



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 19 | Iggeres HaTeshuvah | Sichah 2

A Father's Note

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.

“EXPLAINED THOROUGHLY AND WITH A BROAD EXPLANATION”

After the Alter Rebbe explains, in chapters two and three of *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, the details concerning the fasts that a person should undergo as part of the *teshuvah*¹ process, he continues by saying, in chapter four, that “all that we have said refers to the completion of the atonement... **after** *teshuvah*....”² But regarding *teshuvah* itself {the Alter Rebbe goes on to say} —

The beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence must perforce be explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation by prefacing with the *Zohar*'s explanation³ of the word “*teshuvah*” according to *sod*:⁴ “תשובה ה', the *hei* shall return⁵ — {the reconnection of} the second *hei*⁶ {in the name *Havayah*⁷ to the preceding letter *vav*} is *teshuvah tataah*;⁸ {the reconnection of} the first *hei*⁹ {to the preceding letter *yud*} is *teshuvah ilaah*.”¹⁰

In his notes on *Tanya*,¹¹ in his second note on *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, my father¹² addresses the words, “be explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation.” He explains that these two expressions — “be explained thoroughly” and “with a broad explanation” — correspond to the two levels of *teshuvah tataah* and *teshuvah ilaah*:

The expression “to be explained thoroughly, לְבַאֵר הַיָּטֵב” corresponds to *teshuvah tataah* because the word “בַּאֵר” alludes to the *sefirah*¹³ of *malchus*¹⁴ (the

¹ {Repentance.}

² {*Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” beg. of ch. 4.}

³ See *Zohar*, “*Raaya Mehemna, Naso*,” 122a, 123a.

⁴ {*Sod* is the mystical interpretation of the Torah.}

⁵ {The function of *teshuvah* is to return the letter *hei* of the Divine name *Havayah* — to reattach it to the level represented by the letter that precedes it, just as it was attached to it before the individual sinned.}

⁶ {In the original Aramaic, “*hei tataah*”; lit., “the lower *hei*.”}

⁷ {The four-letter name of Hashem, written *yud-hei-vav-hei*, known as the Tetragrammaton.}

⁸ {*Teshuvah tataah*, lit., “the lower-level repentance,” as discussed in Section 3.}

⁹ {In the original Aramaic, “*hei ilaah*,” lit., “the higher *hei*.”}

¹⁰ {*Teshuvah ilaah*, lit., “higher-level repentance,” as discussed in Section 3.}

¹¹ *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Tanya*, p. 29.

¹² {Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Rebbe's father.}

¹³ {*Sefiros* are Divine emanations. There are ten *sefiros*, which are various phases in the manifestation of Divinity, generally categorized in line with the intellectual and emotional faculties.}

¹⁴ {Lit., “kingship,” *malchus* is the last of the ten *sefiros*.}

second *hei*), and the word “הַיֵּטֵב” alludes to *yesod*¹⁵ *z”a*¹⁶ {*zeir anpin*}, (the letter *vav*). Since *teshuvah tataah* has two dimensions — *teshuvah tataah* itself, which is associated with *malchus* (the letter *hei*), and “***baal teshuvah tataah***,”¹⁷ which is associated with *yesod* (the letter *vav*),¹⁸ the Alter Rebbe uses both of these words, “לְבָאֵר” and “הַיֵּטֵב” (which, as mentioned, correspond to the second *hei* and to the *vav* {in the name *Havayah*}) to allude to the two dimensions of *teshuvah tataah*.

And the expression “with a broad explanation, בְּהַרְחֵבֵת הַבִּיאֹר” “corresponds to *the first hei shall return*” because the first *hei* alludes to *binah*,¹⁹ and “a broad explanation” alludes to *binah* (as my father explains in this note).

