



Likkutei Sichos

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Aligning Allusions

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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.

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1.

ELUL – TWO TYPES OF AVODAH

As is known, the month of Elul connects the outgoing year to the incoming year. As such, the *avodah*¹ of Elul is twofold: (a) An honest evaluation of one's deeds of the past year and *teshuvah* for one's improper conduct, which serve to rectify and perfect the past year; and (b) preparation for the upcoming year by making good resolutions, and the like, thereby ensuring (that the person will be signed and sealed for) a good and sweet year.

Since the names of the months (Nissan, Iyar, etc.) are also found in Torah² (and some of them — including the name “Elul”³ — are even recorded in the **Written** Torah),⁴ it is clear that these names express the inner character of each month.⁵ Similarly, in our case, the name “Elul” alludes to the two types of *avodah* mentioned above.

Therefore, among the allusions encoded in the word “Elul,” we find one that parses “Elul” into two parts (as discussed in Section 2). These two parts correspond to the two types of *avodah* mentioned above.

¹ {Divine service.}

² Even though these names were brought {to the land of Israel} by the Jews returning from the Babylonian exile (*Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Rosh Hashanah*,” ch. 1, halachah 2) — see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, pp. 296 ff. and fns.

³ *Nechemiah* 6:15.

⁴ See *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Rosh Hashanah*,” ch. 1, halachah 2,

⁵ Just as the name {in *Lashon HaKodesh*} of each entity indicates the source of its vitality and its substance — *Tanya*, “*Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,” ch. 1; the Maggid of Mezrich's *Or HaTorah*, end of 4b ff.; et al.

2.

ELUL – THE ALLUSIONS

Among the allusions in the word “Elul”:

a) The Tzemach Tzedek explains⁶ that “אֱלּוּל, Elul” is comprised of the two words “לֹא”⁷ and “לוּ.”⁸ The word “לֹא” (with an *aleph*) refers to *kesser*,⁹ which is beyond the continuum of Creation, and “לוּ” (with a *vav*) refers to “*zeir anpin*,”¹⁰ which is within the continuum of Creation and is part of the process by which Divine influence is transmitted into the world.

[This explanation is similar to the one¹¹ given for the verse,¹² “In all their troubles, לוּ צָר, He was troubled.” The verse is written: “לֹא (צָר), He was **not** (troubled),” but it is read: “לוּ (צָר), He **was** (troubled).” “He was **not** troubled” is from the perspective of the level of *kesser*, which is beyond the continuum of Creation. On that level, the state of the world is of no consequence, and thus, “In all their troubles, He **was not** troubled.” In contrast, the reading, “In all their troubles He **was** troubled” is from the perspective of the level of *zeir anpin*, which is within the continuum of Creation. On that level, the world’s state is of consequence.]

The connection between these two words — “לֹא” (with an *aleph*) and “לוּ” (with a *vav*); and the month of Elul — is as follows: In Elul, the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy,¹³ which are beyond the continuum of Creation — “לֹא” (with an *aleph*) — “shine” and transmit influence {into the world}. However, the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy “shine” in such a manner that this effluence descends (inwardly) into the continuum of Creation — “לוּ” (with a *vav*).

⁶ *Or HaTorah*, “*Re’eh*,” p. 797.

⁷ {Lit., “there is not.”}

⁸ {Lit., “for Him” there is.}

⁹ {Lit., “crown,” is the sublime, encompassing level of Divine emanation which transcends the ten *sefiros* (Divine emanations). It is similar to a crown, which sits atop the head.}

¹⁰ {Lit., “the small face,” the configuration of the six *sefiros* from *chessed* to *yesod*.}

¹¹ *Or HaTorah* on *Tehillim* (*Yahel Or*), p. 361; quoted in an abridged form in *Or HaTorah*, “*Re’eh*,” p. 797; see there.

¹² *Yeshaya* 63:9.

¹³ {Hashem revealed His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy to Moshe after the sin of the Golden Calf (*Shemos* 34:6-7), inviting the Jewish people to invoke these attributes in prayer to seek Divine forgiveness (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b).}

b) My father's¹⁴ explanation:¹⁵ The word “אֱלוּל, Elul” is comprised of the words “א” {lit., “or”} and two *lamed*s:

The word “א” alludes to the level of *malchus*¹⁶ (as discussed in *Zohar*).¹⁷ The two letters comprising the word “א” allude to the two primary levels of *malchus*: “ס” alludes to *kesser* of *malchus*,¹⁸ and “ו” alludes to *daas*¹⁹ of *malchus*.

The two *lamed*s allude to the “thirty virtues” with which “*malchus* is acquired.”²⁰ Since “*malchus* is acquired with thirty virtues,” the supernal flow that is drawn into *malchus* must affect both levels of *malchus* mentioned above. Therefore, {in the word אֱלוּל} there must be a “ו” both after the letter “א” and after the letter “ו.”

The connection between this idea and the month of Elul is as follows: The destruction of the Temple in the month of Av (primarily) affected the *sefirah* of *malchus*. And in the month of Elul, which are days of {Divine} goodwill²¹ (that immediately follow the month of Av), the building of *malchus*²² begins.

¹⁴ {Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Rebbe's father.}

¹⁵ *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak*, “*Igros Kodesh*,” p. 406 ff.; end of p. 410 ff.

¹⁶ {Lit., “sovereignty,” *malchus* is the last of the ten *sefiros*.}

¹⁷ *Zohar*, vol. 3, 23b; see *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak*, “*Igros Kodesh*,” p. 407 for an explanation of how the word “א” relates to *malchus*.

