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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Bo, 5779
(Vol. 15)



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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

...In terms of spiritual matters (including the "highest" levels of spirituality) there already is perfection, including also the most (spirituality) complete state of Redemption. Thus the spiritual eyes of the Jew can already see it. We must open our physical eyes that they too should see the Redemption in a way that is clearly visible to eyes of flesh in our time...

Of practical relevance, everyone should resolve that his study of the previous Rebbe's Torah should complete and compensate for that which was lacking in the dissemination and spreading of the wellsprings due to the speech impediment of my sainted father-in-law. One accomplishes this both through one's own learning **out loud** as well as spreading of the wellsprings to others.

(From the talk of Wednesday, Parshas Bo, 3 Shvat, and Shabbos Parshas Bo, 6 Shvat, 5752)

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

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602 North Orange Drive.

Los Angeles, CA 90036

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

<http://www.torah4blind.org>

e-mail: sys@torah4blind.org

Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
Executive Director

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BESURAS HAGEULO

...We see in reality (as mentioned many times recently) how the nations of the world in many, many countries are assisting the Jewish people in their Divine service (to an even greater degree than it was during the exodus from Egypt). Even that country [Russia] which was closed and locked for many years, and which did not permit Jews to emigrate, etc. and did not allow the proper observance of the Torah and mitzvos, has recently changed from one extreme to the other. Now not only are Jews permitted to live there as they please, and even to emigrate, but even more, the country assists them.

Things have changed to such an extent that we can see today in reality that, in addition to the Jews being "Ready, all of you" for the Redemption, the nations of the world also stand "ready, all of you" for the Jews to go out already from exile and go into the land of Israel in the true and complete Redemption.

And with our souls in bodies without any interruption at all, we will come immediately to the full realization of "Come to Pharaoh" with the true and complete Redemption, the completion of the revelation of "all the lights will be revealed," "And you, O L-rd, will be a light for the world."⁸

...It has been mentioned many times that already "all the appointed times have passed"⁹ and everything is concluded, and the Redemption should have come long ago. But for totally incomprehensible reasons, it has not yet come.

Therefore it follows, that now the Redemption must come imminently and immediately. To employ a colloquial expression: this is High time for the true and complete Redemption!

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

8. *Yeshayahu* 60:19.

9. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

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Bo

TERROR AT MIDNIGHT

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* delivered G-d's message concerning the Plague of the Firstborn to Pharaoh, he also told him when the plague would take place — at midnight. Nevertheless, lest Pharaoh's astrologers err and not realize the exact time — and then say that Moshe's promise was not fulfilled — Moshe told them the plague would take place: "Around midnight."¹

On the surface, it is difficult to comprehend: Why was it necessary to inform Pharaoh of the time at which the Plague of the Firstborn would begin? Moshe could have said — as had been his practice with the other plagues — simply that G-d would bring this plague, without saying when.

The fact that Moshe *did* mention the time when the Plague of the Firstborn would occur thus indicates that this plague has a unique connection to the hour of midnight — so much so that Moshe had to tell Pharaoh when it would take place. (And it was only because of the presence of Pharaoh's astrologers, Moshe refrained from emphasizing the exact time of the plague.)

The reason for this connection can be explained by highlighting the nature of the Plague of the Firstborn and its differences from the other plagues. This final visitation is distinguished by two factors:

There is an innovation unique to our generation - the ninth [from the Baal Shem Tov]- over all preceding generations, including the previous one (the eighth). Since the Redemption had not actually occurred then, the "come to Pharaoh" (the "revelation of "all the lights"¹ to those below) was not completely perfect, as a soul in a healthy body. (The soul was detached from the body, and also the soul when it was in a body was in the situation of "[his] speech was in exile," etc.²). This is not the case with our generation - the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption - when imminently and immediately "the lights [sun and moon] will be hung." Not only is nothing lacking in the great lights (the revelation of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah³), but just the opposite; for this generation will realize a greater perfection [in the revelation of the Written and Oral Torah]. (There will no longer be the "speech impediments" in the [transmission of] the Oral and Written Torah.⁴ Rather they will be transcended.) Even souls within bodies will internalize "the revelation of all the lights" that were "hung" now, by virtue of the imminent arrival of our righteous Moshiach ("Send now by the one You will send"⁵), who will teach Torah to the all the people,⁶ including "a new Torah will go forth from Me."⁷

1. *Zohar*, vol. 1 210a.

2. [A reference to the Previous Rebbe's inability to speak due to a stroke. Translator's note.]

3. See *Shaloh* in his introduction 16, end of first side. His tractate *Shavuot* 191a. See *Likkutei Torah Shir HaShirim* 11:d. Or *HaTorah* on *Bereishis* 14a, 36 end of second side. *Bamidbar* p. 46. *Megillas Esther* (in 5750, edition p. 149), Nach, p. 217 and in other sources. See *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 30, p. 10 ff.

4. *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 28, beginning of first side.

5. *Shmos* 4:13.

6. See Rambam, Laws of Repentance, chapter 9, halacha 2. *Likkutei Torah Tzav*, 17a ff. And in several other places.

7. *Yeshayahu* 51:4. *Vayikra Rabba*, chapter 13:3.

1. *Shmos* 11:4. See *Berachos* 4a, cited by *Rashi* in his commentary to the verse.

There has been an increase in the above during these most recent days.

