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# **LIKKUTEI SICHOS**

## **AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS**

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

**Reprinted for Parshat Shoftim, 5786**  
**(Vol. 51)**



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

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

judge" and "your counselor" of our generation creates the sampling and beginning of the fulfillment of the prayer<sup>29</sup> "Return our judges as of old and our counselors as in the beginning." This is in accordance with the principle "The end of creation arose in thought first."<sup>30</sup> How much more [must there be acceptance and adherence] when these matters have already been expressed in speech (i.e., prophecy, which in Hebrew derives from a word that means "movement of the lips"), as it has become customary recently to express the words in speech, particularly the words that the Redemption is imminent.

We can now answer the question that has been raised recently that the Redemption is coming imminently. The question is, how can this statement be accepted? How will the family and the world at large react to this?

In truth, if the subject of Redemption were an innovation, the question would possibly have a place. But the Redemption is not new; rather all of it has already begun ("as in the beginning") and has been brought into and received in this physical world, the lowest of all possible worlds (in the context of "your counselors as in the beginning"). Therefore it won't be a wonder when the Redemption comes imminently!

*(From the talk of the Shabbos Parshas Shoftim, 7 Elul, 5751)*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה  
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ה"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** שיחי  
**Shagalov**

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**Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,**  
**Executive Director**

Printed in the U.S.A.

29. The eleventh blessing of the Amidah prayer.

30. The hymn "Lecha Dodi."

And furthermore: "A prophet about whom another prophet testifies that he is a prophet is presumed to be a prophet and the second one needs no examination."<sup>24</sup> This applies to the leader of our generation, and continues in the next generation through his disciples. One must immediately obey him even "before he gives a sign." Similarly, "it is forbidden to have doubts about him and question his prophecy, that maybe it isn't true, and it is forbidden to test him overmuch" as it says,<sup>25</sup> do not test the L-rd your G-d as you tested Him at Massa... But since it is known that he is a prophet, believe in him and know that G-d is in your midst. Do not doubt or question him..."<sup>24</sup> One believes in the words of the prophet not because it is the prophet's speech, but because it is **G-d's** speech through **this** prophet!

...One must make known to all members of the generation that we have merited that G-d has chosen a person endowed with free choice, who is incomparably higher than the members of his generation, to be "your judge," "your counselor," and the prophet of the generation. This chosen leader will provide the instructions and advice relevant to the service of all Jews and all people of the generation, in all matters of Torah and mitzvos, and daily conduct in the manner of "in all your ways, know Him" and "all your deeds (should be for the sake of Heaven)."<sup>26</sup> [His counsel has] extended to the essential prophecy<sup>27</sup> of "immediate Redemption" and instantly "Behold he (Moshiach) comes."<sup>28</sup>

The acceptance of and adherence to the instructions of "your

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24. Ibid, halacha 5.

25. *Vaeschanan*, 6:16.

26. *Mishlei* 3:6. Avos, chapter 2, Mishneh 12. See Rambam, *Hilchos De'os*, end of chapter 3. *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, section 231.

27. Not just as a Sage and Judge, but as a Prophet, for this is certain - see Maamarei Ha'ketzirim of the Alter Rebbe, p. 354-5.

28. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on the verse.

# LIKKUTEI SICHOT

## 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 X: *Devarim*

•

In English rendition  
by  
**Rabbi Eliyahu Touger**

## SHOFTIM

### WHY BREAD SATISFIES

On the verse,<sup>1</sup> “Is a man a tree of the field?” the *Sifri* comments: “This teaches that a person’s life is dependent solely on the trees.”

On the surface, this statement is difficult to understand, for humans derive their sustenance from many foods, and not only those that grow on trees.

This difficulty can be resolved based on the following concepts. In *Likkutei Torah*,<sup>2</sup> the Alter Rebbe interprets the verse:<sup>3</sup> “Bread satisfies the heart of man,” to mean that bread satisfies one’s appetite more completely than other foods. A person may also eat meat, but it will not sate his hunger the way bread does.

The reason why entities from the inanimate, plant, and animal kingdoms can provide food for humans, although humans are a higher form of life, is because those entities which have a higher source descend to a lower plane of existence. Therefore, man derives his food from the lower forms of life, because they have a higher spiritual source.

The lower the form of life, the higher its source. Since the plant kingdom is lower than the animal kingdom, plants have a higher source than animals. So it is that bread, which stems from the plant kingdom, satisfies far more than meat which

1. *Devarim* 20:19.  
2. *Likkutei Torah*, Vayikra, p. 39c.  
3. *Tehillim* 104:15.