We need to clarify: *Teshuvah ilaah* also has two dimensions — *teshuvah* (itself) and the *baal teshuvah*.²⁰ *Teshuvah ilaah* itself is in *binah* (the first *hei*), and *baal teshuvah ilaah* is in *chochmah*²¹ (the *yud*). In light of this, a question emerges: Why, when alluding to *teshuvah tataah*, does the Alter Rebbe use an expression that alludes to both dimensions — *teshuvah tataah* itself (*malchus*) and *baal teshuvah tataah* (*yesod z.a.*) — whereas when he alludes to *teshuvah ilaah*, the Alter Rebbe only says “with a broad explanation,” an expression that alludes to *teshuvah ilaah* (*binah*) itself, and not to the level of *baal teshuvah ilaah* (*chochmah*)?

We also need to clarify: The phrase, “explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation” (understood plainly) refers to “the *Zohar*’s explanation²² of the word ‘*teshuvah*’ according to *sod*...” However, the Alter Rebbe’s wording — “by **prefacing** with the *Zohar*’s explanation” — indicates that by bringing the “the

¹⁵ {Lit., “foundation,” *yesod* is the second-last of the ten *sefiros*.}

¹⁶ {An abbreviation of *zeir anpin*, lit., “the small face,” the configuration of the six *sefiros* from *chesed* to *yesod*, corresponding to a person’s emotional faculties.}

¹⁷ {Lit., “the master of lower-level *teshuvah*.” In this context, *baal teshuvah* is not referring principally to a penitent — the person who engages in *teshuvah*. Instead, as explained in *Likkutei Torah*, infra, *baal teshuvah* refers to a superior level of divine consciousness which emanates to, and informs, the actual process of *teshuvah* itself. In the case of *teshuvah tataah*, an effluence from *z.a.*, the “*baal*,” to *malchus*.}

¹⁸ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Balak*,” 75a — quoted in *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Tanya*, p. 29.

¹⁹ {Lit., “comprehension,” *binah* is the second of the ten *sefiros*.}

²⁰ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Balak*,” 75b.

²¹ {Lit., “wisdom,” *chochmah* is the first of the ten *sefiros*.}

²² {See *Zohar*, “*Raaya Mehemna, Naso*,” 122a, 123a.}

Zohar's explanation” as a preface, the Alter Rebbe’s intent is to explain something **else!**

2.

HOW DOES *SOD* HELP US UNDERSTAND THE MITZVAH?

Aside from {the need to clarify} these nuances, the Alter Rebbe’s explanation **as a whole** is unclear. The Alter Rebbe says that to understand “the beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence,” it “must perforce be explained... by prefacing with the *Zohar's* explanation²³ of the word ‘*teshuvah*’ according to *sod*.” Seemingly:

The explanation of “the word ‘*teshuvah*’ according to *sod*” — *teshuvah* is “הַשׁוּבוֹ הִי, the *hei* shall return” — explains only the **outcome** of *teshuvah* (— by sinning, the second *hei* [the *Shechinah*]²⁴ is lowered into exile, and by performing a “proper *teshuvah*,” “the second *hei* returns from exile”).²⁵ However, this (explanation of the word “*teshuvah*” according to *sod*) offers no new insight (at any rate, no fundamentally new insight) as to the mitzvah of *teshuvah* itself (which must be performed by a **person**) — beyond what the Alter Rebbe said previously: “The mitzvah of *teshuvah*” is “the abandonment of the sin... he must resolve in his heart, in perfect sincerity....”²⁶

However, it is clear from the wording, “the beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence... must perforce be explained... {by prefacing with...} the word ‘*teshuvah*’ according to *sod*” that prefacing with an explanation of the word “*teshuvah*” according to *sod* is (also) necessary to understand “the **mitzvah** of *teshuvah*” — the command that a person must fulfill. Moreover, this preface is necessary to understand “the **beginning** of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its **essence.**”

²³ {See *Zohar*, “*Raaya Mehemna, Naso*,” 122a, 123a.}

²⁴ {The Divine Presence.}

²⁵ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 6.

²⁶ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 1 (91a).

3.

WHY IS *TESHUVAH ILAAH* AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE MITZVAH?

