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On the occasion of his 12th birthday, 17 Shevat, 5778

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# LIKKUTEI SICHOS

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the  
**Lubavitcher Rebbe**  
**Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson**

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# LIKKUTEI SICHOS

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

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

by the

**Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson**

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Volume II: *Shemot*

•

In English rendition  
with Introduction and Notes

by

**Jacob Immanuel Schochet**

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR PARENTS

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ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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BESHALACH  
T'U BISHVAT

בשלח  
ט"ו בשבט

A.

I. In a sichah<sup>1</sup> delivered twenty years ago, *Acharon shel Pessach* 5698 [1938], the *Rebbe*, my father-in-law, discussed the *haftorah* of this Shabbat.

At the time he quoted his great-grandfather, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, who had said that his grandfather, the *Alter Rebbe*, once asked: 'Why is the *haftorah* of *Shabbat Shirah* 'Vatashar Devorah'<sup>a</sup> — the song of a woman, and not the song of King David — which is the *haftorah* of *Shevi'i shel Pessach*?<sup>b</sup> In *parshat Beshalach* we have a song of males — 'Az *yashir Moshe* (Then sang Moses) . . .<sup>c</sup> as well as a song of women<sup>d</sup> — 'And Miriam took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out . . . with timbrels and with instruments;<sup>e</sup> and Miriam responded to them: Sing unto the Eternal, for He is gloriously sublime . . .' Why then is the *haftorah* expressly the song of a woman, 'Vatashar Devorah'?

1. *Likutei Diburim*, vol. IV, no. 35 [see there pp. 1388 and 1401].

a. [Judges, ch. 5, the Song of Deborah after the victory over Sisera.]

b. [*Shevi'i shel Pessach* commemorates the Splitting of the Sea, and the Torah-reading on that day is *parshat Beshalach* up to Exodus 15:27. The theme of an *haftorah*, the supplemental reading from the Prophets, is analogous to the Torah-reading. On *Shevi'i shel Pessach* the *haftorah* is the Song of David: 'in the day the Eternal delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul' — II Samuel, ch. 22.]

c. [Exodus, ch. 15.]

d. [Exodus 15:20-21.]

e. [Some translate 'with timbrels and dances.' *Mechilta* (and other *Midrashim*) on this verse explains that the righteous of Israel had been so confident that G-d would do miracles and mighty deeds for Israel at their going out from Egypt that they prepared for themselves *tupim u'mecholot*, according to which *mecholot*, too, are musical instruments (perhaps flutes).]

regard to the Divine service of prayer (also described as hymn<sup>6</sup>, done in a manner of singing). As is known, the *Alter Rebbe* used to pray out loud and with singing. Although song is connected with elevating from below to above, **now** there has to be (after all the elevations are completed) the song from a position of attachment and inclusion in the Supernal. This serves as a preparation and introduction to the "**new song**" of the time to come.

This applies particularly to the prayer for the true and complete Redemption, specifically after the declaration of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that "all the appointed times have passed"<sup>7</sup> already," and all aspects of Divine service have been completed. In addition to the desire, longing and yearning for the Redemption (until now), there must **now** also be an essential feeling of **joy**, borne out of the realization that the Redemption is actually coming at this actual moment.

(From the talk of Thursday, *Parshas Beshallah*, 11 Shvat, and *Shabbos Parshas Beshallah*, 13 Shvat, *Shabbos Shirah*, 5752)

6. *Sifrei*, beginning of section *Va'eschanan* and other sources.

7. *Sanhedrin* 97:b.

## 63

The tenth day of the eleventh month in our generation is the day of passing of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation. At that point he achieved **an elevation**, for "all his deeds and Torah and Divine service that he accomplished during his life"<sup>1</sup> rose to a higher level, an incomparable elevation. The essential perfection of this was completed on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of **this year** - the forty-second year (5710-5752). The forty-second year is connected with the Divine Name "Mem-Bes,"<sup>2</sup> through which all aspects of elevation occur. All the elevations of the forty-two anniversaries of the day of passing **have been completed**, as well as all the elevations through our actions and Divine service of the past forty-two years (including the completion of "It was in the fortieth year"<sup>3</sup>). These parallel the forty-two stages in the wilderness of our generation<sup>4</sup> (the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption). And imminently and immediately we will actually enter the good and expansive land in the true and final Redemption.

...There is an additional and also essential lesson of the Song<sup>5</sup> in

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1. *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh*, section 27 and its explanation.

2. [There are several Divine Names, each indicating a different aspect or manifestation of G-dliness. Many of these names also have alpha-numeric representations. Thus, the name "Mem-Bes" is numerically equivalent to 42, according to the numeric values of the Hebrew alphabet. Translator's note.]