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

In the last moments of exile, the lesson for everyone of Shabbos Parshas Shoftim can be understood. There must be a Divine service appropriate - measure for measure - to the situation of Redemption:

One must publicize to one's self and to all whom he can reach the necessity to internalize the lessons and advice of "your judges" and "your counselors" of our generation. In general these leaders are the rabbis, as in the statement; "Who are the kings? The Rebbis."<sup>20</sup> More specifically, it is the leader of our generation, the judge, counselor and prophet of our generation and the continuation of our Rebbeim who preceded him.

The obligation to receive the words of the leader is rooted in the commandment of the Torah:<sup>21</sup> "I will raise up a prophet for them from amongst their brethren like you and will put My words in his mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him..." "To him you will listen."<sup>22</sup> According to the legal decree of the Rambam mentioned above, if one has the qualifications and perfection required of a prophet, when this same person performs signs and wonders, "we do not believe in him because of the signs alone, but because of the mitzvah Moshe commanded in the Torah when he said, 'if he gives you a sign, listen to him.'" The sign is: "He will tell you thing to come and his words will prove true,"<sup>23</sup> - as we have seen and continue to see the fulfillment of the blessings of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation.

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judges as before times and your counselors as in the beginning... this will be without a doubt when the Creator corrects the hearts of men, their merits increase, their desire is for G-d and their wisdom increases before the coming of Moshiach, etc.

20. See *Gittin* 62a. [The phrase used in the original is the following quotation: "who are the kings? the rabbis." Translator's note.]

21. Our parsha, 18:18.

22. Our Parsha, 18:15.

23. Rambam, *ibid*, beginning of chapter 10.

One can then understand the accomplishment of the later generations in general and the current generation in particular. It is only in current times that my sainted father-in-law, **the leader of our generation**, has declared that everything has been completed. According to all the signs, it is the last moments before the Redemption.

...The spreading of the wellsprings outside, to all corners of the world, has been completed, and in a way that is intellectually comprehensible even to one who is situated in the furthestmost hinterland. The inner teachings of Torah and Chassidus have been translated into many languages (Russian, among many), through my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation. In an ever expanding and illuminating fashion, we have come to witness the recent publication of the Tanya, the Written Torah of Chassidus<sup>16</sup> in Braille, the script for the blind, May G-d preserve us (as mentioned above<sup>17</sup>).

According to the announcement of my sainted father-in-law, all aspects of Divine service have been completed, including the Divine service of our Rebbe's, our leaders, who served as "your judges" and "your counselors" until the present day. In addition, the expression "the generation is worthy"<sup>18</sup> can be understood **literally**. It follows then that we have already arrived at the time of "I will return your judges as at first and your counselors as in the beginning" in the most complete sense of the words. (There is therefore no need for officers to enforce the law, because everything is already refined.) Of this, our rabbis and leaders have already provided us with a taste and beginning.<sup>19</sup>

16. A letter of my sainted father-in-law - published in the summary and notes to *Tanya*, page 118 and further. His *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 4, p. 221 and further. See there vol. 5, p. 90.

17. Sichos Shabbos Parshas Eikev (*Sefer HaSichos*, 5751, p. 764 and further).

18. The expression of our Sages - *Yevamos* 39b. *Chullin* 93b.

19. See Rambam's *Commentary on the Mishneh* in note 6: I will return your

comes from the animal kingdom. (For this same reason, the kosher members of the animal kingdom themselves derive their sustenance from the plant kingdom.)

On this basis, we can appreciate the *Sifri*'s statement that a person's life is dependent solely on the trees. As mentioned above, it is the plant kingdom which provides mankind with its greatest degree of satisfaction. Within the plant kingdom itself, it is the trees which manifest the potential for growth to the greatest degree.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the *Sifri* states that our lives are dependent on the trees.<sup>5</sup>

### "IS A MAN A TREE OF THE FIELD?"

The *Talmud* states:<sup>6</sup>

What is the meaning of the verse: "Is a man a tree of the field?" Is a man, indeed, a tree of the field?

The intent [becomes clear as the passage continues]. It is written:<sup>1</sup> "From it you shall eat; you shall not cut it down." And it is written:<sup>7</sup> "You may destroy [the tree] and cut it down."

What is implied? If one is a proper Torah scholar, one may eat (i.e., study Torah)<sup>8</sup> from him and one should not destroy him. If not, one should destroy him (i.e., abandon him).

The *Talmud* implies that a person is compared to a tree; it is not merely that he derives his sustenance from trees.

