

Introduction: *The Man and the Sefer*

On 5 Tishrei 5501 (September 26, 1740), the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), founder of the Chassidic movement, assembled followers for a celebratory gathering. His disciples were puzzled. What was the cause of the celebration? A new child in the family? An engagement? The *yahrtzeit* of a distinguished rabbinic figure or relative? Perhaps the Baal Shem Tov himself had completed the study of some Talmudic tractate or had reached some other milestone in his study of the Torah? With cakes, fish, delicacies, and spirits in abundance before them, the Baal Shem Tov announced, “A noble and holy soul has descended into the world, and it will be an eloquent advocate for the House of Israel.” On that day, Rav Levi Yitzchok — later to be known as “The Berditchever”^[1] or *Der Derbaremdiger*^[2] (Yiddish for “The Merciful”) — was born in the small city of Husakov in Galicia.

Rav Levi Yitzchok was among the seeds out of which sprouted the Chassidic movement. He excelled in his traditional Talmudic studies during his early years, married well, and enjoyed a successful — albeit highly challenging — career as a rabbinic and communal leader. During much of his life, Rav Levi Yitzchok had to counter the accusations of the opponents to Chassidism, who felt that dedication to Chassidic practice could only be cultivated at the expense of excellence in the core studies of the Talmud and its commentaries. Rav Levi Yitzchok left behind a personal following but did not found a dynastic Chassidic sect. However, he did leave his teachings and homilies, published as *Kedushas Levi* (“The Holiness of Levi”), which has since been recognized as a seminal text of Chassidic thought. As a prelude and background to our translation and elucidation of this work, the following brief biographical sketch provides some context to the author’s immense contributions to Jewish life and learning in general, and to Chassidism in particular, by recounting his early development as a student and *chassid*, tracing his successful but rocky rabbinic career, and recounting his position in the Chassidic movement.

1. After the town where he ultimately settled, Berditchev.

2. After his attribute of arousing Divine mercy on all. See below.

The Beginnings

Rav Levi Yitzchok descended from respected rabbinic stock on both sides. His father, Rav Meir, was a noted Talmudic scholar and was purported to be the 16th generation in his family to serve in the rabbinate. Rav Meir served as communal rabbi in Husakov, which is in present-day Ukraine. His mother, Sarah Sosha, descended from Rav Shmuel Eliezer Edels (1555-1631), known as the Maharsha. He was a highly insightful commentator on the Talmud and leading rabbinic figure of his time. He headed his yeshiva in Posen, Poland for many years, and later served as rabbi in Chelm, Lublin, and Ostrog.

The young Levi Yitzchok's precociousness would not have been disappointing to his illustrious forbears. He was known to possess high native intelligence, to have a very inquisitive mind, and to apply himself with exceptional diligence in his studies and his service of Hashem. At first, his father personally schooled him in the core sources of Jewish law, and then sent him at an early age to continue his studies in the formal setting of the Yaroslav Yeshiva. His promise in scholarship became so apparent that before long his mentors, teachers, and classmates all began to refer to him as the *Yaraslaver Iluy* (the Prodigy of Yaroslav).

The Transformation

When he was 17, two major events occurred that had an indelible impact on Rav Levi Yitzchok's life. First, he became engaged to a remarkable young lady named Perel Peretz, the daughter of an esteemed member of the Libertov Jewish community, R' Yisroel Peretz. Second, he met Rav Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz, who was then the rabbi of the nearby town of Ritchval and later became the founder of the Nikolsburg Chassidic dynasty. Rebbetzin Perel'le became his partner in life, and the Rebbe R' Shmelke became his Rebbe.

A Woman of Valor (Eishes Chayil)

As a young unmarried man, Rav Levi Yitzchok's sharp mind, erudition, and achievements in learning caught the attention of many members of the rabbinate and of many Jewish communal leaders of the time. One such person was R' Yisroel Peretz, the rabbi of Libertov, which was a known center of Talmudic scholarship in Poland. Rabbi Meir Teumim, a leading scholar of the time and noted commentator on the *Shulchan Aruch* (The Code of Jewish Law), wrote about R' Yisroel and his brothers in one of his seminal works, *Rav Peninim*.^[3] In it, Rabbi Teumim noted that his father taught senior students of the Talmud in Libertov and, in expressing thanks for the contributions that the community made to provide food for the yeshiva students, described R'

3. Meir Teumim, *Rav Peninim*, Frankfurt: Kolloel Nofes Tzufim, 1782.

Yisroel and his brothers Moshe, Yonah, and Tzvi Hirsch as well-to-do and upstanding religious leaders of the Libertov community.

R' Yisroel had a daughter of marriageable age when Rav Levi Yitzchok was coming of age in the mid-1750s. Rav Levi Yitzchok would have been a prize catch for the likes of R' Yisroel Peretz, who would certainly have valued someone of his caliber. It is no surprise that a man of R' Yisroel Peretz's stature, means, and dedication to scholarship pursued the young Levi Yitzchok, then all of 16 or barely 17 years old, for his dear daughter Perel. In 1757, when Levi Yitzchok was 17 years old, the two married. Rav Levi Yitzchok continued his studies in earnest in Libertov after his marriage, focusing on the core texts of Jewish law, and began also delving into some of the more mystical sources of Kabbalah.

Assume a Master for Yourself (Asei Lecha Rav)

The other defining event in Rav Levi Yitzchok's life that occurred when he was 17 was his acquaintance with the Chassidic movement and, in particular, with his first Rebbe, Rav Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz. Rav Shmuel Shmelke, later to be known as the Rebbe Reb Shmelka and the Nikolsburger Rebbe, belonged to the inner circle of those aligned with the newly emerging Chassidic movement, which had been introduced by the Baal Shem Tov. Specifically, Rav Shmelke was a prized disciple of Rav Dov Ber of Mezeritch (known as "The Maggid of Mezeritch," 1704-1772), or simply as the Maggid. He was the Baal Shem Tov's earliest and closest follower and disciple.

Not long after his marriage, Rav Levi Yitzchok heard of a remarkable scholar and mystic in the neighboring town of Ritchval named Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz. Rav Levi Yitzchok was very keen on seeing this great tzaddik's divine service with his own eyes and hearing him expound on holy topics in person. Rav Levi Yitzchok therefore announced to his new father-in-law that he wished to travel to Ritchval.

R' Yisroel Peretz was not at all in favor of condoning — let alone supporting — his son-in-law's relation with someone aligned with the Chassidic movement. He gave his consent only after Rav Levi Yitzchok staged a two-day hunger strike.

