



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 19 | Iggeres HaTeshuvah | Sichah 3

Above the Angels

Translated by Rabbi Eliezer Robbins

Editor: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger | **Content Editor:** Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

© Copyright by Sichos In English 2023 ◦ 5784

A note on the translation: Rounded and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; curly brackets are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in curly brackets are those of the translator or editors and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Words in bold type are italicized in the original text.

Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation while maintaining readability. As in all translations, however, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists.

Feedback is appreciated — please send comments to info@projectlikkuteisichos.org

1.

AN ALLUSION TO THE ANGELS

In the fourth chapter of *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,¹ the Alter Rebbe explains that angels are called “*Elokim*” because “their nurture is derived from the external dimension {of G-dliness}... and the name “*Elokim*” is an external state {relative to the name *Havayah*}.”² As scriptural support, the Alter Rebbe cites three verses: “For Hashem *Elokeichem* {your L-rd}³ is *Elokei HaElokim* {the L-rd of L-rds} ...”;⁴ “Praise *Elokei HaElokim*...”;⁵ and, “The sons of *Elokim* presented themselves....”⁶

In his notes on *Tanya*,⁷ my father⁸ explains that these three verses correspond to three classes of angels — *serafim*, *chayos*, and *ofanim*. Respectively, they inhabit the three worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. And my father adds: “And they come into being... from three classes of letters...” — the letters (“an external state”) from which the angels come into being are also divisible into three classes: “thought in *Beriah*; speech in *Yetzirah*; and action in *Asiyah*.”

From these added remarks, the Alter Rebbe’s intent by bringing the three verses that “correspond to three classes of angels” is clearly not only to allude to the three classes of angels — which come into being from the name “*Elokim*” and are therefore called by this name — but also to allude to the idea that the name “*Elokim*” (depicted by “letters”), from which the angels come into being, operates in three domains: The name “*Elokim*” in the first verse (“For Hashem, your L-rd, is *Elokei HaElokim*...”) refers to the “letters of thought,” from which the angels inhabiting the world of *Beriah* come into being. The name “*Elokim*” in

¹ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” 94a.

² {*Havayah*, also known as the Tetragrammaton, is the four-letter name of Hashem, spelled *yud-hei-vav-hei*. *Havayah* represents G-dliness itself, which transcends worlds. *Elokim* represents the level of G-dliness that is manifest in limitation of nature and en clothed within this world.}

³ In the verse in *Devarim* 10:17, it says, “**He** is *Elokei*...”; see *He’aros VeTikkunim* to *Iggeres HaTeshuvah* on this passage {where, in line with Scripture, the Rebbe restored the word “He” to the paraphrase in the text}.

⁴ *Devarim* 10:17.

⁵ *Tehillim* 136:2.

⁶ *Iyov* 1:6.

⁷ *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak*, “*Haaros LeSefer HaTanya*,” p. 29.

⁸ {Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Rebbe’s father.}

the second verse (“Praise *Elokei HaElokim...*”) refers to the “letters of speech” from which the angels inhabiting the world of *Yetzirah* come into being. And the name “*Elokim*” in the third verse (“The sons of *Elokim* presented themselves....”) refers to “the letters of action” from which the angels inhabiting the world of *Asiyah* come into being.

We need to clarify: Why is it necessary, in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, to allude to the idea that each class of angels comes into being from different types of “letters”?

Had my father only said that these three verses “correspond to three classes of angels,” we could have explained that the Alter Rebbe cites these three verses to emphasize that **all** classes of angels — even the **loftiest** one (the angels inhabiting the world of *Beriah*)⁹ — are only brought into being from the name “*Elokim*.”

However, since my father adds, “And they come into being... from three classes of letters...,” clearly, in my father’s opinion, the Alter Rebbe’s intent is to allude to the different levels of letters from which the three classes of angels come into being. As such, this is perplexing: Why is it necessary in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah* for the Alter Rebbe to allude to the specific levels of the root from where the angels come into being?

2.

SOULS VS. ANGELS

Additionally, we need to clarify the general subject matter discussed in this part of *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*:

The explanation as to why “angels are called ‘*Elokim*’” follows a discussion of the superiority of man’s soul over all other creations: The heavenly host,¹⁰ and

⁹ See *Pardes*, sec. 16, ch. 4: “Who would put forth {the specious position} that angels are brought into being in *Atzilus*?”