The events of these final days in the affair of "the kingdoms will struggle with each other" emphasize that we find ourselves in reality close to the Redemption, as explained in the midrashim of our Sages, may their memories be for a blessing,⁷ that this⁸ is one **of the signs of Redemption.**

In the language of the Midrash [it states⁹], "In the year the King Moshiach will be revealed... the king of Persia will provoke the king of Arabia... all the nations of the world will be in turmoil and terror... and (the Holy One, Blessed be He) will say to them (Israel), "My children, do not be afraid, all that I have done I have done only for your sake... **the time of your Redemption has arrived.**"

...And in regard to the activities of the enemies of Israel, which they try to injure, G-d forbid - there is no substance in them, and their efforts will not succeed,

...The connection of these events to the children of Israel is - the knowledge that **"the time of your Redemption has arrived"**; therefore, stand ready all of you to greet our righteous Moshiach, including and in particular through increasing in matters of Torah and mitzvos, since through "one mitzvah," one tips the scale for himself and the entire world to the side of merit, and causes for himself and them salvation and deliverance."¹⁰

From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Bo, 4 Shvat, 5751

7. *Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 42:4. *Midrash Lekach Tov*, Lech Lecha 14:1

8. *[The struggle of the nations, particularly the Gulf War, prophetically described in the Yalkut Shimoni (see next paragraph). Translator's note]*

9. *Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayahu* (Isaiah), remez 499.

10. Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuva*, (Laws of Repentance) Chapter 3, Halacha 4.

a) In contrast to the earlier plagues, it was necessary for the Jews to mark their doorposts and lintels with the blood of the circumcision and the blood of the Paschal sacrifice.² This was to prevent the plague from harming the Jews.

b) G-d ordered the Jews: "No man shall go out of the entrance of his house until the morning."³ The Jews were required to remain at home throughout the night, for the agent of destruction had been given license to devastate; it would not differentiate between the righteous and the wicked.⁴ Had the Jews gone out, they too could have been harmed.

The latter point is somewhat problematic. Seemingly, "the agent of destruction was given license to devastate" with regard to the other plagues as well, and yet the Jews did not require any special protection. Why was the Plague of the Firstborn unique in this regard, and why was it necessary for the Jews to both remain at home and make a sign with the blood of the circumcision and the Paschal sacrifice?

WHEN THE AGENT OF DESTRUCTION IS GIVEN LICENSE

The difference between the Plague of the Firstborn and the other plagues can be explained as follows: With regard to the other plagues, it cannot be truly said that "the agent of destruction was given license to devastate." Most of the plagues affected only the financial resources of the Egyptians, or their comfort. Moreover, even when a plague — such as the plague of wild animals — brought death as well as financial loss, unlimited license was not granted to "the agent of destruction." There was always a constraint to the destruction wrought.

2. See *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 29; *Targum Yonason* 12:13; *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 35b.

3. *Shmos* 12:22.

4. *Bava Kamma* 60a; *Mechilta* and *Rashi* to the above verse. See also *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Choshen Mishpat*, *Hilchos Shemiras Guf ViNefesh*, law 13.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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[This excerpt follows the Rebbe's instruction concerning the preparation for Yud Shvat (tenth of the month of Shvat), the anniversary of the passing of the Previous Rebbe. The Rebbe called for increases in Torah study and tzedekah. He then proceeds to call for extra emphasis on preparation for the Redemption. Translator's note.]

The preparation for Redemption should be emphasized more, by strengthening faith and trust in, and expectation of, the Redemption, "I await him every day that he should come."¹ - In the language of the Previous Rebbe:² **"Stand ready all of you to greet our righteous Moshiach."**³

The above applies specifically in this year, "It will be a year in which I will show him wonders,"⁴ and after they've already seen the miracles and wonders in this last period, including and particularly - the exodus of many Jews from that country [the Soviet Union] to the land of Israel, through which they also come closer to Judaism, Torah and its mitzvos. For subject⁵ is a reflection and example of, and the immediate preparation to fulfill the promise, "a great congregation will return here."⁶

For example, all the earlier plagues involved a specific agent of destruction,⁵ such as frogs, lice, or the like, and this agent was given permission to harm or kill Egyptians only according to its natural tendency. Thus there was not unlimited destruction.⁶

With regard to the final plague, however, the Egyptian firstborn were slain without restraint. Since "the agent of destruction was given license to devastate," it was necessary for the Jews to take steps to protect themselves, lest they also be harmed.

A deeper distinction can be made between the final plague and the nine earlier ones. The intent of the earlier plagues was primarily not to punish the Egyptians, but to generate an awareness of G-d's presence, as it is written:⁷ "So that you can tell... how I performed miraculous signs among them, and you will know that I am G-d." Similarly, it is written: "Through this, you will know that I am G-d,"⁸ "So that you know that I am G-d,"⁹ and "So that you will know that there is none like Me."¹⁰ Therefore there was no need for the plagues to affect the Jews, for the Jews already possessed an awareness of G-d.¹¹

But the Plague of the Firstborn was different in this regard. In the nine other plagues, few people actually perished; the vast majority could thus still come to an awareness

5. Even the plague which killed the livestock (דבר) was limited. Firstly, it afflicted only livestock, and moreover, it affected only five types of beasts — horses, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep. *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 31b.

6. The limited nature of the destruction conveyed by the previous plagues is also reflected by the verse (*Shmos* 9:31-32): "The flax and the barley were destroyed, since the barley was ripe.... The wheat and the spelt were not destroyed, because they are late in sprouting."

7. *Shmos* 10:2.

8. *Ibid.* 7:17.

9. *Ibid.* 8:18.

10. *Ibid.* 9:14.