Upon his arrival in Ritchval, Rav Levi Yitzchok was smitten by the aura of the synagogue and study hall of the great master Rav Shmelke. Nonetheless, Rav Levi Yitzchok's relationship with Rav Shmelke got off to a rocky start. Their initial encounter left Rav Shmelke with the impression that the young Levi Yitzchok was anything but serious and focused. Specifically, Rav Shmelke was troubled and puzzled by the manner in which the idealistic and starry-eyed young man responded to the simple question of whether he knew how to learn Torah by saying, "Torah, wonder of wonders." Rough start aside, it was not long before Rav Shmelke began to recognize the talent and brilliance of

the young man who would become his prize disciple. Rav Shmelke eventually started to study with Rav Levi Yitzchok privately and began to refer to him as “my son” and “my disciple in *Nigleh* (the revealed teachings) and my master in *Nistar* (the hidden teachings).”^[4]

This encounter, and the relationship that grew out of it, lasted for many years, and drew Rav Levi Yitzchok into the inner circle of the growing Chassidic movement. Rav Shmelke eventually sent him to the Maggid of Mezeritch, insisting that Rav Levi Yitzchok become his disciple. The Maggid was the main disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and became the leader of the movement after his master’s passing. Most of the Maggid’s disciples became pillars of the early period of Chassidism, propogating the movement after his passing. Among his great disciples were Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) and his brother Rabbi Zushia of Anapoli (1718-1800), Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (later of Lubavitch, 1745-1812),^[5] Rabbi Nachum of Chernobyl (1730-1797), and Rabbi Aaron of Karlin (1736-1772). In the course of studying under the Maggid, Rav Levi Yitzchok himself became one of the major leaders of the movement, resolving to spread Chassidism and become one of its emissaries in the Jewish world.

The World of the Rabbinate and Conflict

It was not long before the world of hard core Talmudic study from which Rav Levi Yitzchok came began to collide with the world of Chassidism into which he was heading. This conflict, which in many ways shaped his life as a rabbinic leader, began to manifest itself as soon as he took on an official position in the rabbinate.

Formative Years

The Berditchever’s formative years coincided with the genesis of the Chassidic movement. He witnessed and even became a central figure in the disputes and challenges that arose between adherents to this new approach to devotion and the Jewish religious establishment of the time. The opponents of the new movement have generally come to be known as *Misnagdim*, literally “opponents,” implying uniformity among all those who disagreed with the new approach. This is not quite accurate. There were many degrees of opposition. At one extreme there was strong ideological opposition, and such people could be called *Misnagdim*. But many other leaders could more accurately be called “objectors,” who disagreed in varying degrees with some or many innovations of Chassidus. Opponents to the Chassidic movement,

4. Chanoch Vidoslovsky, ed., *Sefer Kedushas Levi* (Ashdod: Machon Hadrass Chen, 2005), biographical section, p. 75.

5. Founder of the Chabad movement.

comprised largely, but not exclusively, of Lithuanian rabbinic scholars, saw the movement, and in particular, its desire to bring religious fervor and spirituality to the masses with doses of song and joy, as a departure from, and an affront to, the then dominant approach to religious scholarship and practice; they saw it as a movement that nullified the primacy of Torah study. The traditional Talmudicists of the day neither understood nor accepted the Chassidic movement. The approach of the Chassidim was novel and in many ways alien to the traditionalists. Rav Levi Yitzchok, however, honestly felt that there was no conflict between the rigors of scholarly rabbinic learning and erudition with the Chassidic approach to life and its new practices in prayer and devotion. He was, first and foremost, a Torah scholar and a rabbinic advisor and arbiter. Like his Chassidic colleagues, he chose, however, to blend his scholarship and rabbinic duties with the essence, customs, and trappings of the Chassidim. He therefore spent the earliest part of his career, sometimes with extreme hardship, countering the attacks of the adherents of traditional yeshiva learning against the relatively new Chassidic approach to Jewish observance.

The Exile (Golus) and the Redemption (Geulah)

Rav Levi Yitzchok experienced three “exiles” before he finally experienced his “redemption” in the town of Berditchev. He saw the middle road — the “Golden Mean” — between the two worlds of the newly emerging Chassidim and their “objectors,” and even with the uncompromising *Misnagdim*. Rav Levi Yitzchok’s world was one of blended colors; the extreme *Misnagdim*’s was sharp black and white. This fundamental difference colored his experience in each of his “diasporas” in Ritchval, Zhelichov and Pinsk before he finally reached Berditchev, his “Promised Land” in this world. As much as the earlier communities were attracted to his prowess in Talmudic learning, they were put off by his Chassidic allegiances and practices.

A Rude Awakening: Ritchval

When Rav Shmelke left Ritchval, he recommended that his star pupil, Rav Levi Yitzchok, succeed him as rabbi. This calling marked the first of Rav Levi Yitzchok’s major life challenges. Until this point, Rav Levi Yitzchok had enjoyed, in turn, the warmth, comfort, and support of his family; the fine learning institutions that he had attended; and then the comfort of his in-laws’ support. In the early 1760s, Rav Levi Yitzchok’s well-to-do father-in-law witnessed a reversal of his fortunes and went deeply into debt. Rav Levi Yitzchok took it upon himself to raise money to reduce his father-in-law’s debt. His attempts in this regard served as the rude transition between the security of yeshiva life and the “real world,” as it were.

And so, Rav Levi Yitzchok entered the rabbinate in 1761. His short tenure in Ritchval was mired with conflict with hard-liners who were unable — or rather, simply unwilling — to view life in his color palate, and considered people as either friend or foe. And so, by default, they automatically regarded Rav Levi Yitzchok as their foe, given his Chassidic inclinations. It was not long before he became a magnet for those who admired his rabbinic scholarship as well as those who were detractors of the Chassidic movement. Matters came to a head during Tishrei of 1765, reaching disastrous, and actually dangerous, proportions during the festival of Sukkos. On Hoshana Rabbah, Rav Levi Yitzchok fled Ritchval with lulav and esrog in hand, fearing physical harm. His closest refuge was the town of Kozhnitz, just over ten miles away, where he made his way, mainly by foot, to a close friend.

Further Indignity: Zhelichov

From there, Rav Levi Yitzchok moved to the bigger and more important community of Zhelichov in Poland to take up a new rabbinic position.^[6] Unlike Ritchval, Zhelichov was a town of some commercial importance, serving as a regional trading center with regular markets twice a week and larger trading fairs twice a year. The Jewish population of Zhelichov played a central role in its economic development. Zhelichov's prominence in the regional economy can be seen in the fact that its social fabric was composed largely of tradesmen, artisans, small merchants and traders, farmers and innkeepers, as well as a few wealthy households, the heads of which would likely have controlled a franchise of a local commodity. As the vast majority of Zhelichov's Jewish population was either illiterate or unlearned in traditional Jewish subjects, the few Talmudic scholars set the tone for its social mores and religious observance and practice.