3. *Devarim* 1:3.

4. [This is a reference to the forty-two stages of the journey of the Jewish people from Egypt to Israel, as recorded in the Torah. Since our generation - the generation of Redemption - is a reincarnation of the generation of the Exodus (see no. 62), the events of our time parallel those of the Exodus, including the stages of the journey. Translator's note.]

5. [This is a reference to the Song of Sea, recorded in the Torah reading of Beshalach and included in the daily prayer service. Translator's note.]

In that context the *Alter Rebbe* related a lengthy story (published in the cited *sichah*), and concluded: when the Jews left Egypt, passed through dry land in the midst of the sea, and then offered a song, the women, sang too. But the women did so 'with timbrels and instruments,' with joy. That is why the *haftorah* of *Shabbat Shirah* is *Vatashar Devorah*. ('All comes from the dust,'<sup>f</sup> the *Sefirah* of *malchut*.)

II. This explanation is difficult to understand. Why, indeed, was the song of Moses and the children of Israel, i.e., the men, less joyous than that of Miriam and the women? In the plain sense the reason is that it is impossible to sense the same joy in an accomplishment attained without effort and agony as when there is great exertion and the experience of difficult struggles. 'The reward is commensurate to the pain':<sup>2</sup> the greater the effort and agony, the greater the joy.

When the Jewish people witnessed the drowning of the Egyptians and their complete redemption from the Egyptian exile, they sang a song. But Moses and all the men could not feel at that time as intense a joy as did Miriam and all the women.

The most difficult period of the Egyptian exile, and the harshest decrees, occurred after the birth of Miriam.<sup>g</sup>

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f. [Ecclesiastes 3:20. In Kabbalistic terminology, *afar* (dust, earth) is represented by the *Sefirah* of *malchut*, which is also the *Sefirah* of the woman; these two, then, are analogous. Of this dust the Midrash (*Bereishit Rabba* 12:11) states that 'All are of the dust' — even the sun's orb. In our context this would mean that everything is by virtue of the woman.

In the *sichah* referred to (see there p. 1401), the *Tzemach Tzedek* concluded that *Shevi'i shel Pessach* and *Acharon shel Pessach* are reminiscent of the Messianic redemption; thus in honor of the Messiah — *ben David* (descendant of King David) — the *haftorah* is the Song of David.]

2. *Avot* 5:21

g. [See *Tanchuma-Kadum*, Bo:7; *Shir Hashirim Rabba* 2:11; *Seder Olam Rabba*, ch. 3: The Israelites spent 210 years in Egypt, but the real bondage and suffering was 86 years, from the birth of Miriam. This indeed was

The most terrible decree of all was that 'every son that is born you shall cast into the river.'<sup>h</sup>

All preceding hardships, the hard labor 'with mortar and bricks, and all the manner of service in the field, all their service which they made them serve with rigor,'<sup>i</sup> were far less devastating than the edict of casting newborn babies into the river.

Moreover, as our sages relate,<sup>3</sup> this was followed by the hardship of Pharaoh's bathing in the blood of the Jewish children.

Such things affect a mother much more than a father. When the Jewish people were set free from Pharaoh and his decrees, the joy of the Jewish women, therefore, was much greater than that of the men.

III. All narratives of the Torah offer instruction for every generation, including our own. This applies also to the story of the exodus from Egypt and the song with the joy demonstrated by the timbrels and instruments of Miriam and the Jewish women.

An allusion to this effect appears in Scripture itself, when it is stated 'and out came *all* the women *after* her'<sup>j</sup> — i.e., all Jewish women to the end of time follow Miriam and say 'Sing unto the Eternal, for He is gloriously sublime; He has hurled into the sea the horse and its rider.'<sup>k</sup>

G-dliness and holiness are gloriously sublime; there can be nothing higher. All things contrary to holiness — signified by the horse and the rider — are hurled into the sea,' that is, hurled with power, to the very depth of the abyss, lower than which there is nothing.

**for the coming of the true and complete Redemption!**

More specifically: there is the prayer, entreaty and supplication that G-d will actually bring the Redemption, imminently and immediately that is said with the feeling of **pain and bitterness** ("Miryam because of the bitterness"<sup>3</sup>) over the length of the exile. [This pain and bitterness] are expressed in the cry from the depths of the heart, "**until when, until when, until when!**"... [Together with the cry of pain, the righteous women are (also and essentially) imbued with the feeling of joy; a **joy** so great that it is expressed **in song**, because of the greatness of the trust that "Behold he (the king Moshiach) is coming",<sup>4</sup> and he has already come!