11. See *Torah Or*, *Parshas Va'eira* (p. 57a); and the corresponding *maamar* in *Toras Chaim*.

1. The 12th principle of the 13 principles [of faith].

2. *[This talk was given the Shabbos before the yahrtzeit (anniversary) of the passing of the Previous Rebbe. Translator's note]*

3. *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves. And in many places.

4. *[In Hebrew, each letter has a numerical equivalent. The letters of the year 5751 (Hey, Tuf, Shin, Nun, Aleph) are an acronym of this phrase, based on Michah 7:15. Translator's note]*

5. *[The emigration from the Soviet Union. Translator's note]*

6. *Yirmiyahu* (Jeremiah) 31:7.

of G-d and be victorious... build the [Beis Ha]Mikdash on its site, gather in the dispersed remnant of Israel... and perfect all the nations, [motivating them] to serve G-d.

The redemption from the present exile will parallel the redemption from Egypt, as it is written:¹⁹ “As in the days of your exodus from Egypt, I will show you wonders.” And then we will leave exile “with an upraised arm,” led by *Mashiach*. May this take place in the near future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Yud Shvat*, 5712)



of G-dliness. With the Plague of the Firstborn, however, the intent was that the firstborn die, and not that their appreciation of G-d's power should be enhanced.

Since the intent of this plague was punishment, the attribute of judgment might have argued: “How different are these (the Jews) from these (the Egyptian firstborn)?” For the Jews in Egypt had also sunk to evil conduct,¹² as the *Midrash* states:¹³ “These are worshipers of idols and these are worshipers of idols.” And so it is possible that “the agent of destruction” — the extension of the attribute of judgment — would not differentiate between Egyptian and Jew.

Yes, it is written:¹⁴ “I will pass through Egypt... I will smite every firstborn... I will perform acts of judgment... I am G-d.” And from this verse, our Sages conclude¹⁵ that G-d Himself was the one who smote the Egyptians, as we say:¹⁶ “I and not an angel... I and no other.”

But this does not discount the influence of “the agent of destruction.” That agent was also present, and could make accusations against the Jewish people.¹⁷ Therefore it was necessary for the Jews to take protective measures.

These measures involved: a) not going out of their homes. Since the agent of destruction was given license to destroy throughout the land of Egypt, if a Jew went outside, no distinction would be made. With regard to this, everyone — Jews and Egyptians — were alike. A sign would not help. The only alternative was to stay inside.

b) Placing a sign on their homes. G-d promised:¹⁸ “I will pass over you,” i.e., the agent of destruction was not to be

12. See *Zohar Chadash*, the beginning of *Parshas Yisro*.

13. *Yalkut Reuveni*, *Shmos* 14:27; *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 170b.

14. *Shmos* 12:12.

15. *Sifri*, *Devarim* 26:8.

16. *Haggadah Shel Pesach Im Likkutei Minhagim*, p. 25.

17. See *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 41a, Vol. III, p. 149a.

18. *Shmos* 12:13.

19. *Michah* 7:15; see *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 189b, 240a.

given license in these places, and so a distinction could be made between the Jews and the Egyptians.

WHERE THE TWAINS MEET

Yet a question remains: Since there was a certain legitimacy in the complaint of the attribute of judgment, why did the sign the Jews placed on their doors protect them?

The resolution of this difficulty depends on the realization that the Plague of the Firstborn had its source in a level of G-dliness above the limits of the spiritual cosmos (*Seder HaHishtalshelus*); it was wrought by G-d in His glory and His essence.¹⁶ Since this level transcends the attribute of judgment, it does not leave any place for accusations. Rational arguments can affect only those levels of *Seder HaHishtalshelus* that are limited in nature. The levels of G-dliness that transcend the *Seder HaHishtalshelus* — the levels which were the source for the Plague of the Firstborn — are entirely beyond reason, and will not be affected by such “rational” accusations.

This also explains why the Plague of the Firstborn took place at midnight. For the levels of G-dliness that transcend the limits of *Seder HaHishtalshelus* are revealed at midnight.

To explain: During the first half of the night, the attribute of *gevurah* (might) is revealed. This is reflected in the fact that as the night proceeds, the darkness increases. During the second half of the night, the attribute of *chesed* (kindness) is revealed, as reflected in the fact that as the night continues, signs of light appear and increase.

At midnight, these opposite tendencies are fused. This is possible because the levels of G-dliness that transcend the limits of *Seder HaHishtalshelus* are revealed at midnight. For

and *vertelach* contained the Torah’s deepest mystic secrets, yet on a conscious level, the simple people were able to appreciate only the story or *vort*. They did not grasp the mystic secrets contained therein.

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, was able to convey the mystic secrets of *Chassidus* in a manner which everyone could grasp. He communicated these ideas in simple language, using concepts that could be easily comprehended. And yet the listeners appreciated that they were hearing Chassidic ideas, and were able to appreciate to some extent the mystic secrets being shared.

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, communicated *Chassidus* in the manner appropriate to the unique nature of our time — the moments which precipitate and prepare for *Mashiach’s* coming. For *Mashiach’s* coming will be revealed to all Jews, so the catalyst for the Redemption, the teachings of *Chassidus*, must also be revealed to all. This approach was epitomized by the Rebbe.