An even greater difficulty: When the Alter Rebbe quotes the *Zohar's* explanation of the word “*teshuvah*” according to *sod*, he doesn't only explain that *teshuvah* means “הַשׁוּבָה הִיא, the *hei* shall return”; he also explains that there are two levels of *teshuvah*: *teshuvah tataah* and *teshuvah ilaah*. Meaning, to explain “the beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence...,” the Alter Rebbe needs to preface with an explanation of *teshuvah ilaah*.

We need to clarify: The Alter Rebbe explains the difference between these two levels — *teshuvah tataah* and *teshuvah ilaah* — later on in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*:²⁷ *Teshuvah tataah* is the return of a Jew to his status before he sinned — “to wash and cleanse their souls of the soiled garments.” And *teshuvah ilaah* (which follows *teshuvah tataah*) is the return of the soul “to its source... as it was united with Him in the ultimate union before the breath of His mouth blew it forth to descend and be incorporated within the human body.”

This is unclear: How can the Alter Rebbe state (as discussed at the beginning of Section 1) that the steps taken for “the completion of the atonement and polishing the soul” so that a person will be “acceptable and beloved... **as before the sin,**”²⁸ happen “**after teshuvah,**” and are not included in “the mitzvah of *teshuvah*”? And in contrast, the explanation of *teshuvah ilaah* [i.e., returning the soul to its source... as it was... before it was blown forth (which is a dynamic relevant also to a person who has never sinned his entire life)²⁹ and seemingly unrelated to rectifying sins] is germane to the mitzvah of *teshuvah* to the extent that it comprises “the **beginning** of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its **essence**”?!

²⁷ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8.

²⁸ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” beg. of ch. 2; and when it says (in ch. 4), “as it says above,” it (seemingly) refers to the beg. of ch. 2.

²⁹ See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Balak*” (74a): “The third *teshuvah* [*teshuvah ilaah* — loc. cit., beg. of 75b] is not for {the rectification of} sins, G-d forbid... {it applies} even if he does good and fulfills mitzvos...”; and in *Likkutei Torah*, “*Shir HaShirim*,” 66c: “*Teshuvah* is performed to return his soul... to its source and root... and thus, the Ten Days of Penitence and Yom Kippur are also relevant to a perfect *tzaddik*... and that is *teshuvah ilaah*”; see also *Torah Or*, 45a; *Likkutei Torah*, beg of “*Haazinu*”; et al.

4.

MITZVOS VS. TORAH

To clarify all the above issues, we must preface with an explanation of a teaching found in several places.³⁰ Namely, *teshuvah tataah* is correlated to the *avodah*³¹ of mitzvah observance] {denoted by the verse}, “turn from evil and do good”³² — whereas *teshuvah ilaah* is correlated to Torah study. [The correlation between *teshuvah ilaah* and Torah study is also evident from a quotation from *Raya Mehemna, parshas Naso*,³³ cited later in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*.³⁴ The Alter Rebbe writes that *teshuvah ilaah* is characterized by “a person occupied in Torah study....”] One explanation {of this correlation} that can be put forth:

The *avodah* of fulfilling mitzvos demonstrates *bittul*³⁵ grounded in the acceptance of the Heavenly yoke. A Jew is prepared to obey whatever Hashem commands him, even if the command is fraught with difficulties. He must obey in the way a servant obeys his master’s command, ignoring other considerations.

In contrast, the *bittul* of a person learning Torah is exemplified in “the word of Hashem, which is halachah, is the very word... that speaks from his throat.”³⁶ Therefore, “Who are kings? The Rabbis,”³⁷ for the *bittul* of a person occupied in Torah study is not “like a servant who fulfills the king’s commandment.” Instead, the servant’s whole identity is the “King.”³⁸

This sort of *bittul* (of a person learning Torah) derives from his soul’s root as it was “before it was blown forth....” Regarding the aspect of the soul in its state *after* its descent into this world, it says in *Tanya*.³⁹ “The soul of a man, even if the

³⁰ *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak,” 73b ff.; *Or HaTorah*, “Bo,” p. 332 ff.