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Bo, 6 Shvat, and Shabbos Parshas Beshallah, Shabbos Shirah, 13 Shvat, 5752)*

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the reason for her being named Miriam, an idiom of *maror*, bitterness, and as it is written 'Vayemareru — they embittered their lives.' (Exodus 1:14)]

h. [Exodus 1:22]

i. [Exodus 1:13]

3. *Shemos Rabba* 1:34

j. [Exodus 15:20]

k. [*Ibid.* 21]

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3. *Shmos Rabba*, beginning of chapter 26. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:11. [*Miryam and merirus (bitterness) share the same root letters in Hebrew. Translator's note.*]

4. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.



The Announcement Of The Redemption

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The writings of the Ari"zal<sup>1</sup> explain that the generation of the future Redemption is the reincarnation of the generation that went out of Egypt. Accordingly, the righteous women of our generation, in whose merit we will be redeemed, are the same righteous women in whose merit we left Egypt.

Our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, for, in the words of my sainted father-in-law, all aspects of the Divine service have been completed and we stand ready to greet our righteous Moshiach. Since this is the case, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, endeavored to affect and influence the women, in order to hasten the Redemption in the merit of the righteous women of our generation.

...There is a unique and essential lesson in regards to the concept of the song, as exemplified by the song of Miryam and the song of Devorah:

Just as in the exodus from Egypt "**the righteous women of the generation were confident** that G-d would perform miracles for them, and they brought tambourines from Egypt,"<sup>2</sup> so too in this final Redemption from exile, the righteous women of Israel must be confident, and **certainly they are confident**, that immediately and imminently the true and complete Redemption is actually coming. [So strong is their conviction that] "**they begin immediately** (in the last moments of exile) **to sing with tambourines and with dances**,

IV. It was already discussed at an earlier occasion that the significance of the decree of 'every son that is born you shall cast into the river' is relevant to every generation and every country – including our own time and place.<sup>4</sup>

The Jewish way of life is to educate the child with Torah and *mitzvot* right after birth. But as soon as a Jewish child is born, Pharaoh, king of Egypt – that is, the dominant trend of society – comes and argues: a boy has been born who in due time will marry and will have to provide for his household. Thus it is appropriate 'to cast him into the river' which provides a livelihood – (analogous to the Nile-river which is responsible for the food and sustenance of Egypt) – from childhood on, to become immersed and drowned in that river.

As for Torah and *mitzvot*, 'Pharaoh' responds that there is a Sunday. On Sunday the banks are closed, businesses are shut, and so forth. Saturday-night the child must be taken to the movies and similar places. The next morning, however, as the parents want to sleep until noon, it is all right for the child to go to Sunday-school to study not only songs and dancing but even Hebrew and *Chumash*. After all, this allows for the parents to sleep and to be deeply asleep spiritually.

Afterwards, about one o'clock in the afternoon, the child will be nourished with television, movies and baseball – thus with the Nile-river which, in their view, provides sustenance.

They fail to bind the child from its very infancy to G-d who sustains all the world in His goodness with grace, kindness and compassion in an honorable and peaceful way. In fact, it is this bond alone that is the Jew's channel for sustenance. The laws of the Nile-river may determine the livelihood of the gentiles. Of Israel,

1. Introduction of *Shaar HaGilgulim*, *Hakdamah* 20. *Likkutei Torah* and *Sefer HaLikkutim Shmos* 3:4.

2. Rashi's commentary on *Shmos* 15:20.

4. See above, *Shemot*, sect. III ff.

however, it is said 'And you who cleave unto the Eternal your G-d are *alive*, all of you, this day':<sup>5</sup> their life derives from this bond of cleaving unto G-d, and thus also their livelihood — for 'He who gives life gives sustenance,'<sup>l</sup> for himself, his wife and children.

By casting the children into the river they are torn away, not only from spiritual reality, but from life itself. For, as said, the sole channel for the life and livelihood of a Jew is his bond with the Almighty.

V. In the Egyptian *galut*, which preceded the giving of the Torah, none of the earlier hardships were as terrible as the decree of 'every son that will be born you shall cast into the river.' It is the same with the present *galut*. None of the entrapments of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) relating to adults are as terrible as the one relating to small children.