¹⁰ {In the context of this *sichah*, the term “heavenly host” refers to celestial entities, such as stars and planets.}

even angels, were created, and “derive their life and existence” from the external dimension of vitality that is “en clothed” in the letters of the Ten {Divine} Utterances of Creation¹¹ through which the world was created. In contrast, man’s soul came into being from the innermost dimension of vitality (and only afterward was it drawn and channeled {into the world} “**by means** of the letters that comprise the Divine utterance, ‘Let us make man,’”¹² so that it would be able to descend and reside “in a body in this inferior {physical} world.”

It then goes on to say: “Therefore, the angels are called “*Elokim*”..., for on the basis of the above explanation [that angels derive from the external dimension of vitality, and man’s soul derives from its innermost dimension], the reason why angels are called “*Elokim*” is also understood, whereas man’s soul is “a part of the name *Havayah*” (in line with the earlier-cited¹³ verse,¹⁴ “For the portion of *Havayah* is His people”). This is because “the name “*Elokim*” is an external state,” whereas “the name *Havayah* indicates the innermost dimension of vitality.”

We must clarify: From among all the beings created from the external dimension of vitality, only angels are called “*Elokim*.” As such, clearly, they are given this name because they possess a superior quality that is unique relative to other creations — even when compared with the heavenly host [who are not called “*Elokim*”]. Angels are superior in that the G-dly vitality from the name “*Elokim*” that gives them life and existence is visible in them openly to the extent that they are **called** “*Elokim*” (openly).

As such, this is unclear: Here in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, the subject is the **dimension** of vitality that creates and enlivens the angels. This vitality is drawn only from the external dimension (as is the vitality of the entire heavenly host). In addition, we are told that “the angels are called ‘*Elokim*’” because of **how** their vitality is received [which differentiates them from the heavenly host] — in them, {the source of} their vitality is manifest openly. But how is the idea germane here?

¹¹ {See *Avos* 5:1.}

¹² {*Bereishis* 1:26.}

¹³ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 4, end of 93b.

¹⁴ *Devarim* 32:9.

The question is even stronger: Man's soul is drawn from the inner dimension of vitality (the name *Havayah*), yet we **don't** find that this soul is called "*Havayah*."¹⁵ [This is clear from the conclusion of this passage: "But man's soul..." — it doesn't say, "is called *Havayah*" (which would correspond to what it said earlier concerning the angels). Instead, it says, "is a part of the name *Havayah*."] The reason is that the vitality of man's soul from the name *Havayah* is not manifest openly.

Moreover, man's soul isn't even called "*Elokim*" {despite the potential rationale for doing so}, since "it then descended... by means of the "letters" of the Divine utterance, 'Let us make man.'" {And these letters correspond with the name "*Elokim*".} In light of this, it is clear that even **this** dimension {"*Elokim*"} is also not manifest openly in man's soul.

This calls for clarification: How is an explanation of the superiority of angels over people apropos for this part of *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, which discusses the superiority of man's soul over (the heavenly host and even over) angels?

3.

A SOUL IN A BODY

We can put forth the following explanation:

By quoting the verse, "For the portion of *Havayah* is His people," the Alter Rebbe's intention is to explain that not only is the **root** of the soul from *Havayah*, but man's soul in this world, as found in a body [which, specifically then, is called "**man's** soul"] is also "a part of the name *Havayah*."

¹⁵ On the contrary, based on the teachings of our Sages (*Bava Basra* 75b), "In the **Future Era**, the righteous will be called by the name of the Holy One, blessed is He," and of *Rashbam* (and similarly, in *Rabbeinu Gershom*), loc. cit., "Their name will be *Havayah*," it is clear that this will be something novel that will only take place in the Future Era; note *Maharsha*, "*Chiddushei Aggados*," loc. cit. (s.v., "*gimmel devarim*"), that even in that era, "The name of the Holy One, blessed is He, will (only) be an adjunct name."

[As the Alter Rebbe says later,¹⁶ “man’s soul” here in this world contains the four letters of the name *Havayah* — which is relevant for explaining *teshuvah*. By knowing this (that man’s soul in this world is a part of the name *Havayah*), we understand the severe blemish caused by sin. When any sin is committed, it causes the Divine effluence that descends via the second *hei* of the name *Havayah* to be lowered into exile.¹⁷ And a sin also blemishes all the letters of *Havayah*, including the first three letters.]¹⁸

True, man’s soul was only “derived **initially** from the inner dimension of {G-dly} vitality” (the name *Havayah*), as discussed above. However, “it then descended...” (to be enclothed in the body) “by means of the **letters...**” (the name *Elokim*). Nevertheless, man’s soul is connected constantly with the inner dimension of vitality. So much so that man’s soul is also part of the name *Havayah* while enclothed in a body.

