



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 15 | Teves

Icicles on Fire

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## 1.

### TWO SPECIAL DAYS IN TEVES

Rosh Chodesh Teves always falls on Chanukah, and as known,<sup>1</sup> Rosh Chodesh incorporates all the days of the month. (That is why it's called "rosh — the head," like a person's head, which incorporates all the limbs of the body.) Clearly, every day in the month of Teves (each of which is incorporated in Rosh Chodesh Teves) shares a connection with Chanukah.

Furthermore, there are two special days in the month of Teves: the fast of the Tenth of Teves, and the *yahrzeit*<sup>2</sup> of the Alter Rebbe (the 24<sup>th</sup> of Teves). Since these days are **fixed** in this month, it makes sense to say that these days are connected with the general theme of the month (as discussed several times).<sup>3</sup>

## 2.

### BODILY PLEASURE

Regarding the month of Teves, our Sages comment<sup>4</sup> on the verse,<sup>5</sup> "Esther was taken to king Achashveirosh... in the tenth month, which is the month of Teves." From this verse, they derive that {Teves} is "a month in which one body derives pleasure from another body." Since the month is very cold, in the words of Rashi:<sup>6</sup> "Because of the cold," the body derives pleasure "from another body."

Everything in the physical world devolves from the spiritual. This applies in our discussion — the physical coldness of the month of Teves devolves from the fact that during this time, the "Sun of Hashem" — "For Hashem, L-rd, is a sun and a shield"<sup>7</sup> — does not shine into the world in such a revealed way.

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<sup>1</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, "Rosh Hashanah," p. 58a.

<sup>2</sup> {The anniversary of one's passing.}

<sup>3</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 183; vol. 18, p. 308.

<sup>4</sup> *Megillah* 13a.

<sup>5</sup> *Esther* 2:16.

<sup>6</sup> *Megillah* 13a.

<sup>7</sup> *Tehillim* 84:12.

G-dliness is more hidden because of the obscurity and concealment imposed by the “garments” of nature.

As known,<sup>8</sup> the intense rays of the sun during the summer is (also) a sign that the intense light and “heat” of holiness from “the Sun of Hashem” is flowing into the world. Therefore, in these months, it is easier to serve Hashem than in the winter months.

Specifically, for this reason there is an advantage of *avodah*<sup>9</sup> performed in the month of Teves over that which is performed in other months, and this is what our Sages alluded to in their teaching that it is “a month in which one body derives pleasure from another body.” Man and woman are a metaphor for Hashem and the congregation of Israel,<sup>10</sup> and the *avodah* of a Jew in this month when it is “cold” in the world elicits **pleasure** On High.

### 3.

#### TEVES IS THE COLDEST

Every idea in Torah is precise, and it is clear that even the nuanced wording of the teaching, “one **body** derives pleasure from another **body**,” dovetails with the deeper explanation mentioned above — that it refers to the pleasure Hashem receives from the *avodah* of Jews. This is because the pleasure that Hashem receives from the *avodah* in the month of Teves is primarily from a Jew’s **body**, and the pleasure is at the level of G-dliness that is, so to speak, called “body.”

The explanation: Everything that happens in the “world at large” is connected with a person’s *avodah* — {referred to by our Sages as} a “small world.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> End of *Maamar “BaYom HaShemini Atzeres,”* 5632, et al.

<sup>9</sup> {Divine service.}

<sup>10</sup> The entire book of *Shir HaShirim* is written using this metaphor.

<sup>11</sup> *Tanchuma, “Pekudei,”* sec. 3.

The summer months, when the “Sun of Hashem” shines brightly in the world, is the time (primarily) for *avodah* of the **soul**. During these months, the body does not obscure or conceal the soul very much; consequently, a Jew can (and therefore **must**) involve himself with matters of the soul in a way that he can feel the light of his soul shining.

[This *avodah* requires that the body should not be allowed to become materialistic and coarse, for the soul is vested in the body, and it will be revealed in and through the body. As such, the body needs to be a vessel which is aligned with the soul’s light.

However, the above is only a preparation for the Jew’s (primary) *avodah* — removing the cover that obscures and conceals the soul, in order that a Jew can then “serve Hashem **with his soul**.”]