It was against this backdrop that Rav Levi Yitzchok assumed the rabbinic helm of Zhelichov's Jewish community. He succeeded Rabbi Naftoli Hertz, Zhelichov's first communal rabbi, in 1765. Its roughly 1,500 Jews represented a healthy majority of the total population.

Rav Levi Yitzchok was undeterred in his efforts to introduce Chassidic warmth and practices, and to reform Zhelichov's communal ritual, practices, and institutions. And thus, his struggle to show that an accomplished Talmudic scholar can also be a Chassidic enthusiast continued in Zhelichov, but on a larger scale than in Ritchval.

Rav Levi Yitzchok was just as concerned with the physical welfare of Jewish communal institutions as he was with the spiritual practices of the community.

6. The *Memorial Book of the Jewish Community of Zelechov* provides a good picture of the history and development of this community, including during Rav Levi Yitzchok's time. See W. Yassni, ed., *Yisker-bukh fun der Zhelekhover Yiddisher Kehile*, Chicago, IL: self-published by Former Residents of Zelechov in Chicago, 1953, available at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/zelechov/zelechov.html.

As such, he is reputed to have led the efforts to build Zhelichov's first large synagogue.

His first act of communal activism was to establish local groups (*chevrahs*) geared for the ordinary, and in many cases, illiterate, Jews. These *chevrahs* existed for study and religious practices (such as the recitation of Psalms (*Tehillim*)), and were organized for people with the same trades, such as garment workers and bakers. The *chevrahs* were designed to engage those un-schooled and/or uninitiated in Talmudic scholarship and provide them with a channel for religious expression. Rav Levi Yitchock went to great pains to direct and establish the exact course of practices of each of these *chevrahs*, sometimes reciting *Tehillim* with them and explaining to them the literal meaning and inner dimensions of the psalms.

During his tenure in Zhelichov, he also instituted reforms in various religious practices. One such reform related to the times at which men would don their *talleisim* for prayer. The Jews of Eastern Europe all followed the practice of men wearing a *tallis* during morning prayers, but not during afternoon or evening prayers. The one exception was the night of *Yom Kippur*, when all men would attend synagogue shrouded in their *kittels* and *talleisim*. Given the connection of *Rosh Hashanah* to *Yom Kippur* in the annual process of judgment, Rav Levi Yitchock decreed that that the men of the community should don their *kittels* and *talleisim* for prayers on *Rosh Hashanah* as well.

His other major reform was to ask the *Kohanim* to refrain from reciting the Priestly Blessings (*duchenen*, in Yiddish) on any day that a major Jewish festival fell on the Sabbath. These practices actually had nothing to do with differences between the *Misnagdim* and the Chassidim, but were driven by Rav Levi Yitchock's approach to the application of Jewish law (*halachah*) or custom. But changes in ritual in a Jewish community have always been met (and will always be met) with dissension, and all the more so a change instituted by a rabbinic figure with Chassidic leanings in a community controlled by *Misnagdim*. And indeed, the changes were not well received by the powers of the Zhelichov Jewish community.

In the course of his relatively short stay in Zhelichov, Rav Levi Yitchock incurred the wrath of many of the leaders of that community, who were opposed to the Chassidic movement, and they dismissed him in 1771. Perhaps this was due to the time he devoted to the simple Jews and their *chevrahs*, arguably at the expense of Talmudic study. Perhaps it was due to the time and resources that Rav Levi Yitchock put into a communal synagogue that would serve the masses. Perhaps it was due to his controversial rulings on synagogue ritual. Or perhaps it was due to simple distaste for a recognized Talmudic scholar with Chassidic leanings. Most likely, it was due to a combination of all of these factors. Whatever the case, Rav Levi Yitchock was again unemployed.

It is of no small degree of irony that the *chevrahs* that he established (and, in particular, what became known as the *Berditchiver Chevrah Tehillim*) continued on long after Rav Levi Yitzchok left Zhelichov, in fact, until the town's Jewish population was exterminated in the Holocaust. More intriguing is the lore that has grown up around the abolition of Rav Levi Yitzchok's synagogue ritual reforms by his successors. One successor, who himself was a *Kohen*, rescinded the abstention from reciting the Priestly Blessings on major festivals that fell on the Sabbath, assuming that that his understanding of *halachah* was better than Rav Levi Yitzchok's. The reversal did not last very long. According to Zhelichov lore, a fire leveled many of the town's major Jewish institutions shortly after the first time that this successor rabbi recited the Priestly Blessings on a festival that fell on the Sabbath. The rabbi fell ill and passed away at a young age in that same year, though he did see in his lifetime the reinstatement of Rav Levi Yitzchok's original reform.⁷

The Darkest Moments and the Final Confrontation: Pinsk

The attacks of the *Misnagdim* against the Chassidim reached new heights in the early 1770s, coinciding with the period when Rav Levi Yitzchok was between pulpits. In 1772, the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman Kremer (1720-1797), commonly referred to as “the Gra,” the acronym of his Hebrew title, “Gaon Rabbeinu Eliyahu”), universally recognized as the leading rabbinic figure and halachic authority of theera, as well as a staunch leader of the *Misnagdim*, issued an edict condemning those aligned with the Chassidic movement. This was essentially a clear statement of partition from the Chassidim. And the Vilna Gaon would not budge an inch. A case in point: The Chassidic leaders sent their leading halachic scholar, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, to visit with the Vilna Gaon in order to heal the growing rift. The Chassidic leaders entrusted Rav Shneur Zalman with this weighty task due both to his prowess in learning –the Maggid of Mezeritch had assigned him with the monumental task of preparing an updated edition of the *Shulchan Aruch* (the Code of Jewish Law) — and to the fact that he was, like most *Misnagdim*, from White Russia (present-day Belarus). The Vilna Gaon simply refused to meet him.

It was against this backdrop that Rav Levi Yitzchok continued his rabbinic career in 1775 in Pinsk, Belarus. It was of all places, a large city far afield from his geographic and spiritual roots. As much as Ritchval and Zhelichov were small communities in broader Galicia, composed largely of simple *Yidden*, Pinsk was a major White Russian community and a stronghold of the *Misnagdim*. It was about as far as Rav Levi Yitzchok could get geographically,

7. These and other interesting stories are recounted in *Zelechow Yizkor Book*, *supra*, note 3 at pp. 32-33.

פרשת ויצא

Parashas Vayitzei

1

ACTUALIZING THE POTENTIAL

Yaakov foresaw the potential of the Jewish people who would descend from him, and sought to actualize that potential in a way that would allow them to fulfill their mission despite the exigencies of history.

- וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע כּו', עַד סוֹף הַפְּרָשָׁה — *Yaakov left Beersheva, and set out for Charan. He came upon the place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took some of the stones of that place and placed them around his head. He lay down in that place. He had a dream: he beheld a ladder standing on the ground, its top reaching up toward Heaven. Upon it, behold, angels of God were ascending and descending. And behold, God was standing over him. He said, "I am God, God of Avraham your forebear, and God of Yitzchak. I will give the land upon which you are lying to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread out powerfully to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south, and all the families on earth will be blessed through you and through your descendants. Behold, I am with you, I will protect you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land, for I will not neglect you until I have fulfilled what I have promised concerning you."* Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "God is truly present in this place, yet I was not aware of it." He became afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gateway to Heaven." Yaakov rose early in the morning, took the stone that he had placed under his head, and set it up as a monument. He poured oil on the top of it. He named that place Beis El ["House of God"], although the original name of the town was Luz. Yaakov made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will protect me on this journey that I am undertaking, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I return to my father's house untainted, and God will be my God, this stone that I have set up as a monument will become a house of God, and I will set aside a tenth for You of everything that You give me" (Bereishis 28:10–22).

וּבֵאֵר בְּזֶה מַה שָּׂאֵנוּ קוֹרִין לְנֵס דְּחֲנֻכָּה בְּשֵׁם לְשׁוֹן 'חֲנֻכָּה', 'כִּי 'חֲנֻכָּה' הוּא מִלְּשׁוֹן חֲנוּךְ.

This passage will be understood by prefacing it with an explanation of why we call the miracle of Chanukah, which occurred with oil, with the

name *Chanukah*^[1] — for the word *chanukah* [חֲנֻכָּה] is related to the word for “education” or “induction” [חֲנוּךְ].

What does “education” or “induction” have to do with oil or the miracle that occurred with the oil? Usually we associate this term with the Chashmonaim’s rededication of the *Mizbei’ach*, not with the miracle of the oil.

וּתְכֵן הַדְּבָרִים, דְּמִצִּינוּ בַתּוֹרָה גְּבִי חֲנוּךְ הַבְּגָדִים שֶׁל כֹּהֲנִים שְׁנֵאָמַר לְמִלָּא אֶת יָדָם לְכַהֵן כּוּי.

The crux of the matter is as follows. We find that in the Torah, regarding the induction of the *kohanim* being affected by wearing their *bigdei kehunah* for seven days, it says,^[2] “Aharon’s sacred vestments will belong to his descendants after him, to become dignified and to be installed by them,” and^[3] “... the holy garments for Aharon the *kohen* and his sons to [be worn during] their service as *kohanim*.”

The first verse quoted refers to Aharon (the first *kohen gadol*) and any subsequent *kohen gadol* being inducted into the *kehunah gedolah* by wearing the *kohen gadol*’s clothes for seven days. The induction of the regular *kohanim* by wearing their clothes for seven days is alluded to in earlier verses,^[4] “You must dress Aharon and his sons along with him in these [garments]. You must anoint them, inaugurate them, and sanctify them [thereby, and thus] they will serve Me as *kohanim*,” and^[5] “You must bring forth [Aharon’s] sons and dress them... You must [thereby] install Aharon and his sons in their duties...”

(These words *לְמִלָּא אֶת יָדָם לְכַהֵן* are presented in the text as if they were part of the same verse, but there is no verse in the Torah containing this phrase. There are some similar phrases, however: The phrase *יָמִלָּא אֶת יָדוֹ לְכַהֵן* appears in reference to Aharon’s successor *kohen gadol* performing the services of Yom Kippur.^[6] The phrase *יָדָם מִלָּא אֶשֶׁר מִלָּא אֶשֶׁר* appears in the context of Aharon’s sons’ duties in the Mishkan.^[7])

דִּהְנָה כָּל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה מְקוֹם לְהִשְׁרָאת הַקְּדוּשָׁה עָלֵינוּהָ, צְרִיכָה מְקָדָם לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּלֵי וְהִכְנָה וּבֵית קְבוּל שׁוֹיְהִיָּה מְקוֹם לְקַדְּשָׁה הַבָּאָה אַחַר כֶּף לְשֵׁרוֹת בְּדָבָר הַהוּא, וְזֶה נִקְרָא ‘חֲנוּךְ’, כְּמוֹ שֶׁמְחַנְכִּין הַנְּעָר בְּמִצְוֹת שׁוֹיְהָא כְּלֵי מְזֻמְנָת לְקַבֵּל הַשְׁרָאת הַקְּדוּשָׁה הַחֵל עָלָיו בְּעַת גְּדֻלְתּוֹ:

Any item intended to be a locus for Divine sanctity has to be first prepared to be a suitable vessel — i.e., a receptacle serving as the locale — for the holiness that will afterward come and rest on it. This process is known as “induction,” just as we educate a child in the performance of mitzvos in order that he be a suitable vessel to receive the sanctity that will descend upon him when he matures.

The *Kedushas Levi* will now demonstrate how Yaakov prepared the Jewish people to be a suitable vessel for holiness.

1. *Shabbos* 21b. 2. *Shemos* 29:33. 3. *Shemos* 31:10, 35:19, 39:41. 4. *Shemos* 28:41. 5. *Shemos* 29:8–9. See also *Vayikra* 8:13, 33–36. 6. *Vayikra* 16:32. 7. *Bamidbar* 3:3.

וְהָיָה יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ הַסֵּתֶבֶל בְּיַחְדָּו עֲלִיּוֹן מֵרֵאשִׁית הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה, וְרָאָה שְׂיִסוּד
כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת הוּא כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Now, Yaakov examined the higher-level union between God and creation, which was the original intention of God in creating the world, and realized that the foundation of all worlds is *Knesses Yisrael*, i.e., the collective soul of the Jewish people.

The “higher union” is the awareness of God being the sole true existence. “Lower union” is the consciousness of God being the unifying force behind all the apparently disparate constituents of reality.^[8]

כְּמֵאמַר חֲכָמֵינוּ ז"ל 'יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָה בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה', "בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא' וְכוּ' בְּשִׁבִיל
יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִקְרָאִים 'רֵאשִׁית'."

As our sages said,^[9] “The Jewish people arose first in His thought.” “The Torah begins,^[10] ‘In the beginning, God created’ — this implies that He created the world for the sake of the Jewish people, who are elsewhere^[11] called ‘the beginning.’”^[12]

The word for “In the beginning” [בְּרֵאשִׁית] can be interpreted to mean, “On account of [that which is termed] ‘the beginning.’”

וְהֵם נִקְרָאִים 'אֶבֶן הָרֵאשִׁי' שֶׁמִּמֶּנּוּ הִשְׁתַּת עוֹלָם, בִּי הֵם יִסוּד כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת
עֲלִיּוֹנִים וְתַחְתּוֹנִים.

They are also referred to as “the foundation rock”^[13] from which the world was founded, for they are the foundation of all higher and lower worlds.