In this way, man’s soul is at an advantage (and is superior) when compared to all other creations: True, the root of all creations derives from the name *Havayah* [as explained at length in the second part of *Tanya*¹⁹ — the meaning of *Havayah* is, “*mehaveh es hakol*, that which brings **everything** into existence *ex nihilo*”; and the name *Elokim* only contracts²⁰ the vitality that emerges from the name *Havayah* and conceals it]. Despite this, the Jewish soul is different {from all other creations} in that even after it descended {into the world} “by means of the letters...” (the name *Elokim*)... “to be enclothed in a body in this inferior {physical} world,” it is still connected to the name *Havayah*.

¹⁶ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” 95a.

¹⁷ As will be discussed below at the end of Sec. 6.

¹⁸ As will be discussed below at the end of Sec. 7, concerning several sins.

¹⁹ *Tanya*, “*Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,” ch. 4.

²⁰ {In the original, “*metzamtzem*.”}

4.

A QUALITATIVE ADVANTAGE

In what way is man's soul superior (in its connection with the name *Havayah*) to the soul of other beings?

Seemingly, we can explain this superiority based on a teaching in *Tanya*²¹ that the contraction²² and concealment of the name “*Elokim*” (numerically equivalent²³ to the word “הַטָּבַע, nature”)²⁴ is expressed by it concealing the light of the name *Havayah*, a name that **transcends** nature. Because of this concealment, “it appears as though the world exists and is conducted according to the laws of nature.”

On this basis, one can say that the superiority of the connection between man's soul (below in this world) and the name *Havayah* is expressed by the affairs of the Jews being conducted by Hashem in a way that transcends nature. [This doesn't apply only to the Jewish people as a whole, but to every Jew in particular.]

However, according to this contention, it emerges that there is not “a very great difference”²⁵ between the soul of man and the soul of other creations [“great” qualitatively, and “very” quantitatively]. Rather, the difference between these two is analogous to the difference between loftier creations and lowlier ones, such as the difference between the heavenly host and earthy denizens:

Just like the superiority of the heavenly host over earthly denizens is that G-dliness is revealed more openly in the former than in the latter, to the extent that you just have to “raise your eyes **On High**” in order to “see Who has created these”²⁶ —

²¹ *Tanya*, “*Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,” beg. of ch. 6.

²² {In the original, *tzimtzum*, meaning, the contraction and withdrawal of Divine *light* to enable Creation.}

²³ {Each of these words is numerically equivalent to the number 86.}

²⁴ *Pardes*, *shaar* 12, ch. 2; *Shelah* (89a) seems to imply that this is sourced in the *Zohar*.

²⁵ Alter Rebbe's wording in *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 4 (94a).

²⁶ *Yeshayahu* 40:26; see *maamar* “*Se'u Marom Eineichem*” in the Tzemach Tzedek's *Sefer HaChakirah* (101a ff.); the Tzemach Tzedek's *Sefer HaChakirah*, 54a ff.

So, too (based on the above explanation), is the superiority of Jewish soul over the heavenly host: When we see that the Jews are “one sheep among seventy wolves, yet it is safeguarded”²⁷ (the same applies also to every individual Jew),²⁸ we see the revelation of G-dliness more openly and more conspicuously, than in the G-dliness we “see” in the heavenly host {when we “raise [our] eyes On High”}.

Additionally (and this is the key point): This explanation only imparts the idea that man’s soul **evinces** the name *Havayah* (which transcends nature), but not that man’s soul is “a part of the name *Havayah*.”

To address this omission, the Alter Rebbe adds, “Therefore, the angels are called “*Elokim*...” (and he quotes three verses as prooftexts) to clarify that the difference between man’s soul and other beings (including the heavenly host and even the angels) is essential to their fundamental makeup.

5.

DIFFERENT SOURCES OF VITALITY

The angels are called “*Elokim*” (as discussed above in Section 2) because the vitality that vivifies them is openly manifest.

