

EXCERPTS FROM:

PARADIGM SHIFT

Transformational Life Teachings
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe



Jewish Learning Institute

Seeing a Beautiful Garden

Text 1

The Rebbe, *Sichot Kodesh*, 5732, 1:361-362

When we look about with physical eyes, we only perceive the physical aspects in all that we see and we naturally wonder: what is happening with the world? The situation is steadily deteriorating, from one generation to the next and even from one year to the next. Goodness does not prevail, conditions are not improving, holy and spiritual values do not dominate. This is especially true with regard to Jewish concerns. Our nation has always been a small minority among the world's inhabitants, and this is certainly the case today.

Such thoughts easily lead to the conclusion that this world is but a jungle dominated by vicious animals, and that it certainly does not remotely resemble a garden that yields edible fruit... Such thoughts also lead to dejection and despair. How can we hope to affect and change the world for the better if the situation is consistently degenerating? If we reach this conclusion, even if we dutifully obey [and continue to study Torah and do good deeds] ... we will lack the zest and happiness that is necessary in order to fulfill our mission and properly serve G-d, inasmuch as it appears that we will certainly fail, for the world is no more than a wild jungle ruled by vicious beasts.

Text 2

Song of Songs 5:1

I have come to my garden, my sister, [My] bride.

Text 3

The Rebbe, *Sichot Kodesh*, 5732, 1:362-363

We must know that the world . . . is a garden. Not just a field that yields grain [which is necessary in order to subsist], but a garden that yields luxurious fruits [that provide enjoyment and pleasure]. Moreover, the pleasure provided by a given entity is subjective, its extent determined by the needs and taste of its owner. This world is not just anyone's garden; it is G-d's garden, as the verse states, "I have come to *My* garden." [Its goodness is therefore measured according to His infinite terms.]

Text 4

Sidur Tehilat Hashem, Morning Prayer, p. 41

In His goodness, G-d renews each day, continuously, the work of Creation, as it is said (Psalms 136:7): "[Give thanks] to Him Who makes great luminaries, for His kindness is eternal."

Text 5

The Rebbe, *Sichot Kodesh*, 5732, 1:363-364

With this perspective, we view the world differently; and when we do so, we begin to notice things that we missed upon first glance. When we realize that it is our

responsibility to constantly be on the search, we endeavor to look around us and perceive that which is beneath the shell, the fruit that is under the peel. We are confident that we will successfully uncover the garden that is latent in creation because the Torah tells us that it is indeed there, waiting to be discovered. The knowledge that we will surely find precious fruit, fruit that G-d says is a part of the garden in which He dwells, infuses us with supreme confidence and enthusiasm. Knowing that a precious treasure awaits discovery, we remain focused on our task and do not allow ourselves to be sidetracked by other endeavors. . . .

We must know that we inhabit a wonderful world. The evil inclination endeavors in every way possible to obscure the world's preciousness, in the hope that we lose all hope, G-d forbid, or at least, to lull us into doing the bare required minimum. . . . Through contemplating the above, however, we assuredly traverse through life . . . secure in the knowledge that we will find the fruits of G-d's garden.

Text 6

Midrash, *Kohelet Rabah* 3:15

“It is good” (Genesis 1:31) refers to the human inclination to do good. “It is *very* good” (ibid.) refers to the human's evil inclination.

Text 7

Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman of Liadi, *Tanya*, ch. 36

The purpose of this world's Creation, a renowned rabbinic statement asserts, is G-d's desire to have a home in the lowest world.

Text 8a

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichot* 20:126

Jacob's challenging stay in the house of Laban was for the purpose of great gain — in order that he should become [as Genesis 30:43 states] “exceedingly wealthy.” Jacob perceived the purpose of the challenge — the profit it would subsequently bring him — and was therefore able to sing, whilst in the house of Laban, the “Song of Ascents.”

Text 8b

The Rebbe, *ibid.*, p. 127

Because of the advantages that ensue from struggles and challenges, at times, God orchestrates . . . opponents that attempt to battle us and disturb our divine service.

Upon experiencing such adversity, we respond by singing “A Song of Ascents.” The difficulties do not impede our

service or cause it to flag; to the contrary, they evoke extra energy and courage. They cause us to sing.

Text 9a (Optional)

Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed* 3:12

People often think that the evils in the world are more numerous than the good things; many sayings and songs of the nations dwell on this idea. They say that a good thing is found only exceptionally, whilst evil things are numerous and lasting. Not only common people make this mistake, but even many who believe that they are wise.

Al-Razi wrote a well-known book on theology. Among other mad and foolish things, it contains also the idea that there exists more evil than good. He maintains that if the happiness of man and his pleasure in the times of prosperity be compared with the mishaps that befall him — such as grief, acute pain, defects, paralysis of the limbs, fears, anxieties, and troubles — it would seem as if the existence of man is a punishment and a great evil for him...

This error results from judging the whole universe by what occurs to a single person. Only an ignorant person believes that the whole universe exists only for him, as if nothing else required any consideration. If, therefore, anything happens to him contrary to his expectation, he at once concludes that the whole universe is evil. If, however, he would take into consideration the whole universe, form an idea of it, and comprehend what a small portion he is of it, he will find the truth. For evil is not found among the angles, the spheres, the stars, the elements, and that which is formed of the elements, that is, minerals and plants, or in the various species of living beings.

