



Likkutei Sichos

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Winds of Change

Translated by Rabbi Shmuel Kesselman

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | Editor: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

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1.

ELUL IN LUBAVITCH

In one of his talks delivered on Pesach, the Previous Rebbe¹ described the spiritual ambience experienced on the Shabbos before Elul in Lubavitch — the capital of the Chabad Rebbes over the course of many years.

He said:²

On the Shabbos before Elul in Lubavitch, although it was still a bright, sunny day, the atmosphere had already changed. You could already smell the scent of Elul; a *teshuvah*-wind³ had already begun to blow.

The words of all our Rebbes are precise. So clearly, the four descriptive details mentioned in this vignette about the Shabbos before Elul — (a) the bright sunshine, (b) the change of air, (c) smelling the Elul scent, (d) the *teshuvah*-wind blowing — are not just flowery locution. Rather, they are four points that express the inner message of the Shabbos before Elul.

Furthermore, our Rebbes' wording was precise not only regarding its **content** but also regarding its **timing**. Everything was spoken in its appropriate time and at a time that was germane to the message. (Still, as explained in many sources, the impact of their words, necessarily, was felt even afterwards). The Previous Rebbe spoke about (and described) the Shabbos before Elul on **Pesach**, suggestive of an inward connection and correlation between these two time-periods.

Seemingly, this is not at all understood:

The two time-periods — [the Shabbos before] Elul and Pesach — not only comprise different messages and content, but seem oppositional. The thrust of Pesach is that of outflow from Above into this world. First, “My beloved is to

¹ {Rabbi Yosef Yitchak Shneerson, the Rebbe's father-in-law.}

² 5694/1934 (*Likkutei Dibburim*, vol. 1, 115b).

³ {*Teshuvah* — repentance.}

me,” and then, “I am to my beloved.”⁴ As known, the redemption from Egypt did not occur because of the Jewish people’s *avodah*.⁵ (On the contrary, before the exodus, the Jewish people were on such a low spiritual level that the angels said,⁶ “These {the Egyptians} serve idols and these {the Jews}...”.) Rather, the exodus occurred through an *isarusa d'leila*,⁷ which evoked an *isarusa dilsata*⁸ in the Jewish people. In contrast, the month of Elul is a time of divine service from below to Above — first (*isarusa dilsata*) “I am to my beloved, אני לדודי” and then, (*isarusa d'leila*) “and my beloved is to me, דודי לי.”⁹ (The first letter of the four words אני לדודי ודודי לי spells Elul, אלול.) We need to clarify: What is the purpose of explaining, on Pesach, ideas that relate to (the Shabbos before) Elul?

2.

ISARUSA DILSATA AND ISARUSA D'LEILA

The explanation:

As known, even what a Jewish person attains through his own *avodah* is also a result of empowerment from Above (in line with the exposition of our Rabbis¹⁰ on the verse,¹¹ “Who has come to meet {serve} Me whom I haven’t already paid {i.e., enabled him to do so}?”). Only after *isarusa d'leila* can the person perform his *avodah* in the manner of *isarusa dilsata*. As the Alter Rebbe explains:¹² During Elul, Hashem’s “thirteen attributes of mercy” shine openly. The Alter Rebbe offers an analogy of a king who goes out to the field, where everyone who wants **may** come and greet the king. Meaning, although in the month of Elul, the method of *avodah* is that of a process directing from below to Above — *isarusa dilsata* — nevertheless, the revelation of the “thirteen attributes

⁴ *Shir HaShirim* 2:16.

⁵ {Divine service.}

⁶ *Midrash Tehillim* (Buber ed.), 15:5.

⁷ {Lit., “an awakening from Above.” This term refers to the gift of sudden and unexpected inspiration to serve Hashem, granted by Hashem Himself.}

⁸ {Lit., “an awakening from below,” referring to divine service initiated by a person.}

⁹ *Shir Hashirim* 6:3.

¹⁰ *Vayikra Rabbah*, ch. 27, sec. 2.

¹¹ *Iyov* 41:3. {See *Yefas Tohar*, ad loc; *Mezudas Dovid*, ad loc.}

¹² *Likkutei Torah*, “Re’eh,” 32a.

of mercy” and permission (empowerment) from Hashem is necessary to facilitate this *avodah*. Afterwards, a Jew can engage in the *avodah* of “I am to my beloved.”

Thus, clearly the *isarusa d'leila* that is elicited and generated by the *isarusa dilsata* is much loftier than the *isarusa d'leila* that serves as a prelude to the *avodah*. This is because the first *isarusa d'leila* is initiated out of Hashem’s kindness and is unearned; so it merely reflects an external quality of G-dly light. However, the *isarusa d'leila* that results naturally from *avodah* is from the inwardness of the G-dly light because “You cherish Your handiwork.”¹³ Nonetheless, we also understand that the reason the *isarusa dilsata* is able to arouse the *isarusa d'leila* is only because of the previous *isarusa d'leila*.