Meaning, not only **by means** of angels does it become manifest that there is a Divine light that creates and enlivens them — corresponding to the verse, “see Who has created these,” referring to the heavenly host — but in the angels’ very existence, G-dliness is openly manifest. [Their role defines their very existence as “angels, *malachim*” {lit., “emissaries”}, who are constantly²⁹ in a state of *bittul*³⁰ to Hashem, prepared to fulfill His assignment.]

²⁷ See *Tanchuma*, “*Toldos*,” sec. 5; *Esther Rabbah*, ch. 10, sec. 11.

²⁸ As known (*Hemshech* 5672, ch. 88; et al.), individual Divine providence over the Jewish people is from the name “*Havayah*.”

²⁹ Even at times when they are not fulfilling a particular assignment; thus, they are (always) called *malachim*, emissaries.

³⁰ {*Bittul* connotes submission to Hashem, self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego.}

In light of this, it is clear that in terms of “revelation” and “concealment,” angels are more sublime than man’s soul as it is found in this world. As discussed, man’s soul is not called by Hashem’s name — not even the name “*Elokim*.”

[The superiority of angels in comparison to human souls can also be seen in the fact that human souls in this world sometimes act contrary to Hashem’s will, while angels are always prepared to carry out Hashem’s commands.]

It follows from the above that the relationship between all creations, and even angels, to the name “*Elokim*,” and the relationship between man’s soul and the name “*Havayah*,” is (not based upon the degree of {G-dly} revelation and concealment. Rather, it is) because {the source of} their **vitality** is different: The vitality of all creations, including angels, derives from the name “*Elokim*,” whereas the vitality of a Jew’s soul, even when enclothed within a body, derives from the name “*Havayah*.”

In order to clarify the distinction between man’s soul and all creations (including angels) concerning their {source of} vitality (although the root-existence of all creations also originate from the name *Havayah*) — yet, on the other hand, man’s soul also was drawn {into the world} “by means of the letters” — the Alter Rebbe quotes the three verses in which the angels are called “*Elokim*.” These correspond to the three worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* and correspond to the three classes of letters from which the three classes of angels are brought into being.

6.

THE THREE VERSES AND THE THREE CLASSES OF ANGELS

We can understand the correspondence between these three verses and the three classes of angels to which they allude by explaining the different ideas that each verse emphasizes:

The first verse draws a connection between angels and Jewish souls: “Hashem, **your L-rd** (the L-rd of Jewish souls), He is *Elokei HaElokim*” (the L-rd of the angels, who are called “*Elokim*”). But the other verses do not draw such a connection.

The second verse (“Praise *Elokei HaElokim*...”) has an advantage (over the third verse) in that in this verse, the angels are called “*Elokim*,” whereas in the third verse (“The sons of *Elokim* presented themselves...”), the angels are called the **sons** of *Elokim*.³¹ (Undoubtedly, when angels are called “*Elokim*,” G-dliness is more openly manifest within them than when they are called “the sons of *Elokim*.”)

[Additionally, the second verse also mentions and acknowledges “**Elokei HaElokim**” — a loftier level of the name “*Elokim*” (“*Elokei*”) than the name “*Elokim*” that descends and vests in the angels.]

In light of this, it is understood that the first verse — in which “*Elokei HaElokim*” (the angels) are connected with “Hashem, *your* L-rd” (Jewish souls) — refers to the angels in the world of *Beriah*, the world of thought, who are connected with {the Jews, concerning whom it says,} “Israel arose in thought.”³²

The second verse doesn’t connect the name “*Elokim*” associated with the angels (“*Elokei HaElokim*”) with “Hashem, *your* L-rd” (souls). Nonetheless, the name “*Elokim*” associated with angels is openly manifest. This verse refers to

³¹ See *Zohar*, vol. 2 (43a) and *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 2, par. 7 regarding the order of the ten classes of angels (from highest to lowest): “*Elokim*, sons of *Elokim*.”

³² *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1, sec. 4. One explanation of this idea is that Jewish souls are on the level of the world of *Beriah* (*Torah Or*, end of 75b; et al).

angels in the world of *Yetzirah*, because *Yetzirah* {the world of Formation} is a revelation, as it says,³³ “*Yotzer or* — Who forms light.”³⁴

The third verse, in which even the name “*Elokim*” associated with the angels is not (so) manifest, refers to angels in the world of *Asiyah*.

7.