4. Thus *I Melachim* 5:13 states: "And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree... until the hyssop." See also the *maamar* entitled *Vayatzar in Toras Chayim*, *Bereishis*, sec. 17.

5. According to the opinion (*Berachos* 40a) that wheat is a type of tree, the statements of the *Sifri* can be simply understood. For this opinion holds that bread comes from a tree.

6. *Taanis* 7a.

7. *Devarim* 20:20.

8. The parenthesis are based on *Rashi's* commentary to *Taanis*, *op. cit.*

Although at first the comparison raises questions, a likeness between the two is ultimately established.

Yet this passage is problematic: a) Why does the *Talmud* question the comparison between a person and a tree at the outset? There are, after all, several aspects in which a likeness between the two is apparent. Indeed, the *Mishnah*<sup>9</sup> itself draws a comparison between man and a tree.

The force with which the *Talmud* asks this question indicates that it considers the likeness between a man and a tree as complete, and not merely a comparison involving several particulars. It appears that the *Talmud* sees man and trees as the same.

If that is the intent, however, the resolution offered by the *Talmud* — that there is a way in which a person can be compared to a tree — is difficult to accept. Why is this facet more significant than the other characteristics by which a person can be compared to a tree?

b) The *Talmud*'s answer mentions a Torah scholar, while the verse speaks about mankind as a whole. How can a comparison to a Torah scholar be appropriate for all men?

c) What is the connection between the interpretation of the *Sifri* mentioned previously and that of the *Talmud*?<sup>10</sup>

### INTELLECT'S ADVANTAGE AND ITS LIMITS

Every person is described as "a world in microcosm."<sup>11</sup> Thus everything that exists within the world at large has its parallel within the world of each individual. Just as the world

9. *Avos* 3:17. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1210, where this *mishnah* is explained.

10. For as mentioned previously (see the *sichah* to *Parshas Toldos* in this series), all the interpretations of a verse are interconnected.

11. *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Pekudei*, sec. 3; *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 69 (p. 100a). See also, *Avos deRabbi Nosson*, ch. 38; *Koheles Rabbah* 1:4; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 143b; *Moreh Nevuchim*, Vol. I, ch. 72; *Likkutei Torah*, *Bamidbar*, p. 5a.

attained by Moshe.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore - relevant to every generation is "I will establish for them a prophet **like you**,"<sup>10</sup> as the Rambam explains:<sup>11</sup> "We do not believe in any prophet that arises after Moshe our Teacher only because of the sign [he performs], but because of the mitzvah commanded **by Moshe in the Torah**, etc." This means that every prophet is a continuation of the prophecy of Moshe and his Torah. As the Rambam explains, it is only in the **manifestation** of the prophecy that there exists different levels.<sup>12</sup> In our generation it is my sainted father-in-law who has attained the degree of prophecy.

Specifically, after "prophecy has returned to Israel,"<sup>13</sup> as an "introduction to Moshiach"<sup>13</sup> - our righteous Moshiach (who will be "a great prophet<sup>14</sup> approaching our teacher Moshe") will prophesy. Our Sages<sup>15</sup> state that "the first Redeemer (Moshe) is the final Redeemer" and in every generation there is one who is qualified for this. Therefore one has to know as a halacha [law] that even now prior to the Redemption, there exists a revelation of prophecy from Moshiach, even before the Redemption which is a taste and beginning of the complete revelation of prophecy after the Redemption. This means, that this prophecy is not an innovation that will be realized only after the Redemption, but the beginning of it will be achieved even before, in the spirit of "your counselors as in the beginning." The Rambam, who includes in his law code the laws relevant to the days of Moshiach and the introduction to it as well, writes about this [prophecy].

9. *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 23, p. 71. And elsewhere.

10. Our parsha, 18:18.

11. Rambam, *Hilchos Yesodei Torah*, chapter 8, halacha 2.

12. Chapter 7, halacha 5.

13. Rambam, *Igros Teiman*, chapter 3.

14. Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuva*, chapter 9, halacha 2.

15. See Shmos Rabbah, chapter 2:4. *Zohar Chadash* vol. 1, 253a. *Shaar HaPesukim*, *Parsha Veyechei*. *Torah Or*, beginning *Parshas Mishpatim*. And elsewhere.