³¹ {Divine service.}

³² {*Tehillim* 34:15.}

³³ *Zohar*, vol. 3, end of 123a.

³⁴ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8 (98b).

³⁵ {*Bittul* connotes submission to Hashem, self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego.}

³⁶ {*Torah Or*, “*Vayeshev*,” 27b.}

³⁷ *Torah Or*, “*Vayeshev*,” 27b (et al.), based on *Gittin* 62a.

³⁸ *Torah Or*, “*Vayeshev*,” 27b; note *Tanya*, ch. 23.

³⁹ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 35 (end of 44a ff.).

man is a perfect *tzaddik*... cannot be utterly nullified out of existence...⁴⁰ to be merged with it {Hashem's light} in perfect unity....” This *bittul* and unity engendered by Torah study is facilitated by a radiance emanating from the aspect of the soul as it was “before it was blown forth,” when the soul was “united with Him in the ultimate union.”

In light of this, the relationship between *teshuvah tataah* and the fulfillment of mitzvos — “turn from evil and do good” — and between *teshuvah ilaah* and Torah study is understood:

A Jew's *bittul* as a function of his soul **after** Hashem “blew forth”⁴¹ {the Jew's soul} — and especially⁴² after his soul descended into this world and was enclothed in a body — is only in a way that his **identity** is subordinated to Hashem, like the submission of a servant to a king.

Since *teshuvah tataah* is (primarily) the return of a Jew to his standing and status before he sinned (“to wash and cleanse their souls of the soiled garments...”) — and at that time, he was also an autonomous “entity” {separate from Hashem}, as discussed above — *teshuvah tataah* is primarily correlated with the fulfillment of mitzvos, whereby a person's *bittul* is “like a servant who fulfills the king's commandment.”

In contrast, *teshuvah ilaah* is the soul's return to its source, “as it was united with Him in the ultimate union before it was blown forth....” Therefore, **this** level of *teshuvah* is correlated to a person's occupation in Torah study, when “the word of Hashem... is the very word... that speaks from his throat.”

⁴⁰ {In the original Hebrew, “בְּטִילָהּ בְּמִצְיָאוֹת”; *bittul bemetzius* constitutes the absolute form of *bittul* whereby one loses all sense of independent existence.}

⁴¹ {*Bereishis* 2:7.}

⁴² The wording of the Alter Rebbe (*Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8): “blown forth... to descend,” implying that it was “blown forth” **for the sake** of descent. On this basis, even once it was blown forth, etc. (before it descended), it wasn't in the ultimate state of union as it was before it was blown forth. Note *Hemshech 5666*, beg. of p. 491: “The soul was contracted into itself in order to be enclothed....”

5.

TWO LEVELS WITHIN *TESHUVAH TATAAH*

These two dimensions — *teshuvah tataah* and *teshuvah ilaah* — are also found in both types of *teshuvah*. These are the two levels of “*teshuvah*” and “*baal teshuvah*” that are present both in *teshuvah tataah*⁴³ and *teshuvah ilaah* (as discussed above in Section 1).

The explanation: The two dimensions within *teshuvah tataah* are explained in Chassidus.⁴⁴ The lower level within *teshuvah tataah* — (“*teshuvah*” itself) which is correlated with the *avodah* of “turn{ing} from evil” — requires a person to work on his character to the extent that it would be impossible for him to disobey Hashem’s will. And the higher level of *teshuvah tataah* (the level of “*baal teshuvah*”) is correlated with the *avodah* of “do{ing} good” — “to toil in Torah study and prayer”⁴⁵ more than his nature dictates and more than he is accustomed to. This is the level of the “עוֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים, he who serves Hashem,” who “reviews his studies one hundred **and one** times”⁴⁶ — more than he does routinely.⁴⁷

On this basis, the two dimensions (of *teshuvah tataah*) are understood — “*teshuvah*” and “*baal teshuvah*” resemble the levels *teshuvah tataah* and *teshuvah ilaah*:

When a person is engaged in the *avodah* of turning from evil, he retains his feeling of autonomous selfhood, but the Heavenly yoke he has taken upon himself restrains him from acting counter to the Supernal will. Therefore, this mode of *avodah* is apropos of *teshuvah tataah* (within *teshuvah tataah* itself).

