

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FRIEND

Reb Meir (Michel) ben Reb Yehuda ה"ע Elfassy
On the occasion of his third yahrtzeit, 2 Shevat, 5786

ת. ג. צ. ב. ה.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER IN LAW & MOTHER

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

Passed away on 13 Kislev, 5786

ת. ג. צ. ב. ה.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Va'eira, 5786
(Vol. 14)



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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav Schneur Zalman Halevi ה"ע
ben Horav Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi ה"ע
Shagalov
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
Reb Dovid Asniel ben Reb Eliyahu ה"ע
Ekman
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
Mrs. Devora Rivka bas Reb Yosef Eliezer ה"ע
Marenburg
Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
Reb Yitzchok Moshe (Ian)
ben Reb Dovid Asniel ה"ע
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
ת. ג. ב. ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. Esther Shaindel bas Fraidel Chedva ש"ח
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel ש"ח
Shagalov

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Executive Director

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world to come⁵), 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.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. Roneete Mona Mina bas Reb Zev ה"ע **Kurtzman**
Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783
ת. ג. ב. ה.
*

DEDICATED BY
Chabad-Lubavitch community of California ש"ח
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR FRIEND AND COPY EDITOR
Rabbi Benyomin Daniel (Brad) ben Reb Ephraim ה"ע **Hoffman**
Passed away on 24 Tamuz, 5783
ת. ג. ב. ה.
*

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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

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

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

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson



Volume VII: *Shmos*



In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

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.]*

VA'EIRA

**THE CONTRAST BETWEEN MOSHE'S FAITH
AND THAT OF OUR PATRIARCHS**

The conclusion of the previous portion, *Parshas Shmos*, relates Moshe Rabbeinu's complaint:¹ "G-d, why do You mistreat Your people?" Moshe was perplexed: How could preparations for the Redemption from Egypt lead to further mistreatment of the Jews? After all, the Redemption was a process which was entirely good,² the mission was carried out by Moshe, of whom it is said:³ "And she saw that he was good," and the one who ordered the mission was G-d Himself.

G-d in His glory⁴ was the agent of the Jews' redemption. Since they had sunk to the 49th level of impurity,⁵ they could not have been redeemed by any agent within the natural order, for this would have enabled the attribute of strict justice to oppose the redemption. Instead, it was G-d Himself who had to redeem them.⁶

So the motivating forces were surely of the utmost good, as alluded to in the Kabbalistic expression:⁷ "There is no left [vector] in [the realm of] Atik." Since the mission itself, the person sent to fulfill it, and the One who sent him all repre-

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 (5711⁸), 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))*

1. *Shmos* 5:22.
2. See *Torah Or*, *Parshas Va'eira*, p. 56d.
3. *Shmos* 3:2. See *Sotah* 13a; *Or HaTorah Shmos*, p. 60ff.
4. Cf. *Haggadah Shel Pesach*.
5. *Zohar Chodash*, the beginning of *Parshas Yisro*.
6. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshas Tzav*, p. 12c.
7. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 129a; see also p. 289a.

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).

sent the ultimate good, how is it possible that the mission should have negative consequences?

To this question, G-d answers (as related in the beginning of this week's Torah reading):⁸ "I am G-d (ה-י-ה-) I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov..., but I did not make known My name ה-י-ה- to them. And I established My covenant with them...."

G-d told Moshe that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov also faced many challenges, yet they had not questioned G-d's ways. Indeed, the *Midrash*⁹ quotes G-d as saying: "It is a shame that those who have departed no longer exist."

This narrative raises several questions:

a) Why in fact did Moshe question G-d? Moshe was on a higher spiritual level than the Patriarchs. He was the seventh in the line of *tzaddikim* that arose after Avraham, and as our Sages state:¹⁰ "All sevenths are cherished." If the Patriarchs did not ask questions of G-d, why did Moshe?

b) Since G-d's answer highlighted the virtue possessed by the Patriarchs — that they had unquestioning faith — why did He use the name Yaakov, and not the name Yisrael? The name Yisrael reflects a higher spiritual level than the name Yaakov.¹¹

c) All the stories in the Torah are intended to serve as instruction for every Jew.¹² This is particularly so concerning this story. For the Torah generally refrains from making unfavorable statements, even with regard to

8. *Shmos* 6:2-4.