# BESURAS HAGEULO

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

### 37

The proclamation of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation<sup>1</sup> : "Immediate repentance (and automatically) immediate redemption," and that everything is already completed, including "polishing the buttons,"<sup>2</sup> has been mentioned often lately. His announcement that it only remains to "stand<sup>3</sup> prepared, all of you"<sup>4</sup> has also been completed. We are now ready to greet our righteous Moshiach immediately. It's obvious that we are now at the time when the promise that "I will return your judges [as they were in the beginning]<sup>5</sup>... and your counselors"<sup>6</sup> is ready to be fulfilled. Furthermore, "as they were in the beginning," alludes to the fact that this has already begun,<sup>7</sup> as mentioned earlier.

...In every generation - even before the resurrection of Moshe - it is relevant to know the law that "G-d gives prophecy to mankind."<sup>8</sup> It is within the grasp of the created to experience a true revelation of G-dliness, even to the degree of perfection that was

at large is divided into four categories: inanimate matter, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, and mankind, so too there are parallels to each of these four forms of existence within man.

With regard to the plant kingdom, it is explained that the parallel within our human framework are the emotions.<sup>12</sup> For the emotions grow from an underdeveloped state to a developed state.<sup>13</sup>

A man's advantage over an animal involves his intellect.<sup>14</sup> Although the parallels to the three forms of existence — inanimate matter, the plant kingdom, and the animal kingdom — as they exist within man are far more elevated than these forms as they are found in the world at large,<sup>15</sup> this does not constitute the advantage possessed by man. Man's advantage is his ability to think.

This is the meaning of the *Talmud's* question: "Is a man, indeed, a tree of the field?" Our Sages understood that within man there exists a parallel to the plant kingdom, the realm of emotions. But is this man? Does this constitute the uniqueness of humanity?

The question is reinforced based on the well-known distinction regarding the four Hebrew terms used for man:<sup>16</sup> *adam*, *ish*, *gaver* and *enosh*. *Adam*, the term used in the verse under discussion, is associated with our intellectual capaci-

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1. "Kol Koreh" in "HaKriah VhaKedushah" (Sivan-Tammuz 5701. Elul 5702) - published in the *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. 8, p. 361 ff. 377 ff. 408 ff. Vol. 6, p. 430 ff.

2. See *Sichos Simchas Torah* 5689.

3. His *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 4, p. 279. See there for cross references.

4. See *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves and in many other places.

5. *Yeshayhu* 1:26.

6. See Rambam's *Commentary on the Mishneh*, Sanhedrin, chapter 1, Mishneh 3, which implies there that "I will return your judges, etc." will be "before the coming of Moshiach" and as the passage concludes, "afterwards it will be called for you a righteous city, etc." See *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 9, p. 105, note 74.

7. [There is a play on words. In the citation from Isaiah (Yeshayhu) it says, "All your counselors as in the beginning." The Rebbe interprets this to mean that the beginning of this prophecy has already occurred. Translator's note.]

8. Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei Torah, beginning of chapter 7.

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12. See *Torah Or*, p. 4a; *Likkutei Torah*, Bamidbar, p. 58a, *Devarim*, p. 95c.

13. See the *maamar* entitled *Vayatzar* cited above, sec. 17ff.

14. Therefore, all of man's activities, even those which appear to be petty and mundane, must be dictated by the intellect. It is not sufficient that the arousal of the emotions of love and fear be prompted by the intellect. Instead, even the actual performance of the *mitzvos*, for which it would be sufficient to arouse one's emotions, should come as a result of the intellect (see the *maamar* entitled *Vayidaber*, 5696, sec. 5).

15. *Likkutei Torah*, Bamidbar, p. 58b; the *maamar* entitled *Chavivin Yisrael*, 5696. See also *Tzofnas Paneach al HaTorah*, the beginning of *Parshas Korach*.

16. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 48a; the *maamar* entitled *Chaviv Adam*, 5700; *HaYom Yom*, entry, Elul 4. See also *Midrash Shochar Tov* 9:16; *S'dei Chemed*, Vol. I, *Klalim*, *Maareches Alef*, sec. 74.

ty,<sup>17</sup> and represents the highest of these four levels.<sup>18</sup> This then is the *Talmud*'s question: "Is an *adam*, indeed, a tree of the field?" Are the emotions the epitome of humanity, for which reason mankind has been given the name *adam*?

The *Talmud* responds, explaining that the ultimate purpose of the intellect is to affect the emotions and cause them to follow the intellect's prompting. This reflects a stage of fulfillment in an individual's striving for personal development.<sup>19</sup>

Intellectual prowess in itself does not reveal anything about personal development. The goal is that one's understanding should affect one's heart, as implied by the verse:<sup>20</sup> "Know this day, and *take unto your heart* that G-d is the L-rd." After knowing, one must take one's thoughts to heart.