In contrast, when a person is engaged in the *avodah* of doing good, by toiling in the study of Torah more than he is accustomed to, and by breaking his

⁴³ See *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak,” 75a, which explains that the level of “*baal teshuvah*” within *teshuvah tataah* is similar to *teshuvah ilaah*; see fn. 25 in the original.

⁴⁴ *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak,” 73b ff.; *Or HaTorah*, “Bo,” p. 332 ff.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ {In Talmudic times, it was customary to review each lesson one hundred times.}

⁴⁷ *Chagigah* 9b; *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 15.

nature, he **withdraws**, somewhat, from his selfhood. Therefore, this mode of *avodah* is apropos of *teshuvah ilaah*.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, this loftier *avodah* is also only a particular level within *teshuvah tataah* [although within *teshuvah tataah* itself, it is categorized as *teshuvah ilaah*]. This is because (a) even when a person engages in the *avodah* of “do{ing} good,” he doesn’t completely withdraw from his selfhood; it is only in terms of action that by fighting, he overcomes his nature, and (b) moreover, even the change in his nature — breaking with what he is accustomed to — is brought about by **human** effort, as opposed to a person who occupies himself with Torah study, for then, the **word of Hashem** “speaks from his throat.”

6.

TWO LEVELS WITHIN *TESHUVAH ILAAH*

However, this *avodah*, too, of learning Torah, which is correlated to *teshuvah ilaah*, as discussed, is merely the level of “*teshuvah*” itself (within *teshuvah ilaah*), whereas the level of “*baal teshuvah ilaah*” consists of the *avodah* of internalizing the directive⁴⁹ to “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you.”⁵⁰ As discussed above (in Section 5), “*teshuvah*” and “*baal teshuvah*” are parallel levels to *teshuvah tataah* and *teshuvah ilaah*. On this basis, it emerges that within *teshuvah ilaah* itself, occupying oneself in Torah study corresponds with *teshuvah tataah*, and sanctifying oneself by refraining from what is permitted corresponds with *teshuvah ilaah*.

To elucidate: Interpreting the verse,⁵¹ “You shall be to Me a treasure,” the *Mechilta* says: “*You shall be to Me* — you shall be acquired by Me and occupied in Torah; you shall not be occupied in other matters.” Meaning, being “occupied in Torah” alone is insufficient for you to be truly “acquired by Me.” It is also

⁴⁸ Note *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak,” (73d) which says that *teshuvah* in the mode of “do good” is “similar” to what is described in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah*, ch. 8 — the return of the soul to its source before it was blown forth.

⁴⁹ *Yevamos* 20a; *Sifri* on *Devarim* 14:21.

⁵⁰ *Or HaTorah*, “*Va’era*,” pp. 185, 2597.

⁵¹ *Shemos* 19:5.

necessarily contingent on you not being “occupied in other matters.” This disengagement from mundane affairs is⁵² exemplified by the *avodah* called for by the mandate to “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you.”

A person being occupied in Torah study — even in a manner by which “the word of Hashem... the very word... speaks from his throat” — does not yet prove that the person’s entire existence is “acquired” by Hashem. Perhaps his *bittul* while learning Torah is a result of the **Torah** permeating his being to the extent that he loses the sense of being an independent existence. But that doesn’t mean that he, **in and of himself**, is *battel bemetzius*⁵³ to G-dliness.