According to the Talmud,^[14] the stone located in the *Kodesh HaKodashim* of the Beis HaMikdash was the primordial rock from which the rest of the world was created. Allegorically, this rock is synonymous with the Jewish people, who are the foundation of the world in the spiritual sense.

וּבְמַחֲשָׁבָה שֶׁם נִקְרָא 'אֶבֶן הַנִּלְבָּשׁוֹן יְחִיד בִּי שֵׁם נִתְאַחַד בְּלָלוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּאַחֲדוֹת הָאֲמִתִּי בְּמוֹל עֲלִיּוֹן:

There, in God’s primordial thought, this “rock” is referred to in the singular, for there all the Jewish people are united in a true union, within the Heavenly *mazal*.

The foundation stone in the *Kodesh HaKodashim* is referred to in the singular, in contrast to the Torah reference to a plurality of stones in the same location, namely, the stones on Mount Moriah (the location of the Beis HaMikdash) that Yaakov arranged to protect his head when he went to sleep there, as described in the beginning of this *parashah*, quoted above. According to the Midrash,^[15] Yaakov positioned twelve stones around his head, symbolizing the twelve tribes whom he hoped to father; when they miraculously fused into one stone,

8. As explained at length in *Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*. 9. *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4.

10. *Bereishis* 1:1. 11. *Yirmiyahu* 2:3. 12. *Vayikra Rabbah* 36:4; Rashi on *Bereishis* 1:1.

13. *Zechariah* 4:7. 14. *Yoma* 54b. 15. *Bereishis Rabbah* 68:11.

he knew that he would produce the twelve tribes. Thus, in this context, the one (foundation) stone symbolizes the Jewish people in a state of unity, before they have differentiated into twelve tribes, each with a different approach to serving God based on their differing conceptualizations of how God reveals Himself in the world.

Along similar lines, there are twelve *mazalos* (plural of *mazal*, “a channel of [Divine] flow,” usually identified with the twelve constellations of the zodiac). These *mazalos* funnel God’s revelation into its twelve differing archetypal manifestations the world; they are thus the spiritual source of the twelve tribes. These twelve *mazalos* are rooted in one, general *mazal* “above” them (the “Heavenly *mazal*” mentioned in the text).

It is stated in Kabbalah^[16] that the twelve *mazalos* and the twelve tribes (as well as the twelve months of the year, and so forth) are ultimately rooted in the twelve distinct permutations of the Name *Havayah*. These permutations represent how God’s creative energy embodied in the Name *Havayah* manifests itself in the lower worlds. They are thus the spiritual “structure” of creation. It is for this reason that Adam, and later, the *Avos*, sought to establish a family with twelve sons^[17] — in order that this family (and the nation that would descend from it) serve as the channel through which these twelve variations of Divine energy would flow into the world.

וְהָיָה יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ נִתֵּן שְׂכָלוֹ וּמַחֲשָׁבֹתָיו וְהֵנִיחַ מַחוּ עַל זֶה הָעֵנָן, שֶׁהִשְׁתַּוְּקַק
 יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ לְהוֹצִיא הַדָּבָר מִכַּח אֶל הַפְּעַל, מִשְׂרָשׁ אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁם רָעָה אֲבָן
 יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶל הַתְּפִשְׁטוֹת, לְנִטֵּעַ בְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵן שְׁלֹם בְּכָל עֵינָיִם, בְּשָׁנִים עֶשֶׂר
 שְׁבִטֵי יִי"ה הַמְּכֻוֹנִין נֶגְדַי י"ב גְּבוּלֵי אֶלְכֶסוֹן.

Now, Yaakov focused his intelligence and thoughts and set his mind on this matter. Yaakov longed to bring the matter (the centrality of the Jewish people) out of the state of potentiality into the state of actuality, i.e., from its root-state, which “from there, He shepherds the rock of Yisrael”^[18] to a state of manifestation. He desired to build *Knesses Yisrael* into a complete edifice in all respects, consisting of the twelve Godly tribes, corresponding to the twelve diagonals.^[19]

The phrase “from there, He shepherds the rock of Yisrael” is interpreted here to mean that God conveys (“shepherds”) the Jewish people from their state of unity (“there”) in their source (“the rock”) into manifestation as twelve tribes. This verse is part of Yaakov’s blessing to his twelve sons.

A further way in which the twelve permutations of the Name *Havayah* “define” created reality is by manifesting themselves as the twelve diagonals, i.e., the twelve lines that define the boundaries of a cube, the representation of the

16. *Sefer Yetzirah*, chapter 5, and commentaries ad loc. 17. *Midrash Tanchuma* (ed. Buber), *Vayeishev* 8; *ibid.*, *Vayeichi* 16; *Bereishis Rabbah* 24:5; *Aggadas Bereishis* 73. 18. *Bereishis* 49:24.

19. *Sefer Yetzirah* 5:12; *Zohar* 3:134b; *Pardes Rimonim* 21:6–7; *Shefa Tal* 5:3.

three dimensions of space.^[20] Thus, by fathering twelve righteous sons, Yaakov intended to create a spiritual “structure” serving as the source of the skeletal structure of physical reality, i.e., the three dimensions of space.

וְלִהְיוֹת הַמְרֻכָּבָה שְׁלֵמָה מְשֻׁשִׁים רַבּוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּמֵאֲמַר חַז"ל אֵין הַשְּׂכִינָה
 שׁוֹרָה פְּחוֹת מְשֻׁשִׁים רַבּוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְלִהְיוֹת קוֹמָה שְׁלֵמָה מֵאַבְרָם וּפְרָקִים,
 וְלִהְיוֹת הַכֹּל מְכוּן נֶגֶד הָעוֹלָמוֹת וְאוֹרוֹת הָעֲלִיוֹנִים.

He desired that the twelve tribes serve as a complete “chariot” for the Divine Presence, which they would when they would be composed of six hundred thousand Jewish souls, as our sages say,^[21] “The *Shechinah* does not dwell on fewer than six hundred thousand Jews.” Yaakov wanted the Jewish people to develop into a complete spiritual bodily structure, complete with all its “limbs” and with all its “joints,” and that all this spiritual bodily structure correspond exactly to the spiritual bodily structure of the higher worlds and lights.

The Jewish people became a nation — a unified body — at the Exodus from Egypt, at which point they numbered, for the first time, six hundred thousand adult males. Thus, the number six hundred thousand is the seminal number of Jewish souls, the minimal number of souls necessary to comprise the “body” of the Jewish people.

In Yechezkel HaNavi’s vision,^[22] he sees God’s creative energies organized in the form of man sitting on a throne. It is in this sense that God created the human being “in our image, after our likeness.”^[23] See *Concepts*.

