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, vol. I, p. 309.)]

In reality, however, one cannot be 'neither here nor there,' neither enthusiastic for holiness nor for improprieties. A state of coolness towards holiness will ultimately lead, Heaven forbid, to an involvement in the impurity of Egypt.^s

The *yetzer hara* thus exerts himself with every effort to cool a Jew, making him indifferent to G-dliness. Even in the face of a self-evident miracle the *yetzer hara* will argue: 'Why are you impressed? After all, you do believe that everything is from G-d, that G-d is omnipotent, and that relative to G-d all worlds are as nothing! Thus surely there is nothing special in G-d converting the combination of the three letters *chet-mem-tzadik* (*chometz* — vinegar) to a new combination of *shin-mem-nun* (*shemen* — oil), and 'He who had commanded the oil to burn will also command the vinegar to burn!'¹⁶ Why then all this excitement to the point of rapture?'

s. [Coolness means indifference. Indifference to holiness implies non-involvement, in effect, separation. Of this the Baal Shem Tov used to say: 'As soon as man separates himself from G-d, he is in effect worshipping idolatry; there is no in-between. Thus it is written 'and you turn aside — and you serve other gods' (Deuteronomy 11:16);' see *Tzava'at Harivash*, sect. 76. Note also that Amalek, the arch-enemy of Israel, the antithesis of holiness, signifies coldness, cooling the ardor and enthusiasm for G-d, which must result in sin; see *Midrashim* and Rashi on Deuteronomy 25:18, and *Lik. Sichot*, vol. I, Vayikra sect. VII, and vol. II, Tetze sect. VII.]

16. *Ta'anit* 25a

[R. Hanina ben Dossa's daughter inadvertently spoiled the Sabbath-lamps by pouring in vinegar instead of oil. Saddened that this would prevent her from lighting the Sabbath-lights, she was consoled by her father who said: 'Why should this (mix-up) trouble you? He who commanded the oil to burn can also command the vinegar to burn!' And indeed, she kindled the vinegar and it burned for the whole of the Sabbath.]

Underlying this story is the principle that everything, including all minerals, came into being through the Ten Utterances of command by means of which the heavens and the earth were created (Genesis ch. 1). Even objects that are not mentioned explicitly in these utterances derive therefrom, by means of the different combinations and substitutions of the letters in those words: different combinations and substitutions will form the Hebrew names and terms of all objects not mentioned explicitly; and as these names