However, during the winter months, when the “Sun of Hashem” doesn’t shine so much, and it is a cold season, a person’s (primary) *avodah* is the *avodah* of **the body**, to toil in the *avodah* of refining and purifying the body.

In the winter months themselves, there is a difference between the month of Teves and the other months. In the other months, a certain “warmth” still remains in the world, and this means that the refinement of (“the coldness” of) the body (also) results from the revelation of the light (the “heat”) of the soul.

However, during the month of Teves, the coldest time of year,<sup>12</sup> the obscurity and concealment by the body leaves no room for the light of the soul to shine. At that time, the *avodah* of refining and purifying the body comes about (not by revealing the light of the soul, but only) from the body, as a function of the **body alone**.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Rashi on *Bereishis* 8:22.

<sup>13</sup> See the explanation (in *Hemshech* 5672, vol. 3, p. 1315 ff.) regarding the two ways darkness is transformed into light: By means of the light or by means of the darkness itself. See there at length.

## 4.

### ICE INTO FIRE

The previous Rebbe told a story<sup>14</sup> (in the name of the Tzemach Tzedek) about the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov cherished light. One time (on a winter's night), the Baal Shem Tov's disciples didn't have enough candles to light up the synagogue. The Baal Shem Tov told them to take icicles hanging from the roof and to light them. His disciples did so, and the icicles ignited. Regarding this occurrence, the Tzemach Tzedek commented: For Chassidim and disciples of our teacher, the Baal Shem Tov, the icicles ignited and illuminated.

The Baal Shem Tov showed how the icicles, the antithesis of light and warmth, can be transformed into light and warmth. This means that they didn't burn in a way by which they lost their identity as ice, but rather, the ice itself (maintaining its existence and form as ice) became luminous.

Similarly, regarding our discussion, we must transform the coldness and darkness of the body into holiness. Not (only) should the body be refined of its materialism through the soul's light, but as a function of the body itself.

## 5.

### THE BODY IS HIGHEST

How can we transform the body so that it should lose its coarseness and materialism, to become overtly a holy body, and not due to the light of the soul, but as a function of the "physicality" within it?

The explanation is that, on the contrary, the body in particular has a connection to the Essence of Hashem.<sup>15</sup> The soul has a natural affinity principally with light and revelation. Therefore, its attachment with G-dliness is also

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<sup>14</sup> *Sefer Hasichos 5700*, "Summer," p. 174.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding this topic, see *Sefer HaSichos Toras Shalom*, p. 120 ff.

through the “revelation of light.” The physical body of a Jew, however, is chosen by the **Essence of Hashem**. Therefore, the bond that the body’s **physicality** has with G-dliness is more profound than the bond that is a function of the light of the soul, because the power of the essence of the Hashem is, so to speak, specifically in the body's physicality, and the body is loftier than the soul.

However, the power of the Essence that is in the body will only be revealed in a time of obscurity and concealment, when the soul’s light does not shine. This calls forth the power of the Essence, which is not limited, G-d forbid, by the boundary of what can be revealed.

This is the deeper interpretation of the teaching, “one body derives pleasure from another body”: The word “body, גוף,” can connote “essence” (as the saying goes, “the body of, גופי, laws”<sup>16</sup> {i.e., the essential laws themselves}; “the body of, גופא, the King,”<sup>17</sup> {i.e., the essential being of the king}, etc.). The “pleasure” of the **Essence** of G-dliness is experienced [primarily not (by lifting the concealment caused by the body, to allow) the soul’s light to shine, but rather] “**from the body.**” The body itself (and on its own)<sup>18</sup> becomes transformed into holiness. This happens specifically “due to the cold” — in a time of concealment — as discussed above.

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<sup>16</sup> {Avos 3:18.}

<sup>17</sup> {Zohar, vol. 1, 217b.}

<sup>18</sup> {In the original, “מצד עצמו.”}

## 6.

### TRANSFORMING THE BODY

This is also the connection between the month of Teves and the days of Chanukah:

The purpose of the Chanukah lights is to fulfill the verse,<sup>19</sup> “and Hashem lights up my darkness” — to illuminate the darkness, even the outside darkness in the public domain, to the point He “**lights up my darkness**” — the darkness itself is illuminated and glistens. The power to accomplish this comes from “**and Hashem**” (with a *vav* prefix) which represents Divinity beyond the continuum of Creation (the supreme level of *Havayah*).<sup>20</sup>

This is analogous to the idea that “one body derives pleasure from another body.” On account of the Essence (“body”) of G-dliness, the darkness of the body itself is recast into holiness.