The *Talmud* communicates this concept by employing the analogy of a tree. Just as the advantage of a tree is the fruit it provides,<sup>21</sup> so too an *adam*, a person identified with knowledge, a Torah scholar, must provide fruit. When can we recognize a Torah scholar as "proper"? When his intellect affects his emotions, which in turn invigorate his observance of the *mitzvos*, a process which our Sages describe<sup>22</sup> as "bearing fruit."

### THE MACROCOSM AND THE MICROCOSM

Man, the world in microcosm, resembles the macrocosm, the world at large. In the world at large, mankind derives its

of the essence of the intellect is that it become an active force, effecting a change in one's emotions.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Beshallah*, 5722)



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- 17. *Likkutei Torah*, *Shir HaShirim*, p. 25a; the *maamar* entitled *Chaviv Adam*, *loc. cit.*
  - 18. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 48a; *Likkutei Torah*, *loc. cit.*
  - 19. It is true that intellect reflects a man's superiority over the animal kingdom. But true intellectual superiority arises when the mind rules the emotions (the *maamar* entitled *VaYisa Aharon*, 5694, sec. 1).
  - 20. *Devarim* 4:39.
  - 21. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra*, p. 35c; see also the *Sifri* to *Devarim* 20:19, which emphasizes the importance of a tree's fruit.
  - 22. *Sotah* 46a.

springs.<sup>38</sup> For as mentioned previously, the ultimate purpose

38. Just as a *mikveh* is disqualified if the water flows outside the *mikveh*, so too a stream is not disqualified despite the fact that water flows outside its confines. For the definition of flowing water is not that it flows from place to place within the confines of a container, but rather that it flows outward. Indeed, even a *mikvah* is acceptable despite the fact that water flows from place to place within it (*Tzemach Tzedek*, *Yoreh De'ah*, Responsum 164, sec. 5ff.; *Ramah*, *Yoreh De'ah* 201:50).

Thus the power of a stream is expressed in the fact that it imparts ritual purity even beyond its confines. Moreover, as mentioned in note 36, there is a hypothesis that it is only when the water of a stream is flowing that it imparts ritual purity.

To cite a parallel, the *Kesef Mishneh* (gloss to *Hilchos Shaar Avos HaTumah* 6:15) states that a person does not attain ritual impurity until he emerges from a *mikvah*; while he is in the *mikvah*, he remains ritually impure. Similarly, one could explain that by spreading the wellsprings outward, the true power of the teachings of *Chassidus* is revealed. (A distinction can, however, be made. For with regard to the *mikvah*, it can be said that the emergence from the water completes the immersion.)

On the basis of the above, we can understand a statement made by the *Tzemach Tzedek* (cited in *Likkutei Dibburim*, p. 662; *Toras Shalom*, p. 169): "If my grandfather (the Alter Rebbe) had lived in the era of the *Tannaim*, he would have been a great *Tanna*. Had he lived in the era of the prophets, he would have been a great prophet. It is only because the generation was on a low spiritual level that these qualities were hidden." {Similar statements were also made with regard to Rabbi Yehudah *HaChassid* (*Sefer Maasios*).}

On the surface, the uniqueness of the *Tzemach Tzedek's* statement can be questioned. After all, our Sages have stated (*Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7): "There is no generation which does not have individuals like Avraham or Moshe." Nevertheless, the statement of the *Midrash* can be interpreted to mean that although in every generation there are individuals who possess a potential equivalent to that of the patriarchs and Moshe, that potential is not revealed. To refer to the analogy of a spring, the water does not flow outward.

For example, the potential of Rabbi Yehudah *HaChassid* remained primarily hidden. Although some of his directives were accepted throughout the international Jewish community, the motivating principles for these directives and his potential for prophecy remained hidden.

With regard to the Alter Rebbe, by contrast, he was able to enclothe even the most elevated of his potentials in his *Chassidic* teachings. By studying these teachings, it is possible for us to tap these potentials.

The *Tzemach Tzedek's* statement that these potentials were hidden can thus be interpreted to mean that they were not openly manifest, but rather en clothed within the teachings of *Chassidus*. Thus his potential can be compared to a stream which conveys ritual purity even when its waters flow outside its confines (*Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5715).

sustenance primarily from the plant kingdom, because the plant kingdom has a higher source than mankind. Nevertheless, plants today exist in a fallen state, and must be elevated by mankind. Once a man performs such an act, because of its higher source, the plant provides the man with sustenance and energy.