What empowers the *avodah* of “I am to my beloved” is the revelation of the “thirteen attributes of mercy,” which irradiates during **Elul**. Nevertheless, everything has a (beginning and primary) time, and the time of *isarusa d'leila*, **in general**, is Pesach, as mentioned above (in contrast to Elul, which in and of itself, is a time of *avodah* that springs from below to Above, as discussed.) Therefore, the same applies to the *isarusa d'leila* of Elul — the source of the Heavenly outflow is on Pesach. Meaning, Pesach is the time of an *isarusa d'leila* in a general fashion. And from it, afterwards, the particular Heavenly outflows emanate into their particular contexts, each emanation at its appropriate time. This also includes the Heavenly outflow of the month of Elul — the “thirteen attributes of mercy”.

For this reason, the Previous Rebbe gave the talk¹⁴ about the Shabbos before Elul on Pesach. (Shabbos *Mevorchim*, the Shabbos preceding every month, is the time when all spiritual elements of the upcoming month are elicited, in a general sense, including the extension of the “thirteen attributes of mercy.”)

¹³ *Iyov* 14:15.

¹⁴ A Divine emanation is elicited through the *Nasi Hador* (Leader of the Generation).

3.

SUN OF HASHEM

On this basis, we can also appreciate the four elements in the description of the Shabbos before Elul (in the aforementioned talk). These elements subdivide into two categories: The bright sunshine — in the first phrase of the vignette (“**Although** it **was still** a clear, sunny day,”); and the change of air, feeling the Elul smell, and a *teshuvah*-wind blowing — in the second part of the talk.

The light and rays of the sun extend to us **from Above**. On a deeper level, this refers to the Heavenly outflow and the rays of the “sun of Hashem.” (This G-dly light extends during the month of Elul as a specific piece of the general outflow of the month of Nissan, as discussed.) The other three elements express the awakening of people below, in the world, who are aroused by the Heavenly outflow and ray of the “sun of Hashem.”

4.

SMELL, WIND, AND ELUL

The Previous Rebbe makes two points concerning the awakening of people (caused by the Heavenly outflow):¹⁵ (a) “you could already smell the scent of Elul”; and (b) “a *teshuvah*-wind had already begun to blow.”

To explain the connection between “smell the scent” and “wind”¹⁶ to Elul and *teshuvah*:

¹⁵ “The air had already changed” is an introduction to these two points, as explained above in Sec. 5.

¹⁶ {The Hebrew word for wind is “*ruach*.” “*Ruach*” can also mean “spirit.”}

“*Teshuvah* primarily involves a process by which, as the verse says,¹⁷ ‘the **spirit** will return to Hashem, who gave it.’”¹⁸ *Teshuvah* primarily involves a person elevating himself to the level of “spirit” (in this context, the level of “spirit” is more sublime than that of “light”).¹⁹ When a person reaches this level, he experiences a “return to Hashem.” The Previous Rebbe alludes to this by using the word, “*teshuvah-wind*,” for the core of *teshuvah* (Elul) occurs at the level of “*ruach*” (wind {i.e., spirit}).

With this in mind, we can also appreciate the connection between “smell the scent” and Elul. The *avodah* of “I am to my beloved” in Elul primarily involves the *avodah* of *teshuvah*. By engaging in this *avodah*, we will merit the “spirit of Moshiach,”²⁰ whose revelation involves the sense of **smell**, ריח, as the verse says,²¹ “He will smell, ויהריחו {the truth} by his fear of Hashem....” Moshiach identity will be corroborated by his specifically by his ability to “smell and judge,” as our Sages say.²²

5.

HUMAN NECESSITIES

By way of introduction to these two elements — the “wind” of *teshuvah*, and the “smell the scent” of Elul (through *teshuvah*) — the Previous Rebbe says in the talk: “The **air** had already changed.”

By doing so, he highlights the following:

A person’s basic needs of life can be grouped into a few categories: shelter, clothes, food, drink, and air to breathe. Each one is more necessary than the previous: Clothes are more necessary than a house, food is more necessary than the previous categories, drink is more necessary than the previous ones, and the

¹⁷ *Koheles* 12:7.

¹⁸ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Haazinu*,” 71c.

¹⁹ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Haazinu*,” 72a.

²⁰ *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 2.

²¹ *Yeshayahu* 11:3. {See *Radak*, ad loc.}

²² *Sanhedrin* 93b.

most necessary of them all is air to breathe.²³ (Air to breathe is needed continuously. A person cannot survive for even a short time without air to breathe.)

The fact that a person needs air so badly, and breathes air regularly, clearly illustrates that the benefit of air is something that **every person** feels **constantly**.

This, then, explains the Previous Rebbe's aim in discussing air in his talk: One could already detect the Elul "scent" and the *teshuvah*-wind in the rarified "air" (of Elul). This means that these elements could be accessed like air, with no trouble²⁴ — attainable and necessary for every person. Furthermore, they give life to every person — **every neshamah** {soul}, **in every nesheemah** {breath} — as our Rabbis expound²⁵ the verse²⁶, "Let every *neshamah* praise Hashem — praise Hashem!"

-Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos parshas Re'eh, the Shabbos before Elul 5727* (1967)

²³ *Maamar "Mayim Rabim"* 5636, sec 1.

²⁴ See *Maamar "Mayim Rabim,"* loc. cit, where the author explains that since air is critical to life, it is always accessible and comes without payment.

²⁵ *Bereishis Rabba*, ch. 14, sec. 9.

²⁶ *Tehillim* 150:6.