This is in contrast to the *avodah* of “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you,” whereby the **person** sanctifies and separates himself from his own concerns — “other matters” — even those that are “permitted to you.” Engaging in this *avodah*, a person evinces his “submission {to Hashem} and how he relinquishes his {sense of} self, to become *battel* to Hashem”⁵⁴ — he has no independent existence. Rather, he is “acquired by Me.”

On this basis, it is understood why *teshuvah ilaah* is expressed by a person engaging in the *avodah* of “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you.” In contrast, the focus of the *avodah* of Torah study is different. The *avodah* of Torah study depicts the level of *teshuvah tataah* within *teshuvah ilaah*: The nature of *teshuvah ilaah* is “to cleave to Him in a wondrous union, as it was united with Him in the ultimate union before it was blown forth....” It is impossible to say that at that time (“before it was blown forth”), the soul had an independent existence, and since the *bittul* of a person occupied in Torah study does not (entirely) negate his independent existence, as discussed above, this person’s level of *teshuvah* is *teshuvah tataah* within *teshuvah ilaah*. In contrast, a person engaging in the *avodah* of “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you” manifests how his whole selfhood has been “acquired” by Hashem. This is the higher level, the actual point of *teshuvah ilaah*.

⁵² *Or HaTorah*, “Yisro,” p. 810; *Maamar “Ve’atem Tihyu Li 5660,”* close to the end; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 258.

⁵³ {*Bittul b’metzius* (“existential nullification”) constitutes the absolute form of *bittul* whereby one loses all sense of independent existence.}

⁵⁴ *Likkutei Torah*, “Ki Setzei,” end of 38d — quoted in *Or HaTorah*, “Yisro” (p. 809).

CONNECTING TO HASHEM

On this basis, it is clear why the *avodah* of “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} what is permitted to you” is connected with the level of *chochmah* within a person’s soul,⁵⁵ corresponding to the letter *yud* (a point) — as discussed above (in Section 1), “*baal teshuvah ilaah*” corresponds to the letter *yud*. This is because this *avodah* expresses the quintessential attachment (between a Jew and Hashem). The letter *yud* alludes to this attachment — it is a “point” defying any definition.

The attachment of a Jew with Hashem by means of the three modes of *avodah* — “turn from evil,” “do good,” and the *bittul* of a person occupied in Torah study — assumes a particular “form,” because a person who engages in these modes of *avodah* does not abandon his autonomous selfhood completely. Instead, he attaches his **autonomous selfhood** to Hashem. Therefore, his attachment to Hashem is formed according to the shape assumed by his soul faculties, through which he forges this connection. Therefore, these three modes of *avodah* are linked with the letters *hei*, *vav*, and *hei* of the name *Havayah*, which have a particular “form.” In contrast, the *avodah* of “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you,” by which a person “makes himself *battel*, and sets aside his selfhood and his will,”⁵⁶ expresses the essential point of attachment beyond delineation or depiction based on the person’s abilities. Thus, the letter *yud* — a point — alludes to this *avodah*.

⁵⁵ “For ‘*kadesh*, sanctify’ is in *chochmah*, as in the verse, “Sanctify to Me every firstborn...” {*Shemos* 13:2} (*Likkutei Torah*, “*Ki Setzei*,” end of 38d); and in *Likkutei Torah*, “*Balak*,” s.v., “*Ma Tovu*” (75b), it says that “Sanctify to Me every firstborn” is the level of “*baal teshuvah ilaah*,” the *teshuvah* of the letter *yud*.

⁵⁶ {*Likkutei Torah*, “*Ki Setzei*,” end of 38d.}

8.

ALL OF THESE AVODOS ARE CONNECTED

Just as the first of the four letters of the name *Havayah* is the letter *yud* — a point — and then, this point expands to take the form of the first *hei*, and then to take the form of the letter *vav*, and finally, to take the form of the final *hei*,⁵⁷ so, too, when it comes to the *avodos* discussed above: Essentially, these *avodos* are not entirely distinct. They constitute a single continuum:

Its beginning and core is the attachment point of a Jew with Hashem. At this stage, the attachment is beyond any form or definition; it is expressed by the **negation** of {the Jew's} existence: he “makes himself and his will *battel*...” — “sanctify yourself by {refraining from} that which is permitted to you.” Subsequently, this point is expressed in a certain “form,” characterized by occupation in Torah study, “do good,” and finally, “turn from evil.”