Similar concepts apply with regard to the relationship between intellect and emotion. The source of the emotions is higher than that of intellect.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, in their present form, the emotions are on a lower level and the intellect must elevate and refine them. Once this process is complete, the emotions can in turn lift the intellect to a higher level, allowing it to attain fulfillment. As mentioned previously: "Know[ing] this day," should lead to "tak[ing] unto your heart."

On this basis, we can appreciate the connection between the interpretation of the *Sifri* and the interpretation of the *Talmud*. Both are motivated by the same concept: that the plant kingdom can lift the human kingdom to a higher level. The *Sifri*, however, speaks about the macrocosm, the relationship between the plant kingdom and mankind, while the *Talmud* highlights how this relationship is reflected within the individual world of every person.

## A TRULY HUMAN MAN

There is a deeper aspect to the above concept. Intellect represents the advantage of mankind over the animal kingdom, the crux of our humanity. Accordingly, just as all four types of existence: inanimate matter, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, and humanity, are included within man, so too, parallels to these four levels exist within our intellect itself.<sup>24</sup> There is an aspect of intellect that resembles inanimate

23. *Likkutei Torah*, *Bamidbar*, p. 58b.

24. The *maamar* entitled *Zos Chukas*, 5673; see also *Likkutei Torah*, *Berachah*, p. 95c.

matter, one that resembles the plant kingdom, one that resembles the animal kingdom, and a uniquely human dimension.

This relates to the four terms for mankind mentioned previously. For example, *ish* refers to the aspect of intellect that relates to the emotions.<sup>25</sup> *Adam*, by contrast, refers to the essence of intellect — abstract understanding that is above all connection to emotion.<sup>26</sup>

This is underscored by the *Talmud*'s question: "Is a man, indeed, a tree of the field?" The *Talmud* understands that "know[ing] this day," should lead to "tak[ing] unto your heart." On the surface, however, this can be accomplished by the element of the intellect which relates to the emotions, the level associated with the term *ish*. Seemingly, the essence of intellect, the level associated with the term *adam*, is above all connection to the emotions.

The *Talmud* resolves this difficulty by referring to the phrases: "From it you shall eat; you shall not cut it down," and "You may destroy [the tree] and cut it down." To explain the analogy: Fruit grows from the flowers that sprout from a tree's branches, not from the trunk of the tree, and certainly not from its roots. (For the trunk and roots refer to higher levels, planes too elevated to produce fruit.)<sup>27</sup>

25. For that reason, the name *ish* is not applied to a male until he reaches the age of 13. Although his emotional potential existed previously, his emotions are not affected by the modulating influence of intellect until that age (*Peirush HaMilos* of the Mittler Rebbe, sec. 2).

26. See *Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim*, p. 25a, which states that the term *adam* is associated with the level of *mochin digadlus*, intellect so developed that it encompasses every element of man's conduct.

For this reason, the term *adam* is applied to the Jewish people alone, for the intellectual potential (*nefesh hasichlis*) of the Jewish people is far different from that of other nations. For although the intellectual potential of the Jewish people is also mortal, it is sensitive to the refinement and abstraction of spirituality (the *maamar* entitled *Chaviv Adam*, 5702, sec. 1).

27. The trunk of the tree represents G-d's essence, the True Being. The branches which extend outward from the trunk represent the *ayin* that comes into exis-

a) There are those who protest: "Why must we spread the wellsprings outward?" "Everyone," they explain, "must be granted influence on their own level. For those on the peripheries, drawn water is enough, or the water of a *mikveh*. Why must the wellsprings themselves be used for those on the peripheries?"

The answer is that the only way to affect those on the peripheries is to use the wellsprings. For these wellsprings never contract ritual impurity; indeed, they convey ritual purity to everything.<sup>37</sup>

b) Others protest: Why must I be involved with the peripheries at all? Why can't I sit in my room and study *P'nimiyus HaTorah*? What connection do I have with those peripheries?

The answer is alluded to by the expression: "Spreading the wellsprings of *your* teachings outward." When do the wellsprings of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* become *your teachings*? When they are spread to the peripheries. If such efforts are lacking, the person himself will not appreciate them as well-

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dedication to the exact wording used by the *Nasi* (see *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 296). Indeed, the student who dedicates himself to spreading *Chassidus* should not see himself as an independent entity (from *Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5715).

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\* See also *Megillas Yud-Tes Kislev*, p. 30.

\*\* Most authorities, including the *Tzemach Tzedek*, interpret this as referring to an empty pool. See the *Tzemach Tzedek, Yoreh De'ah*, Responsum 164, sec. 2, based on the gloss of the *Shach (Yoreh De'ah 201:30)*, quoting the *Perishah*, and also the comments of the *Raavad in Baalei HaNefesh*; R. Ovadia Bartenura.

