

Savo: The Connection Between Savo and Chai Elul

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

The eighteenth day of *Elul*, or *Chai Elul*, marks the birthdate of both the Baal Shem Tov,¹ founder of the Chassidic movement, and the Alter Rebbe,² founder of Chabad Chassidism. This day invariably falls either on or near the Shabbos during which the Torah portion of *Savo* is read.

All Jewish festivals and auspicious occasions on the Jewish calendar are alluded to in the Torah portion read during the week when they occur.³ Understandably, *Chai Elul* is thus alluded to in the portion of *Savo*.

Where in this portion can one find this connection?

Savo begins by relating the laws of *Bikurim*, the first fruits that the Jews were obliged to bring immediately upon “coming to the land that G-d your L-rd is giving you as a heritage, occupying and settling it.”⁴

Our Rabbis note⁵ that the qualification “occupying and settling it” comes to teach us that the obligation of *Bikurim* did not begin until after the 14 years during which *Eretz Yisrael* was conquered and divided among the tribes.

The verse is modified in this way for the following reason: The true meaning of “coming to the land” is that of coming into it *entirely*. This is in keeping with the saying of our Sages:⁶ “A partial entry is not considered an entry at all.” The word “coming,”⁷ therefore means “occupying and settling it,” for only then were the Jews considered to have truly entered the Land.

This, then, is the connection between *Savo* and *Chai Elul*, the birthdate of the two great Chassidic founders:

Chassidus is unique in its ability to rouse the spirit, mind and heart so that a Jew’s service of Torah and *mitzvos* is in the manner of *savo* — a complete immersion, with every fibre of one’s being suffused by spiritual service.

The importance of this manner of service will be understood by explaining the difference between man’s intrinsic and extrinsic states of being; intrinsic referring to man as he exists in relation to himself and extrinsic to man as he exists relative to others.

In terms of spiritual service, this means the following: When a person does something in an external and extrinsic manner, he and the thing he is doing remain two distinct entities.

When, however, a person does something from his innermost self, then his being immerses itself in that which he is doing, for in relation to man’s innermost core there exists nothing outside of himself. Thus, when a person acts in this manner, even a specific, seemingly external, action is tied up and united with his innermost self; he and the act are united.

Herein lies that which is unique about Chassidus: Chassidus, as part of “the soul of Torah,”⁸ reveals a Jew’s quintessential life force in all aspects of Torah and *mitzvos*,⁹ and the unique quality of this life force is that it totally unites with that which it enlivens.¹⁰

For the life force does not add anything to that which it vitalizes — a live body possesses no more parts than a dead corpse. The life force is thus not separate from that which it energizes, rather it is the *soul* of the enlivened body, and because of it each and every aspect of the body is a living entity.

The reason is that a person’s “life” is his soul and innermost essence, and as explained earlier, that which is part of a person’s innermost core becomes wholly one with the object with which it unites. Thus, the body in which a life force dwells is entirely permeated by it.¹¹

Exactly so is the effect of Chassidus on Torah and *mitzvos* : It is possible for a Jew to study Torah and perform *mitzvos* while remaining separate from them. Chassidus, however, enables every Jew to reveal the innermost aspect of his life force — his holy Jewish soul. And in relation to that level — the quality of *savo* — each and every Jew is truly one with all of Torah and *mitzvos*.¹²

Based on *Likkutei Sichos* Vol. XIX, pp. 244-247.

FOOTNOTES

1. In the year 5458 (1698).
2. In the year 5505 (1745).
3. *Shaloh, Cheilek Torah SheBiksav* beginning of Torah portion *Vayeishev*.
4. *Devarim* 26:1.
5. *Zevachim* 118b.
6. *Chulin* 33b.
7. See *Kiddushin* 37b.
8. *Zohar III* 152a.
9. See *On the Essence of Chassidus* , ch. 6 and onward. See also *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5708 p. 295ff.
10. See *Ki Imcha* 5700 ch. 2; *Yichayeinu* 5701 ch. 2, *et al.*
11. See *Hemshech Te’erav* ch. 210.
12. See also *Likkutei Torah* , *Behar* 40b-d.

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