9. *Shmos Rabbah* 6:4; *Sanhedrin* 111a, quoted by *Rashi*, *Shmos* 6:9.

10. *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:11. [See the explanation of this concept in the *maamar Basi LeGani*, 5711.]

11. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Vayishlach* in this series, where this concept is explained.

12. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 53b.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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animals.¹³ Surely this principle should be applied with regard to man who is singled out from all other created beings! And how much more so does it apply with regard to Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who was singled out from the entire Jewish people.

Since the narrative casts Moshe *Rabbeinu* in an unfavorable light, we are forced to say that it is included in the Torah only because of the importance of the lesson it teaches — that Jews in every generation are expected to emulate the unquestioning faith shown by the Patriarchs.

It is, however, very difficult to understand how every Jew, particularly those living in *ikvesa diMeshicha* — the present generation, when *Mashiach*'s approaching footsteps can be heard — possesses the potential to choose either the path of the Patriarchs *or* the path of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. It is true, as our Sages say,¹⁴ that in every generation there are individuals who resemble Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and Moshe. But this applies to a select few. The Torah, by contrast, was given to every Jew, and "speaks about the situation that applies by and large,"¹⁵ serving as a source of guidance, not merely for the spiritual elite, but for the ordinary man and woman. How can we expect an ordinary Jew not to follow the "lowly" path of Moshe, but instead emulate the example shown by our Patriarchs?

THE PERSONIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL QUALITIES

The difference between Moshe and our Patriarchs can be explained as follows: Moshe *Rabbeinu* is identified with the level of *chochmah*, Divine wisdom, which in turn is associated with *bittul*, selflessness, as Moshe said of

13. See *Pesachim* 3a, which explains that the Torah uses additional words rather than referring to an animal as "impure."

14. *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7.

15. *Moreh Nevuchim* III, ch. 34.

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, Mevorach 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.

The merit of this course of behavior, which combines two opposite tendencies, will serve as a catalyst to take us out of exile. "All the exiles are called Egypt,"⁷¹ for both *Mitzrayim* (Hebrew for Egypt) and exile are associated with limitation. This will lead to our entry into *Eretz Yisrael*, led by *Mashiach*. May this take place in the near future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Va'eira, Rosh Chodesh Shvat, 5722*)



himself:¹⁶ *V'ananchu mah*, "And what are we?", i.e., he was identified with the level of *mah*, which is characteristic of those at the rung of *chochmah*. For this reason, Moshe served as the medium through which the Torah, G-d's wisdom, was given to the world. The Divine service of the Patriarchs, when compared to that of Moshe, was associated with *middos*, the emotions.

Avraham's Divine service centered on kindness and love. He served G-d with love, as reflected in the verse,¹⁷ "Avraham who loved Me." And similarly in regard to his relations with his fellow man, he was a fountain of kindness in both the material and spiritual sense.

Yitzchak's Divine service, by contrast, was characterized by the vector of might (*gevurah*) and fear, as indicated by the phrase:¹⁸ "The Dread of Yitzchak." And because Yitzchak served G-d through fear and awe, he could not tolerate even a trace of evil in his environment. For this reason, he became blind, unable to witness the incense being offered by Esav's idolatrous Canaanite wives.¹⁹

Yaakov's Divine service displayed the vector of *tiferes*, beauty, which is identified with *rachamim*, mercy. These attributes combine kindness and might. Reflecting this fusion, Yaakov said of himself:¹⁸ "The G-d of my father[s], the G-d of Avraham, and the Dread of Yitzchak, was with me." For Yaakov fused the attributes of Avraham and Yitzchak.

This synergistic blend enabled him to manifest perfection in his personal affairs. And thus it is said of him:²⁰ "His bed was perfect," i.e., his progeny were unflawed. For Divine service which fuses two opposing emotional attributes

16. *Shmos* 16:7, as interpreted by *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Bamidbar*, p. 91d.

17. *Yeshayahu* 41:8.