To refer to the Alter Rebbe’s famous analogy:¹⁷ *Chassidus* is the prize jewel in the king’s crown, the gem on which the value of the entire crown depends. The Rebbe took this jewel and made it public property, conveying its insights in English and French, making it accessible to all Jews. In this manner, the Rebbe completed the last preparatory steps necessary for the Redemption, heralding the era described by the *Rambam*:¹⁸

A king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and observes its *mitzvos* like David his ancestor, as prescribed by the Written Law and Oral Law.... He will compel all of Israel to walk [in the way of the Torah], repairing the breaches [in its observances].... He will fight the wars

17. See *HaTomim*, Issue 2, p. 49.

18. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim* 11:4. See also the letter of the Rebbe Rashab (*Kovetz Michtavim*, Vol. I, Epistle 9) [Letters of the Rebbe Rashab, Vol. I, p. 309ff.].

people from all strata, even simple Jews, but the teachings of *Chassidus* were within reach of only the intellectually gifted.

Similarly with regard to the spread of *Chassidus* throughout the Jewish community, there was always a difference between those who had accepted a Chassidic way of life, and those who had not. True, the numbers of Chassidim grew, but this fundamental distinction remained.

This began to change through the efforts of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe. The Rebbe's approach was to teach *Chassidus* to everyone, without restrictions. Wherever the Rebbe traveled, he would teach *Chassidus*, regardless of whether he was visiting a Chassidic community or not. Moreover, the Rebbe devoted great effort to encouraging even the unobservant to begin the study of *Chassidus*. He brought the subject within the reach of many who were lacking in basic Torah knowledge. Indeed, he brought *Chassidus* within reach of those who could not even comprehend *Lashon Ha-Kodesh* by having Chassidic texts translated into other languages.

In this vein, a comparison can be drawn between my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, and the Baal Shem Tov. They both taught *Chassidus* in a manner accessible even to simple people. And they both spread *Chassidus* in all sectors of the Jewish community.

There were other Rebbeim who brought the Chassidic way of life within reach of all Jews. The Baal Shem Tov and my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, however, made not only the Chassidic way of life, but also the *teachings* of *Chassidus*, accessible to all.

A FORETASTE OF THE REDEMPTION

As mentioned, the Baal Shem Tov taught *Chassidus* by enclothing it in stories and practical examples, and by teaching common people capsulized Torah *vertelach*. These stories

as is well known, the fusion of two opposites is possible only through an influence which is above the limits of both.¹⁹

In other words: At the time of the Plague of the Firstborn, G-d's essential love for the Jewish people was revealed — a love that transcends all reason and logic. And when this love is revealed, even if logic can demand: "How different are these (the Jews) from these (the Egyptian firstborn)?" and "Is not Esav Yaakov's brother?"²⁰ implying that they are the same, G-d replies: "I love Yaakov and hate Esav."²¹ He loves the Jewish people, for they are His children, as it is written:²² "You are children to G-d, your L-rd." And a father's love for his children is an essential bond which cannot be challenged by logic or complaint.

By telling Pharaoh that the Plague of the Firstborn would take place at midnight, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was alluding to the fact that there would be a revelation transcending the limits of *Seder HaHishtalshelus*. Had this concept not been communicated, Pharaoh and his wizards would not have believed that a plague whose intent was to destroy evil would not affect the Jews, for the two people's level of conduct was similar. Therefore Moshe informed him that a transcendent light would be revealed — and that this transcendent light would reveal the Jews' essential link with G-d.

SIGNS OF INNER LOVE

Although the essential bond between G-d and the Jewish people would be revealed, it was still necessary for the Jews to place signs on their doorposts. This can be explained as follows: All the influence with which G-d endows us is drawn down to the earthly realm through our Divine service. Even

19. See the explanation of this concept in *Or HaTorah*, the *maamar* entitled *Va-Yachleik Aleihem*, ch. 5ff.

20. *Malachi* 1:2.

21. *Ibid.*:3.

22. *Devarim* 14:1.

those revelations which transcend the limits of *Seder HaHish-talshelus* are dependent on such service. Although G-d's essential love is by definition perfect at all times, and thus not dependent on our Divine service, our Divine service is still required in order that such love can be revealed and incorporated within this earthly realm.

The Divine service that draws down transcendent love must resemble that love, i.e., it must also transcend reason, going beyond the limits of our conscious powers. This is why the signs which the Jews placed on their homes on the night of the Plague of the Firstborn — the blood of the circumcision and the blood of the Paschal sacrifice — reflect a connection with G-d that transcends logic.

To explain: the *mitzvah* of circumcision reflects such a bond because it is established with a Jewish child at the age of eight days, before he gains control of his intellectual faculties.²³ Similarly, the *mitzvah* of bringing the Paschal offering required *mesirus nefesh*, self-sacrifice that transcends logic. For sheep were worshipped by the Egyptians. The Jews held the animals for four days to attract the Egyptian's attention, and when asked, they told the Egyptians that they were going to sacrifice the animals for G-d. This required actual *mesirus nefesh*.

By manifesting *mesirus nefesh* in this manner, the Jews brought about the expression of G-d's essential love for the Jewish people, a love which also transcends reason. This love was expressed through the revelations at midnight.

REALIZING A POTENTIAL

Based on the above, we can reconcile an apparent contradiction in the words of our Sages regarding the merit by which our ancestors were judged worthy of leaving Egypt. In

23. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 1, *Parshas Toldos*, where this concept is explained at length.

SO THAT ALL MAY KNOW

As mentioned, it was the Baal Shem Tov who began the drive to reveal *Chassidus* to everyone. He would travel from village to village, and from town to town, teaching Chassidic concepts to simple people. Moreover, to enable the people to comprehend these ideas, the Baal Shem Tov brought them down to their level, using stories, *vertelach* (capsulized Torah insights), and parables to communicate the Torah's deepest secrets.