Therefore, when the *bittul* of accepting the Heavenly yoke — as expressed by the phrase, “turn from evil” — is deficient, it not only impairs the second *hei* but also the three preceding letters. For if the core of *bittul* itself (the letter *yud*) radiated within the person, or at least *bittul* as expressed in a person being “occupied in Torah” and in “do good” (the first *hei* and the *vav*), he would have attained the *bittul* entailed by accepting the Heavenly yoke.

For this reason, when a Jew succumbs to sin, he needs to engage in *teshuvah ilaah*; only then is his *teshuvah* “a complete *teshuvah*.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Tanya, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 4 (94b, 95a).

⁵⁸ Tanya, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8.

9.

SYMBIOSIS

In addition, a person must also engage in *teshuvah ilaah* only not **after** engaging in *teshuvah tataah* for the sake of “a complete *teshuvah*.” *Teshuvah tataah* itself also has to be performed such that the person feels (when some action is concerned, at any rate) an undercurrent of *teshuvah ilaah*.

In other words, a person’s commitment “never again to revert to folly to rebel against His rule, that he will never again violate the King’s command”⁵⁹ must be executed in a way that the *bittul* generated by his acceptance of the Heavenly yoke is felt. [Such *bittul* is like that of a servant who is prepared to obey his master’s commands even though he and his master are **distinct** beings.] But moreover, his *bittul* is also generated by, and a product of, the person’s consummate unity with Hashem (on account of his soul in its root).

10.

THE HEI RETURNS

We can posit that this explains (in the realm of *avodah*) why *teshuvah tataah* is (not just that “the second *hei* returns from exile” but also) that “the second *hei* returns to its place, to unite with *yud-hei-vav*.”⁶⁰

The idea of the second *hei* on its own (in a person’s *avodah*) is the *bittul* of a soul, as vested in a body, accepting the Heavenly yoke.⁶¹ “The second *hei* returns to its place, to unite with *yud-hei-vav*” intimates a type of *bittul* of accepting the Heavenly yoke (the second *hei*) in a way that the person thereby senses how he is attached and united, with a “complete unity,” on account of the soul’s essence — the letters *yud-hei-vav*.

⁵⁹ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 1 (91a).

⁶⁰ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8 (98a) — quoted in HaRav Levi Yitzchak’s note mentioned above addressing the words “be explained thoroughly.”

⁶¹ See *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 5 — “Bringing the G-dly soul down into this physical world {to enclothe itself in a human body}” is a function of the second *hei*.

11.

CLARIFYING THE MITZVAH OF *TESHUVAH*

Based on everything we have discussed above, we can understand how the explanation of the word “*teshuvah*” according to *sod* — “the *hei* shall return” — adds to our understanding of “the **mitzvah** of *teshuvah*” (that a person must fulfill):

On the basis of the lengthy explanation of the second *hei*, that it is (not an independent entity, but rather,) a continuation of the three preceding letters, and that *teshuvah* is the return of the second *hei* “to its place” (to be united with the three other letters of the name *Havayah*),⁶² a novel understanding of “the mitzvah of *teshuvah*” — “he must resolve in his heart... never again to revert... to rebel against His rule” — emerges: Despite the essence of *teshuvah* being accepting the Heavenly yoke to “turn from evil” (“never again to revert... to rebel against His rule, that he will never again violate the King’s command, G-d forbid”) — {alluded to by} the second *hei* — nonetheless, the person’s *teshuvah* must also be connected with the *avodos* relating to the other letters of the name *Havayah*.

Therefore, it is appropriate also to preface {the discussion of} “the beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence” with {an explanation of} *teshuvah ilaah* — for regular *teshuvah* must be performed in a manner in which *teshuvah ilaah* is felt within it (as discussed above in Section 9).