18. *Bereishis* 31:42.

19. See *Bereishis* 27:1, and *Rashi's commentary*.

20. *Vayikra Rabbah* 36:5. See also *Pesachim* 56a; *Sifri, Devarim* 6:4, 32:9.

71. *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:5.

empowers one to overcome all the difficulties and challenges which life presents. These include the challenges of wealth and prosperity (*chesed*), as Yaakov experienced at Lavan's household, at which time it was said of him:²¹ "And the man prospered prodigiously." And they also include the challenges of difficulty and aggravation (stemming from *gevurah*) with which he was confronted when Esav marched against him at the head of 400 armed men. Despite these different challenges, Yaakov emerged unblemished, as the commentators mention in their interpretation of the verse:²² "And Yaakov came to the city of Shechem safely (*shaleim*)."

BALANCED, YET DISTINCT

The identification of our Patriarchs with the emotional qualities mentioned above is not meant to imply that they were not involved in Torah study. On the contrary, our Sages say²³ "The Holy One, blessed be He, designated two kidneys for Avraham, and they were like two sages, endowing him with understanding and counsel, and teaching him the wisdom [of the Torah]." And our Sages said:²⁴ "Throughout the lifetime of our Patriarchs, their [attendance at a] *yeshivah* did not cease. Avraham our Patriarch was elderly, and attended a *yeshivah*... Yitzchak, our Patriarch..., Yaakov, our Patriarch...," reflecting the connection of each Patriarch with diligent study.

Conversely, Moshe *Rabbeinu*, although associated with the intellect, also displayed an emotional commitment to Divine service and to his fellow men. This was reflected in the vector of *chesed*, as indicated by the verse:²⁵ "And [Moshe] went out to his brethren and saw their affliction";

21. Bereishis 30:43.

22. *Ibid.* 33:18; see *Shabbos* 33a, and *Rashi*'s commentary to this verse.

23. *Avos d'Rabbi Nisson* 33:1. See also *Bereishis Rabbah* 61:1; *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Vayigash*, sec. 12.

24. *Yoma* 28b; see *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Avodas Kochavim* 1:3.

25. *Shmos* 2:11.

the 70 languages, a realm characterized by darkness and separation.⁶⁹

FROM ROSH CHODESH SHVAT TO YUD SHVAT

The term *Rosh Chodesh* is used for the first of the month because of the analogy implied. *Rosh Chodesh* means "the head of the month." Just as a person's head directs the life energy of all his body's limbs, so too, *Rosh Chodesh* subsumes all the coming days of the month.

Included in these days is *Yud Shvat*, the *yahrzeit* of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe. Based on the above, we can appreciate a connection between *Rosh Chodesh Shvat* and *Yud Shvat*.

Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the first *nasi* of the Jewish people, translated the Torah from *Lashon HaKodesh* into 70 languages. "The extension of Moshe in every generation,"⁷⁰ the *nasi* of our generation, my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, involved himself in the deepest dimension of *Nigleh*, the revealed aspects of Torah law, and in *pnimiyus haTorah*, the Torah's mystic secrets. Moreover, he had these concepts translated into foreign languages, making them accessible even to assimilated Jews.

The Rebbe also emphasized that his example should be emulated by his *chassidim*. On one hand, they should labor to comprehend the deepest concepts in *Nigleh* and *pnimiyus haTorah*. Simultaneously, instead of choosing isolation in enclaves of spiritual observance, they should involve themselves in their surroundings.

69. Based on the above, we can also appreciate why the translation of the Torah into 70 languages was performed on *Rosh Chodesh*. As mentioned above, *Rosh Chodesh* is not an ordinary workday, yet there is (according to the strict letter of the law) no prohibition against working on that day. For *Rosh Chodesh* involves drawing down holiness — as expressed in *Lashon HaKodesh* — into mundane matters — the 70 languages of this world. See the explanation of this concept in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. II, p. 491ff.

70. *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 69; see *Tanya*, ch. 42.