The Baal Shem Tov's student and successor, the Maggid of Mezeritch, followed a different path. He taught *Chassidus* openly, without enclothing it in parables, stories, or the like. These teachings, however, were communicated only to his students, who were Torah sages, and not to the public at large.

The Alter Rebbe, the Maggid's student and successor, and similarly the subsequent *Chabad* Rebbeim, followed the path of enclothing *Chassidus* in an intellectual framework, thus allowing the mortal mind to comprehend Chassidic teachings. This represented the unique contribution of *Chabad Chassidus* — to make *Chassidus* accessible to all Jews, not only to the select few who shared a connection by virtue of their lofty souls or their achievements in Divine service. In particular, this was the pattern followed after the redemption of *Yud-Tes Kislev*.¹⁵

Over the course of time, the number of those who studied *Chassidus* expanded. And since "Great is study, for it leads to deed,"¹⁶ the numbers of those who applied *Chassidus* in their lives also grew.

Nevertheless, the teachings of *Chassidus* were still not universally accessible, for only the intellectually developed were able to understand. Chassidic conduct was practiced by

15. See *Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5668 (*Toras Sholom*, p. 112ff).

16. Cf. *Kiddushin* 40b.

avoiding the peripheries, we should make them the center of our efforts, spreading the wellsprings of Torah there. This parallels the contribution of the *Targum*, which brought the words of the Torah into a secular framework, and in doing so, prepares for the Future Redemption.

A CONTEMPORARY ALLUSION

I have received a letter stating that the word *בריש* can also serve as an acronym for the name of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe. The *ר* stands for Rebbe, the *י* for Yosef Yitzchak (the Rebbe's names), the *ב* for *ben*, meaning "son of" in Hebrew, and the *ש* for Shalom (the first name of the Rebbe's father). Alternatively, the *ש* stands for Shterna Sarah (the names of the Rebbe's mother).

In general, it is not proper to make up acronyms and allusions. There are, however, certain situations which are so clear and evident, that it is appropriate to cite an allusion from the Torah.

Indeed, it is always preferable to cite a source (or at least an allusion) within the Torah for anything that takes place in the world. One must, however, appreciate the intent of these allusions. As the *Rambam* writes in the Introduction to his *Commentary to the Mishnah*, the allusions from the Torah which our Sages cite for the *esrog* and the myrtle are not the sources from which we learn that these are the species intended. For example, the phrase¹⁴ *pri eitz hadar*, "the fruit of a beautiful tree," does not teach us that we must use an *esrog*. Rather, the requirement to take an *esrog* was part of the Oral Tradition. Nevertheless, in order to show that everything is alluded to in the Torah, our Sages found an appropriate reference.

14. *Vayikra* 23:40, as interpreted by *Sukkah* 35a.

one source, our Sages say²⁴ that "It was in the merit of their faith that our ancestors were redeemed." The fact that the Jews believed in Moshe's promise of redemption, as it is written:²⁵ "And the people believed; they accepted [Moshe's promise] that G-d had taken notice of His people," enabled that promise to be realized.

In another source,²⁶ it is explained that the Jews were redeemed in the merit of the blood of the circumcision and the blood of the Paschal sacrifice. This is alluded to in the verse:²⁷ "Through your blood (plural), you will live."

These sources are not contradictory, for the merits they mention — faith, the circumcision, and the Paschal sacrifice — share a common factor. All reflect a level of Divine service that transcends logic. In general, faith begins where reason ends. This applies particularly with regard to the faith in the redemption from Egypt. According to the rules of nature, it was impossible for even one slave to leave the country,²⁸ let alone 600,000. And yet the Jews believed in Moshe's promise.

They were a broken people, crushed by harsh labor and torn by the grief they suffered from Pharaoh's decree mandating the death of their young sons. For it is a natural tendency for a person to give up everything he has so that his children will be saved. Despite these difficulties, and the power of the Egyptian regime, the Jews believed in Moshe's promise that G-d would redeem them from exile.

And this simple faith which transcended reason called forth G-d's essential love, which also transcends all limits. According to reason, it might have been impossible to refute the argument of the attribute of judgment: "How are these different from these?"

24. *Mechilta, Shmos* 14:31.

25. *Shmos* 4:31.

26. *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 29; *Mechilta, Shmos* 12:6, quoted by *Rashi's* commentary to that verse.

27. *Yechezkel* 16:6.

28. *Mechilta, Shmos* 18:11, quoted by *Rashi* in his commentary to *Shmos* 18:9.

For G-d's essential love for the Jews to cause a change within the context of *Seder HaHishtalshelus*, and more particularly, in order for it to bring about their actual redemption, it was necessary for the Jews to manifest a similar pattern in their Divine service. They had to show how their essential connection with G-d is revealed within the context of their conscious powers, and to manifest this in actual deed. This was accomplished through the *mitzvos* of the Paschal sacrifice and the circumcision, for the Jews thereby expressed in deed a connection to G-d which transcends reason.

DEFINING THE MOMENT OF MIDNIGHT

On the verse,²⁹ “And at midnight, G-d slew every firstborn in Egypt,” we find two opinions in the *Mechilta*. One states that it was “the Creator” who divided the night, while the other states that the night was divided by “He who knows His moments and His hours.” The *Radbaz*³⁰ explains that both expressions refer to G-d, but highlight different attributes of His Being. The first places the emphasis on G-d as Creator. Since He brought the night into being, it was possible for Him to halt the revolution of the heavenly sphere, and in this manner divide the night into two halves.