⁶² *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 4 (94b, 95a); ch. 8 (98a).

12.

A BROAD EXPLANATION

On this basis, it is understood that the words “explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation” — that “correspond to the two levels of *teshuvah* that he discusses subsequently, restoring the last *hei* {*teshuvah tataah*} and restoring the first *hei* (*teshuvah ilaah*)” (as quoted above from my father’s notes) — are not only an allusion {to these two levels of *teshuvah*} but are also a novel explanation of how “the beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence” are to be fulfilled.

Therefore, the Alter Rebbe says, “explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation by **prefacing** with the *Zohar*’s explanation....” He uses this wording (adding the word “prefacing”) to clarify that this thorough and broad explanation does not (only) refer to “the *Zohar*’s explanation” (as is plainly evident); rather, “explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation” (also) refers to something else:

For “the beginning of the mitzvah of *teshuvah* and its essence” to be fulfilled “in truth, and wholeheartedly,”⁶³ it must “**perforce**”⁶⁴ be in a manner alluded to by the clause, “be explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation.”

Put differently, although the mitzvah of *teshuvah* is that a person “resolve in his heart” neither to rebel against Hashem’s sovereignty nor to violate the King’s command (“turn from evil”) — the substance of the second *hei* — nevertheless, the *vav* must also be sensed within it. When “explained,” it must be explained “**thoroughly**.” Meaning, in his commitment not to rebel against Hashem’s sovereignty, it should be felt (at least subtly) that the person is also ready “to exert himself” more than his nature dictates and more than he is accustomed (akin to the *avodah* of “do good”).

⁶³ {*Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 4.}

⁶⁴ Based on the explanation in this *sichah*, the nuanced wording “perforce” (and not “we **need** to explain,” or the like) is more palatable.

Moreover, the *explanation* must be a “broad explanation” — “corresponding to the restoration of the first *hei* of *binah*”: In his resolve, the penitent’s readiness to become *battel* and to completely part ways with his sense of autonomous selfhood must be felt (subconsciously) — (similar to the *bittul* of a person learning Torah).

13.

NO ALLUSION TO THE *YUD*

This is also the reason that the Alter Rebbe only alludes to the first three levels of *teshuvah*, and doesn’t allude to the “*baal teshuvah ilaah*” — corresponding to the letter *yud* — as well:

Concerning the letter *yud*, there is no need for any particular *avodah* for it to be felt within the resolve, “never again to revert... to rebel against His sovereignty.” This is because the letter *yud* (as discussed in Section 7) is the **point** of attachment {to Hashem} (that is disassociated from form). And it is clear that this point affects [all of the *avodos* connected with] the other three letters,⁶⁵ since they are an expression of this point in particular forms (as discussed above in Section 7).

[On the contrary, also when someone firmly decides not to rebel against Hashem’s authority, it shows a profound sense of *bittul*.⁶⁶ Since it is a *bittul* {more basic and} lower than a *bittul* shaped by a person’s faculties, it’s in this *bittul* that the most essential connection with Hashem, surpassing any other form of connection, can be experienced.]⁶⁷

And since with the words, “explained thoroughly and with a broad explanation,” he introduces a novel explanation as to how a person should engage in *teshuvah* **practically**, the Alter Rebbe words his explanation in a way that alludes to only the three first levels.

— From a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Re’eh*, 5730 (1970)

⁶⁵ Note *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 18 — *chochmah* in a person’s soul (*yud*) “permeates all the levels of the soul in its entirety... from head to foot.”

⁶⁶ Note the discussion in several places concerning the relationship between *yirah tataah* and *yirah ilaah* (*Torah Or*, beg. of 114d; *Biurei Admor HaZaken*, 81a,b; *Kuntres HaAvodah*, ch. 3 [p. 18]).

⁶⁷ See *Derech Chaim*, 15c.