'Pharaoh' or 'good friends' like the next-door neighbors,<sup>m</sup> argues: "How can you send your child to a *cheder* or to a *yeshivah* to be taught a Torah that is some 3500 years old, a Torah given in a desolate desert and in a time when there was no radio or telephone, and not even a

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5. Deuteronomy 4:4

[Mankind as a whole is subject to the laws and order of nature — symbolized here by the natural laws of the Nile. Israel, however, was given the Torah, and through the Torah becomes attached to G-d, the Creator and Sovereign of nature. Israel thus is able to transcend all natural laws and restrictions. Its vitality is from the very source of life and it stands under the direct Providence of G-d. Cf. *Shabbat* 156a-b; *Zohar* III:216b; and the commentaries *a.l.*]

l. [A paraphrase of *Ta'anit* 8b]

m. ['Pharaoh' is represented as the 'good friend' seemingly concerned about our welfare and that of our children. This is analogous to the Pharaoh of old who pretended to care about the Israelites. Thus our sages interpret 'And they made the children of Israel serve *be-farech* — with rigor': The word *farech* is divisible into the two words *peh rach*, tender mouth; for Pharaoh induced the Israelites to work by initially using soothing words and other deceptions. See *Sotah* 11a-b; *Shemot Rabba* 1:10; *Tanchuma*, Beha'alotecha:13.]

not wait for the fulfillment of 'You shall bring them in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance,' which refers to the Sanctuary in Jerusalem, but when they were still in the desert G-d already said, 'Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.'<sup>v</sup>

It is the same now, in these few days remaining before the coming of the Messiah. Remaining unaffected by all the sorts of decrees and raising 'seed blessed by the Eternal,'<sup>w</sup> brings about the 'Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst,'<sup>x</sup> i.e., that the Almighty will dwell in every Jewish home; and as G-d dwells there, it is inevitable that there will also be bountiful sustenance, plentiful health, and true joy from children and grandchildren for many good days and years.

(Adapted from the Sichot of Yud Shevat 5718)

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v. [Exodus 25:8]

w. [Isaiah 61:9]

x. ['Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst:' strictly speaking it should have said 'and I will dwell in it (in the sanctuary)'; but Scripture means to emphasize 'I will dwell in *their* midst,' among *them*, that is, within each and every one of them, for each and every one must establish a sanctuary within himself. See *Shnei Luchot Haberit*, *Ta'anit*, *s.v.* me'inyan ho'avodah; *Likutei Torah*, Nasso, p. 20b. Cf. below, *Terumah*, sect. VII-VIII, and note 13 there.]



Even according to the opinion that the angels did not wait for the women, still they could not offer their song until Miriam granted them permission. This explains why it says 'Miriam responded *lahem*' — masculine gender; that is, *lahem* refers to the angels, namely Miriam granting the angels permission to offer their song.

From this passage we can see the great significance of the women's *shirah*. Its impact was felt not only in this physical world but also in the supernal, spiritual realms. Their *shirah* took precedence and was superior to that of the angels.

VIII. All the above offers clear guidance for everyone. There is no reason to be afraid, neither of Pharaoh, nor of the Nile, nor of all harsh decrees. When fortified with authentic Jewish vigor, one can be in Egypt even when there is a 'Pharaoh, king of Egypt' with all kinds of decrees, and still have one's children unaffected. Parents can guide the children in the way of the Torah, the way that offers them life, not only life in *Olam Habah*, the World to Come, but also literally life in this world, the here and now.

Parents can guide the children along the path which will cause them to say, 'This is my G-d and I will glorify Him, *my father's* G-d and I will exalt Him;<sup>s</sup> for they shall follow the path of their parents. Surely this is authentic joy from children.

In turn, this will lead — as the *shirah* continues — to 'You shall bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance,<sup>t</sup> — i.e., to merit the building of the third Sanctuary, speedily in our own days.

Moreover, as stated in the *Gemara*:<sup>u</sup> You can learn G-d's love for Israel from the fact that the Almighty did

morning-paper at *Modeh Ani* to start the day! In those primitive days it was all right to pursue an education like that. Today, however, in the twentieth century endowed with progress and culture, we cannot afford to be old-fashioned!"

Moreover, Pharaoh will sometimes appear as a Defender of the Faith by arguing: "Surely you would like your child to contribute large sums to charity in general and to yeshivas in particular. Thus you must see to it that he be wealthy, and therefore cast him into the river of sustenance. Make him be like all the Johns and Michaels who are not involved with the Divine service, and then there is a chance that he will contribute generously to yeshivas and *chadarim*!" (In reality, however, Pharaoh is the only one to profit from this. The Jewish nation gains nothing from it.)

One must be aware that we are dealing with one and the same Pharaoh. He realizes that any demand to commit a transgression will not be obeyed.<sup>n</sup> So he disguises himself in a silken caftan [a saint's clothing, as it were] and claims to have a large yeshivah for which he needs funds. Children should therefore be sent to public schools and Sunday-schools, and this will enable him to build a large yeshivah for — *angles*.