Torah" made it possible to appreciate "the one G-d," even in the framework of the 70 languages of the world — symbols of separation and isolation.⁶⁷

This translation could be performed only by Moshe *Rabbeinu* for the following two reasons:

a) It is dependent on the fusion of the higher and lower realms mentioned previously, this fusion being brought about by the giving of the Torah. Accordingly, G-d demanded of Moshe *Rabbeinu* that he also manifest the Divine service associated with the Patriarchs, thus reflecting a fusion of the intellect and the emotions. Therefore it was Moshe, who represented the highest level of wisdom, who had to "descend" and translate the Torah.

b) It was Moshe alone who could draw down the oneness of G-d into a realm characterized by separation; no other person was capable of this. For to descend to the lowest levels, a person must be on the highest.⁶⁸

To illustrate this with an analogy: When it is necessary to explain a concept to an average student, the task will be within the ability of an ordinary teacher. But only a very great teacher can explain a profound concept to a student with little knowledge. An ordinary teacher who makes the attempt will be forced to admit that the concept's depth finds no echo in his words. Similarly, it is Moshe *Rabbeinu* alone who was capable of translating *Lashon HaKodesh* into

67. See the Translator's Introduction to *Chovas HaLevavos*, which explains that translation involves three prerequisites: a) knowledge of the language in which the text was written, b) knowledge of the language into which one is translating, and c) an understanding of the subject matter.

To apply these concepts to Moshe's translation of the Torah: The *Lashon Kodesh* in which the Torah was written is an expression of *yesh ha'amiti*, true existence. The 70 languages into which he translated the Torah is *yesh hanivra*, created existence. And the Torah, the subject matter translated, is the *ayin*, the selfless existence which connects the two.

68. See the explanation of this concept in *Shaarei Orah*, the *maamar* entitled *Yaviu Levush HaMalchus*, ch. 12ff, ch. 32ff.

showing care and empathy with their plight. And he also manifested the quality of *gevurah*, as it is written:²⁶ "And he said to the wicked one, 'Why are you beating your brother?'" When he saw two Jews in conflict, he firmly rebuked the one who had lifted his hand against the other.

Nevertheless, although both our Patriarchs and Moshe manifested the full range of human intellectual and emotional attributes, each had their own fundamental thrust. Moshe's fundamental thrust was *chochmah*. He was the one who conveyed the Torah to the Jewish people, and indeed, his commitment to the Torah was so great that it is identified with him, as it is written:²⁷ "Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant."

The fundamental thrust of our Patriarchs, by contrast, was emotional, as reflected in the description of Avraham as one "who loved Me." Each of the Patriarchs endowed every one of the Jews who descended from them with the attributes that distinguished their own Divine service.²⁸

EVERY PERSON HAS HIS MISSION

The association of our Patriarchs with emotions, and Moshe with the quality of *chochmah* enables us to understand why Moshe, who was on a higher plane than the Patriarchs asked: "G-d, why do You mistreat Your people?", while the Patriarchs followed G-d with unquestioning faith.

To explain: Moshe was on a higher spiritual level than the Patriarchs. The mission with which he was charged, however, required reason and intellect, and therefore he asked questions. For intellect naturally seeks to understand

26. *Ibid.*:13.

27. *Malachi* 3:22.

28. See the *Rambam*'s statements (*Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Aivel* 2:14) concerning the heritage of loving kindness which Avraham bequeathed to his descendants. From this we can appreciate that similar concepts apply with regard to the spiritual bequests of Yitzchak and Yaakov.

everything with which it comes in contact. When an intellectual encounters something that appears to defy explanation, he has difficulty in continuing with his mission.

Moshe's question did not reflect a lack of faith. Instead, Moshe asked so that he would be able to continue his life's mission: disseminating G-d's wisdom.

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

In response to Moshe's question, the Torah relates:⁸ "And G-d spoke to Moshe, and He said to him: 'I am G-d (ה-י-ה-ה, *Havayah*).... I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov..., but I did not make known My Name ה-י-ה-ה to them."

Before the giving of the Torah,²⁹ G-d's name *E-lohim* had been revealed in the world, but not His name *Havayah*. At the giving of the Torah — and, in an extended sense, at Moshe's announcement of the Redemption which led to the giving of the Torah — the name *Havayah* was revealed, as it is written: "I am *Havayah*."