Similarly, it is stated in Kabbalah^[24] that all Jewish souls are rooted in the soul (and body) of Adam, and thus collectively form one “body.” As such, just as every individual human being (by virtue of being descended from Adam) mirrors God’s “image and likeness,” the Jewish people also collectively mirror God’s “image and likeness” (since they constitute a collective manifestation of Adam). It is instructive to note in this context that Yaakov is compared to Adam, meaning that he is considered to have been the rectified version of Adam — what Adam was meant to be, and would have become had he not sinned.^[25]

וְלִהְיוֹצִיא זֶה הָאֶבֶן מִן הַכֶּלֶל אֶל הַפֶּרֶט עַל זֶה הַנִּיחַ יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ מִחוּ וְרָאֵשׁוּ:

In other words, Yaakov wanted to bring this “rock” from the general state to the particular state. It was to this task that Yaakov set his mind and head.

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁהִכְתּוּב מְכִינָה שִׁיעֲקֹב הַנִּיחַ רָאֵשׁוּ עַל הָאֶבֶן זֶה כְּנוֹי שֶׁהַנִּיחַ מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ
 וְשִׁכְלוֹ עַל אֶבֶן הָרֵאשֶׁה הַנִּי"ל. אַךְ שְׂאִין מְקַרָּא יוֹצֵא מִיַּד פְּשׁוּטוֹ, שְׂבֻדָּאֵי
 שְׂכָב עַל הָאֶבֶן וְיִצְקַע עָלָיו שְׁמֹן כְּמוֹ שְׂמֵבֵאָר בְּכֶתוּב רַק שְׂרַמְזוּ יַעֲקֹב בְּמִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ

20. *Sefer HaBahir* 95. 21. *Bereishis Rabbah* 77:15. 22. *Yechezkel* 1:26. 23. *Bereishis* 1:26.

24. *Taamei HaMitzvos, Kedoshim*, s.v. *Mitzvas v'ahavta*. See also *Derech Mitzvosecha* 28a–29b.

25. *Bava Metzia* 84a, etc. See *Iggeres HaKodesh* 7 (111b).

וכון על דבר אחר, על אבן הרוחני, היא ראשית המחשבה הוא פנת יסוד העולם, להיות מקשר אל המעשה בכל ענפיו ופרטיו, להיות בנזן מפאָר מחדרים ומפלטרין שממנו כמה וכמה צדיקים ולומדי תורה זה היה עבודת יעקב והסתכל באחדות של כנסת ישראל עד סוף כל הדורות. ואחר כך ראָה יעקב ברוח קדשו הרוס של כנסת ישראל וחרבן בית המקדש וגדל החרון אף והדינים שעברו על ישראל.

This is what the passage implies when it later says that he placed his head on a rock.^[26] This is an allusion to Yaakov focusing his thoughts, his entire intelligence, on this primary stone. Of course, Tanach never loses its simple meaning.^[27] Therefore, certainly he rested his head on this rock and subsequently anointed it with oil, as Tanach describes. It is just that in addition, Tanach is alluding to the fact that Yaakov focused and directed his thoughts to a deeper matter as well, to the spiritual rock, which corresponds to the primordial thought, which serves as the cornerstone for the entire world. He wished to attach this thought with an actual deed in all its particular branches and details, so that the ensuing “edifice” would truly be beautiful, with decorous “rooms” and “hallways” — from which would emerge numerous *tzaddikim*, scholars of Torah. This was the Divine service of Yaakov. He focused on the unity of *Knesses Yisrael* as it was throughout the generations. And afterward he beheld, through his Divine inspiration, the ruination of *Knesses Yisrael* and the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. He saw the effects of God’s anger and the judgments that God would visit upon the Jewish people.

ועל זה ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע, רצה לומר שניצא מאותו הסתכלות של היחוד עליון אשר משם נובע שפע לכל העולמות לכל שבע המדות המבנה בשם 'באר שבע'.

Regarding this, the verse says, “Yaakov left Beersheva,” meaning he left the earlier vision, in which he had beheld the Divine unity from which flows God’s goodness to all the worlds, to all His seven attributes, referred to by the name Beersheva, which means^[28] “the well of seven.”

וילך חרנה' והסתכל באותו החרון אשר יעברו על כנסת ישראל, והיה לו צער גדול מאוד בהרגישו צער גדול הצרות אשר יסבלו זרעו בגלות ויהיה להם ירידה חס ושלום. וזהו שכתוב ויפגע במקום, רצה לומר לכד מזה הצער של זרעו, הרגיש ופגע בצערו של 'מקום' בביבול, מקומו של עולם, אשר בכל צרתם לו צר, וחשש יעקב מאד על צער שכינה בביבול.

The verse continues, “and he went to Charan [חרון אף],” meaning that he looked at “the anger” [חרון אף] that would befall the Jewish people. He was pained exceedingly by this, feeling the tremendous suffering that they would undergo throughout the course of exile. He beheld their descent,

26. Bereishis 28:11. 27. Shabbos 63a. 28. Zohar 1:147a.

God forbid. This is the import of the next verse, “He came upon *the place*,” meaning that aside from the pain of his children, he experienced and encountered the suffering of God, Who is the Omnipresent [וְהַמְקוֹם], meaning that He is “*the Place* of the world.”^[29] For in all the pains of the Jewish people, He also suffers pain.^[30] Yaakov was distraught about the pain of the *Shechinah*, as it were.

וְזֶה שְׁכָתוֹב וַיִּלְכַן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, הִיָּה לוֹ לַיְנָה, רָצָה לֹאמַר שְׁנַחֲשֵׁף לוֹ
הָאֵוָר שָׁם מִחֻמַּת גָּדֹל צַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגִלוּת הַשְּׂכִינָה וְנִפְסַק מִהֲדַבְּקוֹת:

This is alluded to in the verse “He spent the night there because the sun had set.” He lay down since it grew emotionally dark for him as a result of his foreknowledge of the tremendous pain of the Jewish people and the exile of the *Shechinah*, and on account of his sadness, his otherwise constant clinging to God was interrupted.

וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׂם מִרְאֲשֵׁתוֹ, הֵנִיחַ מִחֻשְׁבָּתוֹ עַל זֶה הַדָּבָר, לִכְרֹ
כֶּתִיב מֵאֲבָנֵי כִּי זֶה קָאֵי עַל הַרוּס כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִפְרְדוּ.

“He took some stones of that place and placed them around his head.” He focused his thoughts on this matter. This is why it says “from the *stones*,” in the plural, referring to the future breaking up of the Jewish people and their fragmentation.

