



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Elul | Sichah 1

The Talk:

In a talk given on Pesach, the Previous Rebbe described the atmosphere of Elul in the town of Lubavitch:

“On Shabbos Mevarchim Elul (the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh), even though it would still be a clear, sunny day, the air shifted. One could already begin to feel the ‘Elul aroma.’ A ‘wind of *teshuva*’ already began to blow.”

The Question:

Pesach is a holiday that celebrates and commemorates G-d’s intervention to redeem and elevate the Jewish people. The people were not in an elevated spiritual state; G-d initiated a relationship with them by removing them from slavery. It is a holiday of Divine inspiration, not of human effort.

Elul, in contrast, is a month where a person takes initiative in drawing closer to G-d. It is a month of repentance and introspection, where each person examines his own spiritual state and seeks to improve and grow in his relationship with G-d. This is famously encapsulated in the verse, “I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me,” which is an acronym for Elul. Elul is a time of ‘I am to my beloved’ — we approach G-d on our own initiative.

If so, why did the Previous Rebbe speak about the atmosphere of Elul during the holiday of Pesach? Seemingly, the themes of these two times are diametrically opposed!

The Explanation:

Every spiritual step or movement made by a human being is precipitated by a Divine nudge. Nothing is ever truly “self-made.” The initial inspiration may take place deep within the person’s subconscious, but it is there, allowing a person to take his own steps toward G-d. The difference between the initial inspiration and G-d’s subsequent response to a person’s spiritual work is that the initial prodding is given freely, so it does not arise from G-d’s innermost desire. In contrast, the Divine response to human effort emerges from G-d’s deep satisfaction in the effort and work put in by the person.

The human effort of Elul is also not generated in a vacuum; it is inspired by G-d’s palpable presence in that month, alluded to in the famous parable of the “king in the field.” The thirteen attributes of G-d’s mercy shine during this time, and this lights the spark of all Jewish souls so they can initiate their own Divine service. The precursor to all Divine inspiration, however, is Pesach. All subsequent moments of Divine inspiration are drawn from this original wellspring.

Therefore, the Previous Rebbe spoke about the work of Elul on Pesach, because it is on Pesach that the first stirrings of the work of Elul begins.

His teaching, too, alludes to this theme:

- 1) “Even though it would still be a clear, sunny day” — the bright sun alludes to G-d’s revelation and inspiration. Thus, the Previous Rebbe acknowledges that Elul begins with the sun-soaked climate of Divine inspiration.
- 2) “The air shifted. One could already begin to feel the ‘Elul aroma.’ A “wind of *teshuvah*” already began to blow — Once imbued with the “sunny” Divine inspiration, a person’s work begins. The essence of repentance is for “the spirit/breath to return to G-d.” The Previous Rebbe therefore refers to the “wind of *teshuvah*” because it evokes the spiritual nature of the work. Repentance also ushers in the Messianic Era, when the Moshiach will judge by his ability to “smell” the proper

verdict. (Sanhedrin 93b) Therefore, the Previous Rebbe mentions the “Elul aroma” to allude to the aroma of Moshiach. And finally, he prefaces this by saying, “the air shifted.” Oxygen is the most basic human necessity. By referring to the spiritual work of Elul as a shift in the air, the Previous Rebbe alludes to the fact that this work is necessary for, and accessible to, every Jew.