The second opinion maintains that such an unnatural division is unnecessary. Although a human being cannot distinguish the exact moment of midnight, “He who knows His moments and His hours” can. And at that moment, G-d smote the firstborn.

But what is the underlying distinction between these two opinions? And according to the first opinion, why did G-d perform the special miracle of dividing the night?

29. *Shmos* 12:29.

30. Vol. I, Responsum 814.

from Egypt serves as the paradigm for all redemptions, the verse which describes the exodus from Egypt contains an allusion to the Future Redemption to be led by *Mashiach*.

The *Targum* contains a more explicit reference to the Future Redemption for the following reasons. The Torah was translated from *Lashon HaKodesh* into a foreign language because, in the period of exile, there were Jews who could not understand *Lashon HaKodesh*. The *Targum* represents the transition of the Torah from a holy language into a secular tongue, showing how the secular can serve a holy function.⁹ Efforts of this nature help the world prepare for the Future Redemption.

To explain: After the redemption from Egypt, the evil within the souls of the Jewish people remained intact. Therefore the Jews had to *flee* from Egypt,¹⁰ as it is written:¹¹ “And it was told to Pharaoh that the people fled.” With regard to the Future Redemption, by contrast, such flight will not be necessary, for “I will cause the spirit of impurity to depart from the earth,”¹² erasing all traces of evil. Thus with regard to the Future Redemption it is written:¹³ “You will not depart with haste, nor will you flee as you go.” Instead, “all flesh will see together that the mouth of G-d has spoken;” physical flesh will have a direct appreciation of G-dliness. This will be made possible by man's efforts to refine his environment and reveal the G-dliness encloded within.

On this basis, we can appreciate why it is the *Targum* which mentions the association with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the *AriZal*, and the Baal Shem Tov. For the teachings of these masters must be disseminated outward. Instead of

9. See the *Sichah to Parshas Va'eira* in this series. See also the *maamar* in *Torah Or (Parshas Mishpatim)*, entitled *Vayiru... Livanas HaSapir*.

10. See *Tanya*, ch. 31.

11. *Shmos* 14:5.

12. *Zechariah* 13:2.

13. *Yeshayahu* 52:12. See the explanations of these concepts at the conclusion of the series of *maamarim* entitled *VeKachah*, 5637.

Through the teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the *AriZal*,⁵ the “children of Israel [will] leave [the exile] with an upraised arm.” As the *Zohar* states:⁶ “With the book of the *Zohar*, [the Jews] will leave exile with mercy.”

The Baal Shem Tov amplified the efforts of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the *AriZal*, for Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the *AriZal* revealed *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, the Torah's mystic secrets, only to a select few, and even to them the revelations were limited. The coming of *Mashiach*, however, will take place only when *P'nimiyus HaTorah* is disseminated without restrictions.⁷ This represents the contribution of the Baal Shem Tov, who revealed *Chassidus* to everyone, spreading the teachings outward without restraint.

REACHING THE PERIPHERIES

The Torah's teachings are exact. The fact that the allusion to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the *AriZal*, and the Baal Shem Tov is found in the *Targum* and not in the words of the verse itself is significant.

The simple meaning of the verse refers to the exodus from Egypt. Nevertheless, since the Egyptian exile serves as the paradigm for all subsequent exiles,⁸ and since the redemption

5. See the introduction to the texts *Kisei Melech and Mikdash Melech*.

6. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 124b; see *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 26.

7. This concept is reflected in the precise wording of the *Tikkunei Zohar* (the conclusion of *Tikkun 6*) which records Eliyahu *HaNavi*'s promise to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai regarding our redemption: “Several lowly men will derive sustenance from your book, when it will be revealed in the lower realms in the final generations, at the end of days. And as a result, ‘I will proclaim freedom.’”

The *Kisei Melech* states that this will take place in the latter generations, close to *Mashiach*'s Era, several hundred years after the *Zohar* was revealed. And the words of the *Zohar* will be interpreted on the basis of the concepts which the *AriZal* explained. For learning in a superficial matter is not sufficient; the freedom promised by the *Zohar* will come only when its teachings are explained and extrapolated. See also the introduction of R. Chayim Vital to *Shaar HaHakdamos*.

8. See *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:5.

TRANSCENDENCE WITHIN THE NATURAL ORDER

The two opinions can be explained as follows: As stated previously, the Plague of the Firstborn stemmed from a level of G-dliness which transcended *Seder HaHishtalshelus*.

How was this transcendent revelation expressed on the earthly plane? According to the first opinion, the transcendental nature of this revelation was reflected on the earthly plane as well. Since nature and time are unable to contain such a transcendent light, G-d halted the revolution of the heavenly sphere, negating the ordinary patterns of time and nature.

According to the second opinion, it was not necessary to nullify nature. Instead, the influence which transcended *Seder HaHishtalshelus* permeated the patterns of nature in a way which parallels the miracle of Purim. Elevating nature in this manner does more than reveal G-d's transcendence. It shows how nature itself can become a vessel for the Divine light which transcends it.

With regard to differences of opinion among our Sages, it is said:³¹ “These and these are the words of the living G-d.” Accordingly, it is necessary to say that both descriptions of the revelation at midnight are appropriate. On one hand, the Divine light which transcends *Seder HaHishtalshelus* was en clothed within the natural order (as reflected by the expression “He who knows His moments and His hours”). Simultaneously, this transcendent influence was overtly revealed (as reflected by the expression “the Creator”).