וְזֶה שְׁכָתוֹב וַיַּחֲלֹם, רָצָה לֹאמַר שֶׁהַתְּגַבֵּר יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ מֵאֵד בְּמִחֻשְׁבָּתוֹ עַל זֶה
הַדָּבָר הַהַרוּס הַנִּי, מִחֻמַּת שְׁזָה הַדָּבָר הוּא גְדוֹל בְּכֻמוֹת, אִף שְׁלַעֲיָנִי בְּשָׂר וָדָם
נִדְמָה שֶׁהַגְּלוּת אֵינּוּ אֶלָּא לְמִטָּה בְּאַרְצֵיּוֹת, וְזֶה שְׁכָתוֹב וַיַּחֲלֹם סֶלֶם מֵצֵב אַרְצָה,
אֲבָל וַיִּרְאֶשׁוּ מִגִּיעַ הַשְּׂמִימָה, כִּי בְּאֵמַת שָׂרֵשׁ כָּל הַגְּלוּת נֹגַע עַד רוּם שָׁמַיִם
הַעֲלִיּוֹנִים, כִּי בָעַת הַגְּלוּת יֵשׁ תְּשׁוּת כַּח לְמַעְלָה וְנִפְסַק חֲלִילָה הַשְּׁפַע עֲלֵיוֹנָה:

The passage continues, “He had a dream.” Yaakov put all his energies into thinking about this matter — the aforementioned ruination — because it was so extensive. Although to the eyes of mortal man it might seem that the exile only affected the lower world, nonetheless, the verse says, “He had a dream: he beheld a ladder standing upon the ground, its top reaching up toward Heaven.” For in truth, the root-cause of exile is relevant to the highest place in the Heavens, because during exile there is a weakening of the Heavenly power and there is an interruption, God forbid, of the flow of the Divine beneficence from Above.

וַיַּחֲלֹם מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ, רָצָה לֹאמַר שְׁבִאֲמַת עַל יְדֵי הַגְּלוּת
יֵשׁ עֲלֵיָהּ לְכַמָּה נִיצוּצוֹת הַקְּדוּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ לָהֶם עֲלֵיָהּ עַל יְדֵי עַל הַגְּלוּת, אֲבָל
עַל יְדֵי וַיִּרְיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ חַס וְשְׁלוֹם יִרְיַת לְכַמָּה נִיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשִׁים הַנִּקְרָאִים
מִלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים:

“Upon it, behold, angels of God were ascending and descending.” This

29. Bereishis Rabbah 68:10. 30. Yeshayahu 63:9.

means that although many holy sparks are elevated through the yoke of the exile,^[31] but because of the descent of the Jewish people, God forbid, there is also a descent of numerous holy sparks, which are called “angels of God.”

אף יַעֲקֹב הִזְכִּיר אֶת עֲצָמוֹ וְהִגִּיד ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, שְׂבִינֵן שְׁגָלוֹ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַשְּׂכִינָה
בְּיָכוֹל עִמָּהֶם עַל דְּרָךְ עֲמוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְּצָרָה, אִם כֵּן כִּינֵן שְׁהֵשֵׁם יִתְבַּרֵךְ עִמָּנוּ
מֵעַתָּה אֵין לָנוּ אֵלָא צַעַר שֶׁל מְקוּמָם:

But Yaakov reminded himself, “And behold, God was standing over him.” He remembered that since the Jewish people would be exiled, the *Shechinah*, as it were, would be exiled together with them,^[32] as it says,^[33] “I am together with him in his pain.” If God is indeed together with us in our exile, our only concern should be God’s distress.

וְהִנֵּה הַשֵּׁם יִתְבַּרֵךְ בְּשִׂרְאָה שֶׁהֵנִיחַ יַעֲקֹב מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ עַל צַעַר הַשְּׂכִינָה וְזָרַע
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִזּוֹ הִבְטִיחַ לוֹ הַשֵּׁם אָנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם אֲבִיךָ וְכוּ' הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה
שׁוֹכֵב עָלֶיהָ רְצָה לִוְמֵר שְׂאֵתָה דֹאֵג עָלָיו, בְּוֹדָאֵי אֲתַנְנָה לָךְ וְלִזְרַעְךָ.

Now, when God saw that Yaakov was thinking of the pain of the *Shechinah* and the Jewish people, God promised him, “I am the God of Avraham your father...the land upon which you are lying” — which you are worried about — “I will certainly give to you and to your descendants.”

וְהִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וְשִׁמְרֵתִיךָ רְצָה לִוְמֵר אֵף שֶׁהֵם בְּגָלוֹת אֲנֹכִי אֲהִיָּה עִמָּהֶם
וְאֲשֹׁמֵר אוֹתָם.

God continued, “Behold, I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go.” This means that God told him that even “when the Jewish people will be in exile, I will be there with them. I will protect them.”

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ אֶל הָאָרְצָה רְצָה לִוְמֵר אֵף שְׁגָלוֹ אִם יִרְצָה הַשֵּׁם אֲשִׁיב אֶת
שְׁבוֹתָם וְאֶקְבַּל אוֹתָם, עַד אִם עֲשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ.

God continued, “I will bring you back to this land,” meaning, “although they will be exiled, I will return the exiled ones, and I will receive them here when they return” — “until I have fulfilled what I have promised concerning you.”

וַיִּיקֶץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ רְצָה לִוְמֵר מִבְּחִינַת שְׁנָה שֶׁהִיָּה בְּהַסְתַּלְקוֹת הַמִּחוּץ
מִחֲמַת חֲשֻׁכוֹת הַגָּלוֹת וְצַעֲרָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

And then the verse continues, “Yaakov awoke from his sleep,” meaning that he awoke from his state of slumber^[34] — i.e., the loss of intellectual perceptiveness that results from the darkness of exile and the pain of the Jewish people.

31. Likkutei Torah, Ki Seitzei. 32. Megillah 29a.

33. Tehillim 98:15. 34. Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar Tikkun Chatzos 1.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִן יִשׁ ה' בְּמִקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲבִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי, שְׂאֲנִי דְמִיִּי חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם
 כְּשֶׁנִּסְתַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם בְּגִלוֹת הַקְּרוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עִזְבָם וְהוּא בְּהִסְתֵּר פָּנִים וְאִין
 מְשַׁגִּיחַ עֲלֵיהֶם אֲבָל עִתָּה אֲנִי רוֹאֶה שֶׁהַשֵּׁם עִמָּהֶם.

“And he said, ‘God is truly present in this place, yet I was not aware of it,’” meaning, “I thought that, God forbid, when the Jewish people would be exiled, God would forsake them, and that there would be a concealment of His countenance and He would not watch over them. But now I realize that God will be with them.”

וְאִין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים שֶׁהִשְׁכִּינָה עִמָּהֶם יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּגִלוּתָא, אִם בֵּן בּוֹדְאִי
 הִיא לְטוֹבָתָם:

Consequently, “this is none other than the House of God.” Since the *Shechinah* will be with them together in exile, it will certainly be advantageous for them.