THE THREE VERSES AND THE THREE CLASSES OF LETTERS

However, this explanation is insufficient. On the basis of this explanation, it emerges that the difference in wording between the second and third verses alludes only to **how** the angels receive vitality from the name “*Elokim*” — G-dliness is more openly manifest in the angels inhabiting the world of *Yetzirah* than in those inhabiting the world of *Asiyah*.

However, based on my father’s explanation — “they come into being... from three classes of letters,” that the name “*Elokim*” itself (depicted by “letters”) also operates in three domains — it is clear that the difference in wording among these three verses alludes also to the differences in the classes of letters (the name “*Elokim*”) themselves.

We can posit the following explanation: The letters of thought — in addition to having independent existence — are (also) the source of the letters of speech and the letters of action. Thus, the letters of thought include within them all three types of letters: the letters of thought, of speech, and of action. The letters of speech include within them two classes of letters: the letters of speech and of action. The letters of action include only one class of letters: the letters of action.

In light of this explanation, the allusion to the three classes of letters in the three verses mentioned above is apparent. In the first verse (“For Hashem,

³³ *Yeshayahu* 45:7.

³⁴ {In Chassidus, “light” alludes to revelation.}

Elokeichem, is *Elokei HaElokim...*”), which alludes to the letters of thought, “*Elokim*” is mentioned three times; in the second verse (“Praise *Elokei HaElokim...*”), which alludes to the letters of speech, “*Elokim*” is mentioned twice; and in the third verse (“The sons of *Elokim* presented themselves...”), which alludes to letters of action, “*Elokim*” is mentioned once.

8.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAN’S SOUL AND ANGELS

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that by the Alter Rebbe quoting these verses, the fundamental difference between man’s soul and (other creations, including) the angels, is understood:

Among the three classes of letters (the name “*Elokim*”), the letters of speech **do not** contain the aspect of thought (the source of the letters of speech); and the letters of action do not contain the aspect of speech. [This is alluded to by these three verses: The name “*Elokim*” (depicted by “letters”) is mentioned only twice in the second verse and only once in the third verse because the letters of speech **do not** contain the aspect of thought, and the letters of action also do not contain the aspect of speech.]

Likewise (and all the more so) this interplay applies to the names “*Havayah*” and “*Elokim*”: When the vitality of the name “*Havayah*” is en clothed in the name “*Elokim*” — which contracts and conceals the name “*Havayah*” — (it is as if) the aspect of “*Havayah*” (and its advantage) is not intrinsically manifest (before being en clothed in the name “*Elokim*”).

True, the effect of this constriction and concealment brought about by the name “*Elokim*” is only “in relation to the lower realms,” whereas “in relation to Hashem... the attribute of *gevurah*³⁵ does not, G-d forbid, conceal for Him.”³⁶

³⁵ {The attribute by which the revelation of G-dliness is withheld.}

³⁶ *Tanya*, “*Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,” end of ch. 6.

Nevertheless, as explained in several places, this constriction and concealment “in relation to the lower realms” (is not imaginary; it) is real.³⁷

Thus, it emerges that the G-dly vitality that (relates to and) gives creations life and existence **does not** derive from the (lofty) level of the name “*Havayah*,” but rather, from the name “*Elokim*.”³⁸

This is the distinction between man’s soul and (other creations, including) angels:

The vitality of angels derives from the name “*Elokim*” (appearing as if it did not subsume the aspect of the name “*Havayah*”). And even with regard to the name “*Elokim*” itself, when it serves as the source of vitality for angels inhabiting the world of *Yetzirah*, the angels only receive vitality from the letters of speech (which do not contain thought); and the angels inhabiting the world of *Asiyah* only receive vitality from the letters of action (which do not contain speech). In contrast, the soul of man — even after it “descended... by means of the letters that comprise the Divine utterance, ‘Let us **make, naaseh** man...’” (letters of action, *maaseh*) “to be en clothed in a body in this lowermost {physical} world” — receives its vitality from the name “*Havayah*.”

— From a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Ki Savo*, 5730 (1970)

³⁷ Tzemach Tzedek’s *Sefer HaMitzvos {Derech Mitvosecha}*, 54b; et al.; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 21, p. 433 ff.

³⁸ For this reason, it says “בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים” In the beginning, *Elokim* created” {*Bereishis* 1:1} — (Even though Creation derives from the name *Havayah*) it is drawn down by means of the name *Elokim* “...just as the light of the sun that shines on Earth is called a shielded light” (*Hemshech* 5666, p. 222).