This unique revelation was made possible because the Plague of the Firstborn was the last of the Ten Plagues, and the beginning of the exodus. The ultimate purpose of the exodus of Egypt was the giving of the Torah, as it is written:³² “When you lead the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d

31. *Eruvin* 13b.

32. *Shmos* 3:12.

on this mountain.” And the intent of the giving of the Torah is the fusion of the G-dliness which transcends the natural order with the natural order itself. Therefore both sources of influence mentioned above — “He who knows His moments and His hours” and “the Creator” — were associated with the Plague of the Firstborn, so that the fusion of the spiritual and the physical would be openly revealed.

We also see this pattern with regard to the exodus from Egypt as a whole. On one hand, the country was not nullified entirely; even after the exodus, it remained a nation of influence. Nevertheless, at the time when Egypt was at the height of its power, when not even one slave could escape, 600,000 men — plus many women and children — marched proudly out.³³ This reflects a revelation of G-dliness which transcends nature, yet occurs within the natural pattern of the world.

TO PERMEATE THE LOWEST REALMS WITH THE HIGHEST POTENTIALS

As mentioned above, the revelations which transcend *Seder HaHishtalshelus* were drawn down through the circumcision and the Paschal sacrifice. Since the revelation at midnight fused the higher and lower planes in an overt manner, we must say that it was necessary for the Divine service of faith and *mesirus nefesh* that was expressed through these two *mitzvos* to follow a similar pattern. These transcendent spiritual potentials were intended to permeate the people’s consciousness, affecting even their lowest potentials.³⁴ This had a

33. See *Shmos* 14:8.

34. This is reflected in the general thrust of the *mitzvos* of circumcision and the Paschal sacrifice. These two *mitzvos* were commanded before the giving of the Torah, when the world was still “contaminated” (see *Shabbos* 146a; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 52b). At this time, and for this reason, there was a decree separating the lower realms from the higher realms (*Shmos Rabbah* 12:3), and the Torah and its *mitzvos* could not permeate the material world.

Before the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah, it was necessary to elevate certain aspects of material existence while they were still in a contaminated state. This was the purpose of these two *mitzvos*. Their observance

YUD SHVAT

THE CATALYST OF REDEMPTION

The celebrated letter of the Baal Shem Tov¹ relates that when he encountered *Mashiach*, he asked him: “Master, when are you coming?” *Mashiach* answered: “When the wellsprings of your teachings spread outward.” For the coming of the Redemption is dependent on the dissemination of *Chassidus*.

Every development in the world is alluded to in the Torah.² The spread of Chassidism is alluded to in the following manner. The *Targum* — the translation of the Torah into Aramaic by Onkelos — renders the concluding words of the verse,³ “And the children of Israel left with an upraised arm,” as בריש גלי. Chassidic texts⁴ explain that, when the letters of these words are rearranged, the word בריש can be interpreted as an acronym for the Hebrew words meaning “Reb Yisrael, the son of Sarah,” or alternatively, “Reb Yisrael Baal Shem.”

The same texts state that the word בריש can also be interpreted as an acronym for the Hebrew words meaning “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai,” author of the *Zohar*, and “Reb Yitzchak, the son of Shlomo,” the *AriZal*.

1. To his brother-in-law, R. Gershon Kitover, printed in *Kesser Shem Tov*. See also the conclusion to the *Sichah* of *Parshas Vayeitzei* in this series. Note also the explanation of this letter in *Sichas Simchas Torah*, 5690 (*Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. II, p. 572ff).

2. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 221a; see also *Bava Kamma* 92a.

3. *Shmos* 14:8.

4. *Degel Machneh Efraim*.

Redemption will follow the pattern of the exodus from Egypt. The exodus from Egypt came about in the merit of the Jews' faith, and because of the expression of that faith at the lowest levels — encompassing the lowest levels within an individual's personality (circumcision), and even entities entirely outside the human sphere (eating the Paschal sacrifice).

Similarly, the future Redemption will also come in the merit of faith. Despite the overwhelming concealment of G-dliness in the present exile, it is possible to arouse our people's simple faith in the coming of *Mashiach*. For "he is waiting behind our wall";⁴⁴ *Mashiach* is already here, he is merely hiding behind the wall.

The intent is that this faith should not remain merely an encompassing potential, but that it should permeate one's intellect and emotions. Moreover, it should be transmitted even to one's lowest potentials (circumcision).

This is accomplished through studying the teachings of *Chabad Chassidus*⁴⁵ and comprehending them thoroughly. This draws the power of faith into the intellect, internalizing it, and enabling it to affect all our other potentials, causing a change in one's emotional characteristics.⁴⁶

Afterwards, these wellsprings spread, extending into one's environment (the Paschal sacrifice). And as the wellsprings continue to be dispersed, as promised by *Mashiach*, we will proceed to the dawning of the Redemption. May it be in the immediate future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Acharon Shel Pesach*, 5721 and 5722)



44. Cf. *Shir HaShirim* 2:9.

45. See the *Sichah for Yud-Tes Kislev* in this series, which explains the parallel between *Yud-Tes Kislev* ("the Rosh HaShanah of *Chabad Chassidus*") and the *mitzvah* of circumcision.

46. *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. I, p. 56b.

parallel effect in the spiritual realm, causing the revelation which transcends *Seder HaHishtalshelus* to permeate the natural order.