This is but a ruse of Pharaoh, the 'crafty one'<sup>o</sup> who says, 'Come let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply — [and in fact, they will indeed multiply and grow!]<sup>p</sup> —

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n. [See *Shabbat* 105b: Such are the wiles of the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination): He does not come immediately to tempt man to commit a gross transgression, but today he says to him 'Do this,' tomorrow he tells him 'Do that,' until finally he bids him 'Go and serve idols.')

o. [See *Zohar* I:179b that the *yetzer hara* is referred to as the 'cunning rogue,' craftily employing all kinds of pretexts to divert man from good to evil.]

p. [Pharaoh said 'Let us deal wisely with them lest they multiply.' (Exodus 1:10) G-d responded to this by saying, 'You say lest they multiply, but I say 'Thus indeed they will multiply and they will grow.' *Sotah* 11a; Rashi on Exodus 1:12.]

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s. [Exodus 15:2. See above, *Shemot*, sect. X, and notes 10 and k there.]

t. [Exodus 15:17. See *Mechilta* and Rashi on this verse.]

u. [*Ketuvot* 62b]

the Pharaoh who desires that there remain no residue, Heaven forbid, of *Yiddishkeit* and Jewish souls, and thus also not of Jewish bodies.

One must detect Pharaoh's stratagem in time and react with Jewish determination to annul the edict: stop worrying about the children's careers when they are five, seven, thirteen or eighteen years old, to have faith and to trust in the Almighty. For 'many are the thoughts in the heart of man (and these are of no avail precisely because they are many: multifariousness as opposed to the oneness of the ultimate One of the Universe) but the counsel of the Eternal, it endures'<sup>q</sup> (*it* – singular tense). The Almighty controls not only the heavens but also this very earth which is the abode of the parents and their children.

When keeping this in mind one will not be impressed by the neighbors but, on the contrary, influence the neighbors too to save their children from the hands of Pharaoh. Tens of thousands of children will thus be raised to march towards our righteous *Mashiach*, speedily in our own days.

VI. In the days of Moses and Miriam the joy of the redemption from Pharaoh was sensed more profoundly by the women than by the men, because the mothers' agony over the harsh edicts was also more profound than that of the fathers. It is the same today: 'Edicts of Pharaoh,' as well as the joy from overcoming these, affect the Jewish women more profoundly.

A man is not at home for the major part of the day. Even during the time that he is at home, he is not as involved with the education of the children as is the mother. It is the Jewish woman who is constantly locked in battle with Pharaoh in all his disguises and with all his ruses of good friendship. Thus it is she who is assured to be vic-

q. [Proverbs 19:21]

torious and to achieve that 'the Eternal (i.e., Torah and *Yiddishkeit*) is most exalted, (while the opposing side, referred to as) the horse and its rider He has cast into the sea.' This is achieved through joy, with timbrels and with instruments, thus leading into the next *parshah*, Yitro, the *parshah* of *kabalat haTorah*, the receiving of the Torah, because now one is able to state 'our children shall be our guarantors.'<sup>6</sup>

VII. We can now understand a passage in *Midrash Tanchuma*,<sup>r</sup> relating to a seeming difficulty in the verse of 'And Miriam responded *lahem* (to them)': the context suggests that Miriam responded to the *women*; thus it should say *lahen* (feminine gender) and not *lahem* (masculine gender)!

The Midrash relates, however, that when the Israelites crossed the sea and sang the *shirah*, the angels, too, wanted to offer a song. The Almighty then said to the angels: Israel shall sing first, and you only thereafter.

[The *Midrash* thus explains the expression *az yashir Mosheh* (then sang Moses): it does not say *shar* (the proper grammatical form for the past tense, third person singular) but *yashir* (imperative tense) – indicating a command of G-d '(first) Moses shall sing with the children of Israel, and the angels only thereafter.']

When Miriam and the women were about to offer their *shirah*, the angels argued once more: 'We ceded priority to Moses and Israel, but now we want to sing before the women.' One authority in the *Midrash* has it that the angels did get their wish, while others state that the song of the women, too, preceded that of the angels.

6. Prior to the giving of the Torah G-d demanded of Israel a surety that they would keep the Torah. Israel proposed a number of sureties, but these proved unacceptable to the Almighty until they said, 'Our children shall be our sureties.' *Shir Hashirim Rabba* I:4:1.

See *Lik. Sichot*, vol. I, Vayechi, sect. XVII.

r. [*Tanchuma-Kadum*, Beshalach:13. See also *Shemot Rabba* 23:7.]