The name *E-lohim* relates to the Divine light enclothed within the world,³⁰ as reflected in the numerical equivalence between the word *E-lohim* (א-לֹהִים) and the word *hateva* (הָבָרָה), meaning "nature."³¹

The name *E-lohim* places limits on every entity, and in doing so allows for a distinction to be made between it and other entities. Since this makes multiplicity possible, the

were going to conquer the 31 kings living in Canaan, they had been commanded:⁶⁰ "Do not allow a soul to live." So why was it necessary for Moshe to translate the Torah?

And if it was necessary for the Torah to be translated, why was Moshe the one charged with the task? Seemingly, this job could have been accomplished by another. Every moment of Moshe's time was precious, especially on *Rosh Chodesh*, a day which is considered above ordinary work days⁶¹ to the extent that some — and particularly women⁶² — do not perform any work at all on *Rosh Chodesh*.⁶³ Why then was it Moshe who had to translate the Torah?

These questions can be resolved as follows: Before the generation of the Tower of Babel, all mankind spoke *Lashon HaKodesh*.⁶⁴ After the sin of the Tower, discord and division arose; "one person did not understand another's speech."⁶⁵

This represents the direct opposite of the oneness which permeates the realm of holiness, where there is "one G-d," and "one nation," the Jews. Moreover, through "one Torah," this "one nation" draws down G-d's oneness into the material world. The generation of the Tower of Babel rebelled against G-d's oneness, bringing division and separation into the world. And from them originated the 70 different languages.⁶⁶

By translating the Torah into those 70 languages, Moshe drew down the oneness of *Lashon HaKodesh* into a realm characterized by separation. The translation of "the one

60. Ibid. 20:16.

61. See *Yechezkel* 46:1, *I Shmuel* 20:19.

62. *Jerusalem Talmud, Pesachim* 4:1; see *Or HaTorah, Bereishis*, p. 22ff.

63. See the notes of *Radak* to *I Shmuel* 20:19. This concept enables one to resolve the query posed by *Rashi* and *Tosafos* (*Megillah* 22b). For although labor is permitted on *Rosh Chodesh*, it is customary for many not to work. See the commentaries to the *Shulchan Aruch*, ch. 417.

64. *Jerusalem Talmud, Megillah* 1:9, cited by *Rashi, Bereishis* 11:1.

65. *Bereishis* 11:7.

66. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Yisro* in this series.

29. See *Torah Or, Va'eira*, p. 56a ff.; *Toras Chaim, Va'eira*, p. 87a ff.

30. This concept also applies to the name ה-וּ, which was revealed to the Patriarchs. For it also reflects a limited light, as indicated by the *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah* 46:2), which associates this name with the saying of "Enough" to creation.

31. *Pardes, Shaar* 12, ch. 2. From a note in the *Sheloh, Shaar HaOsios, Os Kedushah*, 89a, it appears that this concept has its source in the *Zohar*.

revealed to Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Our Sages interpret the phrase:⁵³ “until the last sea,” as meaning “until the last day.” G-d showed Moshe all the generations of the Jewish people until the coming of the *Mashiach*.

As is well known,⁵⁴ with his gaze, a *tzaddik* empowers those upon whom he looks. By gazing upon the Jews of all the forthcoming generations, including those of the generation of *ikvesa diMeshicha*, Moshe empowered them to fuse the higher and lower potentials.

This fusing of intellect and emotion hastens the manifestation of the four expressions of redemption mentioned later in the Torah portion. And then we will leave all boundaries and limitations,⁵⁵ witnessing the fulfillment of the promise:⁵⁶ “I will bring you to the Land,” “as in the days of your exodus from Egypt,”⁵⁷ led by *Mashiach* in the near future.

THE TORAH IN TRANSLATION

The above concept shares a connection with the upcoming date, *Rosh Chodesh Shvat*,⁵⁸ concerning which it is said:⁵⁹ “In the eleventh month, on the first of the month... Moshe began to explain this Torah.” Our Sages relate⁴⁵ that on that day, Moshe translated the entire Torah into 70 languages.