See also the *Shaar HaMilluim* of the *Tzemach Tzedek* to *Mikvaos* 5:6 (p. 37a). Note also the comments of *Tosafos (Bechoros 55b)*, the *Rambam's Commentary to the Mishnah* (as quoted by the *Beis Yosef, Yoreh De'ah, loc. cit.*). See also the sources quoted by *Taharas Mayim* (authored by Rabbi Nissen Telushkin), sec. 36.

37. For, as stated in the conclusion of the first chapter of *Mikvaos*, a stream can purify all levels of impurity. Moreover, it is from it that water is taken for the ashes of the Red Heifer that remove even the impurity stemming from contact with a corpse, the most severe form of ritual impurity.

[from its source], the waters are equivalent to a *mikvah* (a lesser source of purity than a stream).”\*\*

Moreover, it is possible to say that the waters of the stream (while within the stream) are considered as the stream itself.

Based on this explanation, we can appreciate the hypothesis advanced by *Tosafos* (entry *Shema*, *Bechoros* 55b), that a spring conveys ritual purity only when its waters are flowing. *Tosafos* certainly accepts the law that states when water from a spring is separated from its source, it conveys ritual purity when collected. Why then would the fact that the waters are not separated from their source detract from the waters’ status?

The explanation is that when the waters are connected to their source, they are not considered an independent entity, but as the stream itself. And it is possible to posit that a stream will impart ritual purity only when it is free-flowing, and not when its waters are collected.

(To cite a parallel: *Bikkurim* 3:1 relates that Rabbi Shimon maintains that the designation of fruit as *bikkurim* applies only when the fruit has been detached from its source. While still attached, it is considered part of the field and not an independent entity.)

On this basis, we can understand the opinion of the *Rambam* (*Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Isurei Mizbeach* 4:7) that the fact that a person bows down to a stream belonging to a colleague does not cause its waters to become forbidden to be used for the water libation, although the *Rambam* agrees (*op. cit.*:6) that an animal that has been worshipped as a false deity may not be used as a sacrifice even if it belongs to a colleague.

The distinction between these two instances can be explained as follows: An animal belonging to a colleague cannot be offered as a sacrifice only because the worship caused it to be considered loathsome; it is permitted to accrue benefit from the animal. (This interpretation is necessary, for a person cannot cause an entity belonging to a colleague to be forbidden unless he performed a deed involving that entity (*Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Avodas Kochavim* 8:1).)

The waters of a spring can never be considered “loathsome” because when the person bowed to them, they were not considered an independent entity; they were part of the stream. It is only when they were taken to be used as a libation on the altar that they become an independent entity.

{When, by contrast, a person bows to a stream in his own property, the stream and its water become forbidden. It is not only that they are “loathsome.” For this reason, the stream and the water coming from it are forbidden and may also not be used by an ordinary person. (See the *Lechem Mishneh* to *Hilchos Avodas Kochavim*, *loc. cit.* Although *Hilchos Isurei Mizbeach* uses the term “unfit for a libation” rather than “forbidden” with regard to such water, that is because the context involves sacrificial offerings.)} See *Tzofnas Paneach*, *Mahadura Tinyana* 30a.

Similar concepts apply with regard to the teachings of *Chassidus*. One of the fundamental elements necessary in spreading *Chassidus* is an ongoing, inseparable bond with the *Nesi'im* who teach *Chassidus*. This is expressed in the

Nevertheless, in order for branches to produce fruit, the trunk and roots are necessary. Thus it can be said that the trunk and roots exist for the sake of the fruit. For this reason, the Torah states that a tree which does not produce fruit should be cut down.

Similar concepts apply with regard to our personal world. The essence of our intellect is above any direct connection to emotion. Nevertheless, the essence of our intellect should affect the functioning of our emotions; indeed, it has a more powerful effect than does the dimension of intellect directly associated with the emotions. In the final analysis, it can be said that the essence of the intellect exists in order to change one’s emotional makeup.

### TRANSFORMATION, NOT MERELY REFINEMENT

There is a twofold advantage of the influence which the essence of intellect has on the emotions over the influence exerted on the emotions by the aspect of intellect related to the emotions:

a) Since the aspect of intellect which relates to the emotions considers emotion a significant entity, it is possible for emotions to obscure the light of intellect. When a person’s heart is dull and insensitive, his thoughts will not influence his feelings.<sup>28</sup>

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tence from G-d’s essence, the light which emanates from Him, and which has a genuine appreciation of its dependence on its source and is therefore utterly nullified.