## 7.

### FROM EXILE TO JOY

Generally speaking, this is the difference between the *avodah* during the era when the Temple stood, and the *avodah* during exile. During Temple times, there was a revelation of G-dliness in the world. Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Temple...<sup>21</sup> During exile, however, “our signs we have not seen”<sup>22</sup> — G-dliness is obscured and concealed, so much so that “darkness shall cover the earth.”<sup>23</sup> And then, the {predominant} *avodah* used is expressed by the verse, “and Hashem lights my darkness.”

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<sup>19</sup> {*Shmuel II* 22:29}

<sup>20</sup> {The Tetragrammaton — Hashem’s ineffable, four-letter name.}

<sup>21</sup> *Avos* 5:5.

<sup>22</sup> *Tehillim* 72:9.

<sup>23</sup> *Yeshayahu* 60:2.

[We could say that this is also the deeper reason that the Chanukah lights “will never perish,” and the mitzvah to light them “applies even after the destruction of the Temple, when we are in exile.”<sup>24</sup> This is unlike the lights of the Temple — “when the Temple no longer exists... the lights (of the Temple) will perish,”<sup>25</sup> although the Chanukah lights remind us of the miracle that occurred with the **lights of the Temple**.

This is because the lights of the Temple elicit the light (that is in proximity to, and) within Creation — light in a vessel. Therefore, when the world is in exile — a state of concealment — then “the lights (of the Temple) will perish.”) The Chanukah lights, however, draw the essential light, which is beyond the continuum of Creation; therefore, the Chanukah lights are not changeable. They “shine” even in a place of complete concealment, and the darkness itself is transformed into light.]

On this basis, the connection between the month of Teves and the “Fast of the Tenth”<sup>26</sup> — the Tenth of Teves — is understood. This is the fast {commemorating the day} that began (and is the root of) the **entire idea** of exile. [This is thematically similar to the frigidity of the month of Teves.] Simply, the siege of Yerushalayim (which began on the tenth of Teves) led to **all** the subsequent matters of destruction. Fasting corresponds to the *avodah* of repentance<sup>27</sup> in response to the destruction and the exile, until the fast itself is converted “into happiness and joy, and into a festive day.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ramban, beg. of “*Behaalosecha*.”

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> {*Zechariah* 8:19.}

<sup>27</sup> See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Taaniyos*,” ch. 1, par. 2; ch. 5, par. 1.

<sup>28</sup> {Based on *Zechariah* 8:19.}



## 8.

### CHABAD TRANSFORMS THE COLD MIND TO HOLINESS

Coldness is also to be found among the powers of the soul. It is found in human intellect. As the well-known adage goes:<sup>29</sup> “Nothing is colder than natural intellect and human logic.”

By publicizing the teachings of Chabad Chassidus, the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad Chassidus,<sup>30</sup> clothed matters of faith and G-dly intellect in the garments of comprehension. As a result, even a human mind can grasp G-dliness. “And when natural intellect understands a G-dly idea... this is truly a *resurrection of the dead*.”<sup>29</sup>

This is the connection between the *yahrzeit* of the Alter Rebbe — when “all his actions, teachings, and *avodah* that he engaged in all his days”<sup>31</sup> stand in complete perfection — and the month of Teves. Through his “actions, teachings, and *avodah*,” the Alter Rebbe achieved that “due to the coldness” — from the cold, insensitive mind — that the “body derives pleasure,” the pleasure and warmth of holiness.

— Based on a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Vayeishev*, 5735 (1974)

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<sup>29</sup> *Hayom Yom*, p. 61; *Kuntres Toras HaChassidus*,” beg. of ch. 4.

<sup>30</sup> The wording of the Previous Rebbe (*HaTomim*, vol. 4, p. 51 [191]; *Sefer Hasichos 5703*, p. 188; et al).

<sup>31</sup> The words of the *Alter Rebbe* in *Iggeres Hakodesh*, explanation to sec. 27.