Why was this necessary? At that time, all the Jews spoke *Lashon HaKodesh*, the Hebrew of the Torah. Although they

53. *Rashi*, *Sifri*, *Devarim* 34:2. *Targum Yonason*, *ibid.*3.

54. See *Esther Rabbah* 7:9; *Likkutei Torah*, the conclusion of the *maamar* entitled *Vaes'chanan*.

55. See the *maamar* entitled *Lachein Emor, Torah Or* (*Parshas Va'eira*) which explains that in a personal sense, the exodus from Egypt resembles breaking through the limiting influence (*meitzar hagaron*) that separates the intellect from the emotions, causing the intellect to be drawn down into the emotions.

56. *Shmos* 6:18.

57. *Michah* 7:15.

58. *Parshas Va'eira* is always read on the *Shabbos* which precedes or follows *Rosh Chodesh Shvat*.

59. *Devarim* 1:3-5.

name *E-lohim* itself employs a plural form, as it is written:³² אֱלֹהִים. For the name *E-lohim* relates to — and indeed is the source of — the multi-faceted nature of our material existence.

The name *Havayah*, by contrast, reflects a level of G-dliness which transcends limitation and division. And thus one of the interpretations of the name הָיָה is³³ וַיְהִי הִיא הַוָּה, “*cahad*,” “the past, present, and the future as one,” referring to a light which transcends temporal existence.

This light was first revealed at the giving of the Torah. At that time, G-d nullified the decree separating the higher spiritual realms from this lowly material world.³⁴ Applying this concept with regard to the inner world of the soul, the nullification of this decree makes it possible to unite intellect and emotion.

This is the inner meaning of G-d's reply to Moshe. He told him that at that time, moments before the Redemption which would come in the merit of — and in preparation for — the giving of the Torah,³⁵ even a person whose mission centers on wisdom and reason should temper these potentials with natural emotion, and continue with unquestioning faith.

This also explains why G-d refers to Yaakov by that name, rather than *Yisrael*. G-d was demanding that Moshe, the personification of wisdom, temper his approach with emotion. And an emotional response to G-d reflects *kabbalas ol*, the acceptance of His yoke, a mode of Divine service associated with Yaakov. The name *Yisrael* (ישראל), by

32. *Yehoshua* 24:19; i.e., in this verse, not only does the name *E-lohim* itself employ a plural form, the modifier מִשְׁנָךְ is also plural.

33. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 257b; *Tanya*, *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, ch. 7.

34. See *Shmos Rabbah* 12:3. See also the *Sichos* to *Parshas Lech Lecha*, and *Parshas Chaye Sarah* in this series.

35. *Shmos Rabbah* 3:4 (cited by *Rashi* in his commentary to *Shmos* 6:12).

contrast, is identified with a higher level, as reflected by the fact that it can be broken into the words **לִ רְאֵשׁ**, “a head for me.”³⁶ Yaakov (יעקב) can be divided into **עֲקָב** ”, implying that the **ע** which represents G-d is drawn down into the **קָב**, “the heel.”³⁷

On a personal level, this fusion of higher and lower levels is expressed when the “wise head” displays *kabbalas ol*, unconditional acceptance, the mode of Divine service associated with the feet.

ACTIVITY VERSUS ABSTRACTION

Emotion has another fundamental advantage over intellect. This was implied when G-d told Moshe Rabbeinu, the personification of wisdom, to don the mantle of emotion.

Every power of the incarnate soul has a specific limb or organ which is appropriate for it. Thus the functioning of the primary organs, the brain and the heart, enables us to understand the powers of intellect and emotion which are enclotted within them.

Both the brain and the heart influence all the organs of the body. There is, however, an enormous difference in the way they function. “The heart disperses [life energy] to all organs,”³⁸ and there is normally nothing which prevents this life-energy from spreading.

This does not apply with regard to the brain. Although the brain is the most prominent of the three organs which control the body,³⁹ its influence on the other organs of the body is restrained. Between the brain and the body is the neck, which is far narrower than the head and the body. In

36. See *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Shelach*, p. 48b.

37. *Torah Or*, the beginning of *Parshas Vayetzei*.

38. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 161b; *Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim*, the *maamar* entitled *Levantani*, and the explanation of the *maamar*.

39. See *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 153a. See also *Zohar*, Vol. I., p. 138a; *Zohar Chadash, Rus*, p. 80a.

ESTABLISHING UNITY

Based on the above, we can appreciate the message this narrative conveys to every Jew.

There are many categories of Jew, from “your heads, [the leaders] of your tribes” to “your hewers of wood and drawers of water.”⁵⁰ It is demanded of the “heads” to descend and involve themselves with other Jews, even “hewers of wood, and drawers of water.”

And those on the lower levels are charged with “ascending upward” by studying Torah — not only *Nigleh*, the revealed body of Torah law, but also *pnimiyus haTorah*, the Torah’s mystic truths. Moreover, they are charged to observe *mitzvos* on an ever-higher plane, *behiddur*, in a beautiful and conscientious manner.

In this context, the phrase “all the fat [should be offered] to G-d”⁵¹ can be interpreted as a directive for every Jew.⁵² The “fat” refers to what is choice and desirable — in a personal sense, one’s prime potentials. These must be “offered to G-d,” and dedicated to His service, thus elevating one’s study of Torah and observance of *mitzvos* to a higher rung.

Developing this concept further, the “heads,” a term which by and large refers to students of Torah, are enjoined to fuse the higher realms and the lower realms within their own personalities. They must involve themselves with the world at large by having their intellect follow the approach of *kabbalas ol*, as explained above.

The ability to join the highest and lowest ends of the spectrum was granted every Jew through a vision which G-d

50. *Devarim* 29:9-10. See the interpretation of this verse in *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Nitzavim*.

51. *Vayikra* 3:16.

52. *Rambam, Mishneh Torah*, the conclusion of *Hilchos Issurei Mizbeach*. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. II, p. 326.

should extend himself downward to other people. Indeed, we find that after the giving of the Torah, Moshe concerned himself with worldly matters far more than the Patriarchs had done, although the Patriarchs are identified with emotions, which (when compared to intellect) are characterized by such an outward thrust.

For this reason, the Patriarchs were shepherds, and lived — to a certain extent — removed from worldly concerns. Moshe, by contrast, translated the Torah into 70 languages,⁴⁸ demonstrating his involvement with the entire world. And with regard to the Jewish people, he — to borrow the Torah's wording⁴⁹ — carried them in his bosom like a nursemaid carries an infant.

Here also we see a parallel to a *Midrash* mentioned³² with regard to the giving of the Torah. The *Midrash* states that after the giving of the Torah, “the higher realms descended to the lower realms, and the lower realms ascended to the higher realms.” To relate this to the personal realm:

a) Within our personalities, “the higher realms” refer to the potential of intellect, which has a tendency to favor abstract concepts and surge upward. “Descending to the lower realms” refers to the intellect’s involvement in “lowly” matters — actual deeds.

b) With regard to the “ascent” of the lower realms — A foot is the lowest limb of the body, and obeys the instructions it receives from the head without question. For our minds, container of the highest of our potentials, to adopt this approach and proceed with *kabbalas ol*, without asking questions, reflects how the “lowly” tendency has “ascended” and has been embraced by “the higher realms.”

48. *Rashi*, *Devarim* 1:5. See *Sotah* 36a; see also the explanation of this concept in the continuation of the *sichah*.

49. *Bamidbar* 11:12.

Kabbalistic terminology, this is referred to as *meitzar hagaron*.⁴⁰ In a manner which parallels this physical phenomenon, the influence which the head transmits to the heart is constricted; from the heart, this influence is then disseminated to the other organs.

Parallels exist with regard to the powers of intellect and emotion. Emotion leads to deed, e.g., love motivates one to “do good,” while fear compels one to “turn away from evil.”⁴¹ Intellect, by contrast, inspires a person to become one with the subject he studies. Thus, although a person understands the way in which he should conduct himself, intellect alone does not push him toward actual deed. On the contrary, the tendency of intellect is toward abstraction. Indeed, the pleasure that results from the mind’s connection with a concept can actually prevent a person from applying the concept.⁴² To cite an example, when asked why he did not marry, Ben Azzai answered:⁴³ “What shall I do? My soul yearns for the Torah.” Although he was aware of the importance the Torah places on marriage and family life, the pleasure he experienced in studying the Torah prevented him from setting up a home.