וְאִזְ חוֹר יַעֲקֹב לְמַחְשַׁבְתּוֹ הִרְאֵנוּהָ לְקַח אֲבִן אֲשֶׁר שָׁם מְרֵאשׁוּתֵי, רִצָּה
 לוֹמַר זֶה הִיסוּד אֲשֶׁר הֵנִיחַ רֵאשׁוֹ וּמַחְשַׁבְתּוֹ עָלָיו, וַיִּשֵׁם אֹתָהּ מִצְבֵּה רִצָּה
 לוֹמַר שֶׁפָּעַל לְהַקִּים אֹתָהּ קוֹמָה שְׁלֵמָה, וַיִּצַק שָׁמֶן עַל רֵאשׁוֹ רִצָּה לוֹמַר
 שֶׁהַמְשִׁיחַ לְמַעַל הוּא שְׁמֵן בְּנוֹי לְחֻכְמָה עֲלִיוֹנָה, וּמְשַׁח מִשֵּׁם שֶׁפַע חַיּוֹת
 וְקִדְשָׁה וַיְחַוֵּר הַמַּעֲשֵׂה הוּא חֻכְמָה עֲלֵאָה אֲשֶׁר הוּא אֲבִן הִיסוּד וְעֵשֶׂה מִמֶּנּוּ
 בְּנֵינן שְׁלֵם בְּכָל חֲדָרָיו הַמְּפָאָרִים, וְעֵשֶׂה מִמֶּנּוּ מְדוּר לְשִׁכְנֵיהָ וַיְחַוֵּר לְמִקוֹם
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַתִּיחַד עִם בְּנֵסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, קוֹדֶשׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשִׁכְנֵיהָ.

Then Yaakov returned to his original thought, the rock that he had placed there for his head, this foundation upon which he rested his head, upon which he focused his thoughts. “He set it up as a monument” — He succeeded in establishing the rock as a base for the entire edifice, an allusion to the Jewish people as a whole and complete entity. “He poured oil on top of it,” meaning, he elicited oil from Above, oil being an allusion to Divine wisdom.³⁵ He drew down a flow of vitality, sanctity, and unity of action, which are properties of Divine wisdom, which serves as the foundation rock. He transformed it into a building, complete with all its beautiful rooms, so that it would house the *Shechinah*, and bring unity to God, unifying the Jewish people, the Holy One, blessed be He, and the *Shechinah*.

זֶה שְׁכֵתוֹב וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמִּקוֹם בֵּית אֵל, שֶׁהוּא בֵּית וּמְדוּר שֵׁם אֵל. וְזֶה
 שְׂאֵמֶר הַכְּתוּב וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹז שֵׁם הָעִיר לְרֵאשׁוֹנָה, רִצָּה לוֹמַר דְּבִאֲמַת דְּגַם קִדְּם
 שֶׁעֲשֵׂה יַעֲקֹב זֶה גַם בֵּן הָיוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים בְּכַח בִּיחּוּד הָעֲלִיוֹן, כִּי הוּא רֵאשִׁית
 הַמַּחְשָׁבָה וְהַבּוֹלְלֵת כָּל בְּנֵסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל דוֹר וָדוֹר עַד עַקְבָּא דְּמִשְׁיָחָא, רַק
 שְׁהִיתָה בְּכַחֲנֵת ל׳לוֹז׳. כִּי אֲבָר אֲחַד יִשׁ בְּאֲבָאָדָם שֶׁשָּׂמוּ ל׳לוֹז׳ וְהוּא נִסְכֵּי,
 אֲשֶׁר מוֹזָה הָאֲבָר נִתְּהוּהָ בְּנֵן אָדָם כָּל הַרְמִי״ח אֲבָרִים, וְגַם לַעֲת הַתְּחִיָּה יִבְנֶה
 כָּל הַגּוֹף מוֹזָה הָאֲבָר, כִּי זֶה הָאֲבָר אֵינוֹ נִרְקֵב, אִם בֵּן מְדַכָּל הַגּוֹף נִבְנֶה מִמֶּנּוּ

35. *Menachos* 82b; *Zohar* 1:34a.

על כרחק יש באבר הזה כח וחיות של כל הרמ"ח אברים, והוא כמו היולי
 בן האבן הראשה, שהיתה ראשית המחשבה הכוללת הכל מה שהיה ומה
 שעתיד להיות, רק שיעקב פגע זאת והוציא מבח אל הפעל, אבל הכל היה אז
 בכחו ותבנה. ויותר אין להאריך, והבן ידוק:

This is alluded to by the verse “He named that place ‘Beis El’” (literally, “the House of God”). It was a house and a dwelling place for God. That is why the verse continues, “although the original name of the town was Luz,” meaning, even before Yaakov had accomplished this, it had existed in a state of potential in God’s Divine unity, for this constituted God’s primordial thought, which encompasses *Knesses Yisrael* for all generations until the Messianic Era. Only that it was in a state of *luz*. For there is a certain bone in man called *luz*. It was this that he anointed, for from this bone would emerge the totality of man, including all of his 248 limbs. Indeed, in the future, at the time of the resurrection, the entire body will be rebuilt from this limb, for this limb never decays.^[36] Consequently, the entirety of the body is rebuilt from it. Therefore, this bone carries the potential and the vitality of all 248 limbs, and is therefore like primordial matter — *hyle*^[37] — as was this foundation stone. It represents the primordial thought of God, which encompasses everything, what was and what will be. Yaakov simply “encountered it” and actualized it. But even before he did, it was in a state of potential within God. More than this I cannot elaborate. Think about this, analyze it, and contemplate it well.

2

SEVEN: CONNECTED WITH THE WORLD

*Yaakov left the Land of Israel in order to
 elevate the Divine sparks entrapped there,
 whereas Yitzchak’s Divine service was on a higher level.*

□ ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע — *Yaakov left Beersheva (Bereishis 28:10).*

או ובאר יעקב הוא מנין שבע פעמים הו"ה, והיה יכול לילך לחוץ לארץ
 לעלות ניצוצות, ויצחק הוא מנין ח' פעמים הו"ה, ושם הוא למעלה מעלות
 ניצוצות, לכך לא הרשה לילך לחוץ לארץ:

Another explanation of this verse: The *gematria* of the word *Yaakov* [יעקב, 182] equals seven times 26, the *gematria* of the Name *Havayah*.^[38] Yaakov was able to leave the Land of Israel and to elevate holy sparks there. The *gematria* of *Yitzchak* [יצחק, 208], by contrast, is eight times 26, the *gematria* of the Name *Havayah*. As such, Yitzchak was higher, and transcended this

36. *Bereishis Rabbah* 28:3. 37. Ramban on *Bereishis* 1:1.

38. *Likkutei Torah, Parashas Vayeira*, s.v. *Hinei*.