The flowers which sprout from the branches represent the *eyin* which brings created existence into being, i.e., the ray of G-d’s light which causes our world to exist. From the flowers come the fruits or, in the analogy, our created existence, which also looks upon itself as a *yesh*, an independent identity (the series of *maamarim* entitled *VeKachah* 5637, sec. 77).

28. Moreover, since the aspect of intellect which relates to emotion does not alter the direction of the emotions, it is possible for the emotions to influence the intellect, and bend it in favor of the person’s natural tendencies.

With regard to the essence of intellect, by contrast, it is impossible for the emotions to veil it, and it shines through to the heart.<sup>29</sup>

b) Even when the intellect which relates to the emotions influences the emotions, it does not transform them. Since the emotions are significant in relation to this level of intellect, it can refine them, but does not change their fundamental nature.

The essence of intellect, by contrast, can change the very nature of the emotions. Indeed, this is the ultimate purpose of intellect.<sup>30</sup>

A similar comparison can be made between the study of *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law, and *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, the Torah's mystic dimensions. *Nigleh* is encloded in concepts involving material reality. Therefore:

a) It is possible that it will not refine a person. Thus our Sages say,<sup>31</sup> "If [a student of the Torah] is not worthy, the Torah becomes deadly poison for him."

b) Even when the study of *Nigleh* influences the person who studies it, his natural tendencies and fundamental self-concern remain. For *Nigleh* was given with man in mind, that it be comprehended by mortal intellect.

With regard to *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, the opposite is true:

a) *P'nimiyus HaTorah* will ultimately influence the conduct of everyone who studies it, as our Sages say:<sup>32</sup> "The

29. See the *maamar* entitled *BaYom HaShemini Atzeres*, 5665.

30. See *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. I, p. 56a ff.

31. *Yoma* 72b.

32. The introduction to *Eichah Rabbah*; the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Chagigah* 1:7.

light [within the Torah] (i.e., *P'nimiyus HaTorah*)<sup>33</sup> will return him to the good."<sup>34</sup>

b) It changes a person's nature entirely, lifting him above his natural tendencies and self-concern.<sup>35</sup> Not only does *P'nimiyus HaTorah* refine a person's emotions, it changes the nature of those emotions.<sup>30</sup>

### TO THE MOST EXTREME PERIPHERIES

The above concepts reinforce the directive to "spread the wellsprings of your teachings outward,"<sup>36</sup> producing a twofold lesson:

33. The gloss of *Korban Eidah* to the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *loc. cit.* See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Behaalos'cha* in this series.

34. On this basis, we appreciate the connection between the *Talmudic* passage under discussion and the setting in which it was taught:

Rav Yirmeya asked Rav Zeira: "Share with me a teaching [of Torah law]."

[Rav Zeira answered:] "My heart is faint, and I cannot."

"Share with me a teaching of the *Aggadah*."

[He answered:] "This is what Rabbi Yochanan taught: 'What is the meaning of the verse: "Is a man a tree of the field?" '..."

Rav Zeira's heart was too weak to share a Torah thought, i.e., he was unable to reveal the light of intellect within his heart. So Rav Yirmeya advised him to share a teaching from the *Aggadah*, for the *Aggadah* (in which is implanted the teachings of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* (*Tanya*, *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 25)) has the potential to effect the heart even when it is weak. For this same reason, he chose this particular teaching, which focuses on the unique dimension of the essence of intellect, and by extension on *P'nimiyus HaTorah*.

35. See *Kuntres U'Mayon*, Discourse I, ch. 3; *Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim*, Vol. I, p. 85a.

36. The answer *Mashiach* gave the Baal Shem Tov when he asked him when he would come (the celebrated letter of the Baal Shem Tov printed in *Ben Poras Yosef*, *Ginzei Nistaros*, and in an abbreviated form in *Kesser Shem Tov* and the *Or HaTorah* by the Maggid of Mezeritch).

See *Sanhedrin* 98a, which quotes *Yechezkel* 36:8 "Your branches will sprout forth and provide fruit..." and comments: "There is no greater [sign of] the end of the exile than this." The spiritual analog to this is found in the efforts to spread the wellsprings of *Chassidus* outward.

The reason why *Mashiach* used the analogy of wellsprings\* to describe the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov can be explained as follows: The waters of a spring are always connected with their source. As reflected in the *mishnah* (*Mikvaos* 5:1): "If one caused a spring to pass over a pool and separated it