Warning against this tendency, our Sages taught:⁴⁴ “Whoever says, ‘For me, there is nothing aside from the Torah’ will not possess even the Torah.”

Since intellect has a natural tendency toward abstraction, it is possible that a person who studies the Torah can become satisfied with this endeavor alone. Therefore it is necessary for our Sages to emphasize the importance of deeds of kindness. Torah scholars must labor against their nature and involve themselves in actual deeds.

40. See *Torah Or*, *Va'eira*, p. 57c ff.

41. Cf. *Tehillim* 34:15; see *Tanya*, ch. 4.

42. See the *maamar* entitled *Ner Chanukah*, 5666.

43. *Yevamos* 63b.

44. *Ibid.* 109b. See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 266, note 7.

WHY THE TITLE “Patriarchs”?

The tendency of emotion to lead to action enables us to understand why Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov are given the title “Patriarchs,” as our Sages commented:⁴⁵ “There are only three who are called Patriarchs.” For “Patriarchs” are by definition those individuals who generate a posterity.

There are two expressions of this concept: a) Our Patriarchs’ emotions motivated them to perform good deeds, as our Sages commented:⁴⁶ “The posterity of the righteous are good deeds”; and b) they extended themselves and were involved with others. This relates to the simple meaning of the term Patriarch — one who establishes an ongoing line of children and grandchildren.

POSTERITY, THE ESSENCE OF OUR PATRIARCH’S CONTRIBUTION

In the light of the above, we can also resolve a difficulty in *Rashi*’s commentary on the beginning of the Torah reading. On the verse “I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov...,” *Rashi* cites the words “I revealed Myself,” and adds “to the Patriarchs.” This is seemingly unnecessary; everyone knows that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov are the Patriarchs of the Jewish people.

Other commentators explain that *Rashi* is merely restating the first portion of the verse in a condensed form, setting the stage for his commentary on the remainder of the passage: “[through the medium of] the name יְהֹוָה, but I did not make known My name הָא-תָ-הָרָא to them.” This, however, is insufficient. For if this was *Rashi*’s intent, he could have used merely the final words of the verse, without mentioning the initial words at all.

The need for an explanation is heightened in light of the emphasis placed on every word and every letter in *Rashi*’s commentary by the *Sheloh*, the Alter Rebbe, and the Rebbeim who succeeded him.

It is possible to explain as follows: *Rashi* is highlighting the fact that the preeminent quality of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov is that they are Patriarchs. Each one has a unique personal prominence in his path of Divine service: Avraham in kindness, Yitzchak in might, and Yaakov in beauty. Following these paths, each developed their own attribute to perfection. Nevertheless, this was not their fundamental positive virtue. Their fundamental virtue was that they were Patriarchs, progenitors of our nation and heritage.

This is indicated by the verse concerning Avraham:⁴⁷ “I have distinguished him, so that he will command his sons and his household.” G-d showed special love for Avraham. Why? “Because he will instruct his children and the members of his household to follow the path of G-d.” The emphasis is on perpetuating the Jewish tradition as a whole, and not on conveying the Patriarch’s particular quality.

Although the word “Patriarchs” is not mentioned explicitly at the beginning of this Torah reading, *Rashi* highlights this concept, and calls attention to it. For the fundamental quality that characterizes Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov — who are also identified with the emotions — is that they are Patriarchs, i.e., they begat a posterity.

DESCENT AND ASCENT

G-d’s demand of Moshe that he temper his mission of wisdom and reason with natural emotion has two dimensions: a) that he should not ask questions, but instead proceed with *kabbalas ol*, as explained above; and b) that he

45. *Berachos* 16b; see *Torah Or*, at the beginning of *Parshas Va’era*.

46. *Bereishis Rabbah* 30:6, cited by *Rashi* at the beginning of *Parshas Noach*.

47. *Bereishis* 18:19. See *Rashi*’s commentary.