Text 9b (Optional)

Miamonides, *ibid.*

Some people have great deformities or paralysis of some of the organs. There is also suffering due to changes in the elements that result from bad air, thunderstorms, or landslides. . . . You will find that these evils are very few and rare. There are countries that have not been flooded or burned for thousands of years. There are thousands of men in perfect health, whereas deformed individuals are an exceptional occurrence. If you object to the term “exceptional,” then say “few in number;” they are not one-hundredth, not even one-thousandth of those that are perfectly normal.

Text 9c (Optional)

Miamonides, *ibid.*

Another class of evils comprises those that people cause to each other, when some use their strength against others. These evils are more numerous than those of the first kind. . . . It is nevertheless not widespread in any country of the whole world. It is of rare occurrence that a man plans to kill his neighbor or to rob him of his property by night. Many persons are, however, afflicted with this kind of evil in great wars. But these are not frequent, if all of humanity is taken into consideration.

Text 9d (Optional)

Miamonides, *ibid.*

The more necessary a thing is for living beings, the more easily it is found and the cheaper it is; the less necessary it is, the rarer and dearer it is. Air, water, and food are indispensable to humanity. Air is most necessary, for if man is without air for a short time he dies, whereas he can be without water a day or two. Indeed air is more plentiful and cheaper than water.

Water is more necessary than food; some people can survive four or five days without food, provided they have water. Indeed, water exists in every country in larger quantities than food and is also cheaper.

The same proportion can be noticed in the different kinds of foods; that which is more necessary exists in larger quantities and is cheaper than that which is less necessary. No intelligent person, I think, considers musk, amber, rubies, and emerald as very necessary for man except as medicines; and they, as well as other similar substances, can be replaced for this purpose by herbs and minerals.

This shows the kindness of G-d to His creatures, even to the fragile human being.

Text 10

The Rebbe, *Igrot Kodesh* 20:41

I acknowledge receipt of your letter. . . . Despite its tone and content . . . I have not, G-d forbid, lost hope that eventually you will appreciate the good in life, including the good in *your own* life, and that this appreciation will impact your emotions and frame of mind. . . .

In our world, everything is a mixture of good and bad. Human beings must choose which aspects they will emphasize, contemplate, and pursue. In everyone's life there are two paths — to see the good or [the opposite]. . .

How instructive is that which our sages tell us, that Adam was an ingrate. Even before he was banished from the Garden of Eden, [while living in a literal paradise], he complained about his circumstances. On the other hand, there were Jewish men and women who thanked and blessed the Creator and recited the morning blessings while living through the most horrifying times in the German concentration camps. Ultimately, everyone's circumstances will be somewhere between these two extremes. . . .

Needless to say, my intention is not to imply that anyone deserves suffering, G-d forbid. My point is simply to underscore the reality: The types of lives that we live, whether full of satisfaction and meaning or the opposite, depends, in large measure, on our will power, which dictates whether we will focus on the positive or on the negative.

Text 11

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichot* 35:345-346

May I suggest the following: Were the deceased not invited to the Torah celebration, she would have suffered her fatal attack in a very different setting, perhaps on the street or in the presence of strangers. She would have been deprived of the comforting presence of a physician, who was also a dear friend of hers and shared her religious values. In her final moments, she would not have heard words of encouragement nor would she have been surrounded by her friends, her coreligionists. The vast difference between these two possible scenarios is self-understood. Moreover, consider how significant are the last moments of life to a dying person. . . .

Based on the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov [regarding divine providence], it is possible that one of the true reasons why G-d inspired so and so to donate the Torah was to allow for the tranquil ascent of this young woman's soul, and that it should occur in a Jewish home, a home that displays and is protected by a *mezuzah* whose first words are, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One."

Text 12a

The Rebbe, *Sichot Kodesh* 5730, 1:610-611

The complaints that people have against the younger generation, that they are destroying the system . . . the so-called "establishment," should be addressed to their

educators. When parents and teachers taught the younger generation proper behavior, they explained it as the means to be able to afford a nice home, have a large bank account, own two Cadillacs (“his” and “hers”), and to be honorees and seated at the head table at banquets. . . . When this constitutes the reason for choosing between good and evil . . . it is understandable why the youth will ultimately lose all patience for such falsehood. . . .

The youngsters are in the process of a spiritual journey. We cannot allow them to drift and get lost. We must educate them according to their needs, in a pleasant and kind manner, and lead them to a proper understanding of right and wrong.

Text 11

The Rebbe, *Torat Menachem* 5728, 3:131

The youth are brazen, have chutzpah, and are not deterred by anything — not by world opinion, not by their parents or families, not even by the opinions they themselves entertained a day earlier. . . . Instead, they proudly proclaim their absolute freedom to do as they wish. (This has become especially evident in the past weeks, as they have held strikes and protests, etc.) Specifically because of their chutzpah, it is easier to draw them to the true path of Torah and *mitzvot!* . . .

When we successfully inspire the youth, they will not suffice with personal Torah observance, but — due to their fierce indomitable spirit — they will also inspire others to do the same. They will be an unstoppable force that will transform the entire world and bring it in alignment with integrity and justice.