The Divine service associated with the *mitzvah* of circumcision is, as explained elsewhere,³⁵ intended to establish an eternal, transcendent bond with G-d in our actual flesh, and more particularly in the organ associated with "*Yesod*, the end of the torso."³⁶

This same motif was fulfilled in a more encompassing manner by the Divine service associated with the Paschal sacrifice. For the Paschal sacrifice involved a lamb, a material entity outside the human sphere altogether; even further removed than "the end of the torso." Moreover, the Egyptians worshipped the lamb. This was the entity which the Jews employed as a means of expressing their *mesirus nefesh*.

This concept also relates to a distinction between the Paschal sacrifice and other sacrificial offerings.³⁷ The entire intent of the Paschal sacrifice is that it be eaten. With regard to all other offerings, by contrast, partaking of the sacrifice is an additional *mitzvah*.

Eating is one of the activities in which "a human resembles an animal."³⁸ The purpose of the Paschal sacrifice was to express on this lowly plane a level of faith and *mesirus nefesh* which transcends reason and logic.

TRUE FREEDOM

As mentioned on several occasions,³⁹ true freedom requires not only that the soul be free from the restraints gen-

in turn generated the potential for the contamination to cease at the giving of the Torah (*Sichos Rosh Chodesh Kislev*, 5712).

35. See the *sichah* for *Parshas Vayechi* in this series.

36. See the Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, p. 17a.

37. See *Pesachim* 76b.

38. *Chagigah* 16a.

39. See the communal letter of *Pesach*, 5722, and the sources mentioned there.

erated by the body and the animal soul, but that the body and the animal soul themselves be free. And on a broader scale, freedom implies that one's environment, even those aspects which conceal G-dliness, should be affected by the revelation of the soul.

The initial step leading to true freedom — of the soul, the body, the animal soul, and one's environment — is the revelation brought about by faith, for faith reveals the soul. This faith is then expressed in the *mitzvah* of circumcision (which involves the organ associated with “*yesod*, the end of the torso”) and in the Paschal sacrifice, which involved offering an entity beyond the human sphere, part of our environment.⁴⁰

40. The above does not contradict the concepts explained in *Tanya*, ch. 31, which states that “the evil in the souls of the Jews still remained strong in the left part of the heart, for their contamination did not cease until the giving of the Torah.” For this reason, the Jews had to flee from Egypt.

Although the circumcision and the Paschal sacrifice brought about freedom even with regard to the refinement of the body and the animal soul (as explained in the *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 56, and the *Zohar Chodash*, at the beginning of *Parshas Yisro*), the refinement achieved at this time was primarily due to the revelation from above. From the Jews' own perspective, they were not yet prepared for this freedom.

Their Divine service in circumcising themselves and offering the Paschal sacrifice was merely a preparation for the revelation from above. For since the world at large was still “contaminated,” the observance of the *mitzvos* was different.

For that reason, we do not derive Torah law from the observance of *mitzvos* before the giving of the Torah (*Jerusalem Talmud*, *Mo'ed Kattan* 3:5, *Yoma* 28b; see also the discussion of this subject in the *S'dei Chemed*, the *Pe'as HaSadeh*, and the *Encyclopedia Talmudis*; see also above note 34 concerning contamination.)

For this reason, the nullification of the evil of the animal soul was only external at that time. Internally, the evil continued to exist. Nevertheless, the nullification of evil on the external plane because of the revelation from above began — and generated the power for — the nullification of evil in an internal way which was accomplished through the Divine service of the Jews during the days which they counted until the giving of the Torah. This made it possible that, at the giving of the Torah (after the Jews' preparation), their contamination ceased, i.e., not even a hidden trace remained (*Sichos* of the 2nd Night of *Pesach*, 5720).

The power to descend and affect inferior levels of existence comes from a very high plane. Accordingly, we can appreciate that the power of the *mitzvah* of circumcision — which reveals G-dliness within our physical flesh, even within the organ associated with “*yesod*, the end of the torso” — is very great. And the power of the Paschal sacrifice is even greater, for it draws G-dliness into a realm outside the human sphere.

This facilitates the attainment of true freedom. For as long as one has not taken the “great wealth”⁴¹ of Egypt out of exile by refining one's environment, one has not entirely left exile, and one's experience of freedom is lacking.

Thus we find that circumcision served as a preparatory step for the Paschal sacrifice. As the *Midrash* relates,⁴² when the Jews wanted to partake of the Paschal sacrifice offered by Moshe, Moshe told them that first they must circumcise themselves. For a preparatory step implies action at a level lower than the objective for which the preparations are made.

ANTICIPATING THE ULTIMATE EXODUS

It is written:⁴³ “As in the days of your exodus from Egypt, I will show [you] wonders,” indicating that the future

41. Cf. *Bereishis* 15:14. See the *sichah* for *Parshas Vayigash* in this series, where this concept is explained.

On this basis, we can also explain why the lamb selected for the Paschal sacrifice had to be set aside four days before the sacrifice, so that it could be inspected (*Pesachim* 96a). The sacrifices (epitomized by the *korban tamid*, the daily offering) bring a person close to G-d, as reflected by the connection between the Hebrew word for “sacrifice,” קָרַב, and the word קָרַב, meaning “close”. The inspection of the sacrifices is intended to ensure that a person's approach to G-d is perfect, without blemish. This is achieved through refining one's portion of the world as expressed through the Paschal sacrifice.

When a person does not shoulder the task of refining his environment, even if he refines all the powers of his soul, including even his lowest potentials (circumcision), it is possible that the essence of his soul is still in exile, distant from G-dliness. See the *sichah* for *Parshas Vayigash* in this series.

42. *Lekach Tov*, *Shmos* 12:6.

43. *Michah* 7:15.