¹⁸ {Each of the ten *sefiros* is comprised of a complete array of ten *sefiros*.}

¹⁹ {*Daas*, lit., “knowledge,” is the third of the ten *sefiros*; it is the third stage of the intellectual process at which concepts, having proceeded from seminal intuition (*chochmah*) through meditative gestation (*binah*) now mature into their corresponding dispositions or attributes of character (*midos*, or *zeir anpin*).}

²⁰ *Avos*, ch. 6, mishnah 5 (in Alter Rebbe's ver., *Avos*, ch. 6, mishnah 6).

²¹ {See beg. of *Biur HaGra* on *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 581, and sources listed there; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 128, par. 1.}

²² {We participate in this process, which culminates on Rosh Hashanah, by petitioning Hashem to renew His sovereignty over Creation.}

3.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO ALLUSIONS

The connection between my father's explanation and the explanation of the Tzemach Tzedek is [not only that, according to both explanations, the letter "ס" alludes to *kesser*, which is beyond the continuum of Creation, and the letter "י" alludes to a deeply penetrating Divine influence (*zeir anpin*, according to the Tzemach Tzedek's explanation, or *daas*, which is "the key that includes²³ six").²⁴ Rather, these two explanations are also connected] concerning the words "סי" and "י" as explained by the Tzemach Tzedek:

The reason the two primary levels of *malchus* are "kesser of *malchus*" and "daas of *malchus*" is explained by my father:²⁵ First of all, what is needed {for the building of *malchus*} is {to arouse Hashem's} delight in, and will for, sovereignty — and this is "kesser of *malchus*." (As known, *kesser* corresponds to "delight and will.") However, since "there is no king without a people,"²⁶ Hashem, as the King, has to constrain Himself and draw closer to the people. This constraint is the level of "daas of *malchus*."

The difference between these two levels: From the vantage point of Hashem's "delight in, and will for, sovereignty," the King is still totally disconnected from the nation. At this level, **His** loftiness and exaltedness are predominant; therefore, the nation is of no account to Him.

In contrast, at the level of "daas of *malchus*," the King comes close to the people and leads them (by enacting laws, etc.). At this level, the conduct of the people assumes significance.

This is the connection between my father's explanation and the explanation of the Tzemach Tzedek (according to which "Elul" is comprised of

²³ {Daas is the "key" to "unlock" *zeir anpin* — the configuration of the six *sefiros* from *chessed* to *yesod*.}

²⁴ *Likkutei Torah*, "Vaeschanan," beg. of 6d ff. (and sources cited there).

²⁵ *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak*, "Igrosh Kodesh," p. 408.

²⁶ *Bachya* on *Bereishis* 38:30; *Kad HaKemach*, p. 205 (b); *Sefer Chaim Sefer Geulah ViYeshuah*, ch. 2; *Emek HaMelech*, "Shaar Sha'ashuei HaMelech," beg. of ch. 1; *Tanya*, "Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah," beg. of ch. 7; and see *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 3.

the two words “לֹא” and “לוֹ”): On the level of “*kesser of malchus*” — a level where people’s conduct is insignificant — “In all their troubles, לֹא צָר, He **was not** troubled.” In contrast, at the level of “*daas of malchus*” — a level where people’s conduct is significant — “In all their troubles, לוֹ צָר, He **was** troubled.”

4.

REPAIRING THE PAST AND PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Corresponding to these two paradigms relating to the month of Elul, we find, generally, two types of *avodah* germane to this month: repairing the past year and preparing for the coming year.

The primary *avodah*²⁷ on Rosh Hashanah is to make Hashem our monarch.²⁸ The “crowning” of Hashem awakens His **essential** preeminence, where people’s conduct is irrelevant, as discussed above.

This is the reason we say on Rosh Hashanah,²⁹ “**He will choose** our legacy for us...,” because making Hashem sovereign over the Jewish people is (not predicated on our *avodah* of learning Torah and performing mitzvos, but is) an outcome of Hashem’s **free choice** since Jewish souls are rooted in His Essence, which is even higher than the root of Torah and mitzvos.³⁰ [For this reason, Hashem says,³¹ “I cannot exchange them for another nation,” regardless of their standing in learning Torah and performing mitzvos.] And this {Divine awakening} comes about by the Jewish people arousing in themselves a profound *bittul*³² as a corollary of their souls’ **essence**.

However, we repair the past year by truly accounting for our Torah learning and mitzvah performance, evaluating how we have implemented **the King’s laws** — and this is connected with the level of *malchus*, which is joined with the nation.

²⁷ For the foregoing, see, at length, *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, “Rosh Hashanah”; vol. 19, pp. 282, 350 ff.

²⁸ *Rosh Hashanah* 16a (end); 34b.

²⁹ *Tehillim*, 47:5. {We recite this chapter of *Tehillim* before shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah.}

³⁰ *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1, par. 4; *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu Rabbah*, end of ch. 14.

³¹ *Pesichta*, “*Rus Rabbah*,” ch. 3; see *Pesachim* 87a (end); et al.

³² {Submission to Hashem; *bittul* connotes self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego.}

5.

ELUL UNITED BOTH IDEAS

Since “Elul” is **one** word, it is clear that “ל’א” and “ל’ו,” which together make “ל’אול” are (not two distinct ideas; rather), in the words of the Tzemach Tzedek,³³ “in Elul, ‘ל’ and ‘א’ **join together.**”

To elucidate:

The true accounting of the past year that we make — the “ל’ו” of Elul — entails doing *teshuvah*³⁴ for discreditable deeds, and making amends. And Hashem’s forgiveness and atonement for these deeds come from the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which transcend the continuum of Creation — the “ל’א” of Elul. Because the deeds of people do not affect this plane, the atonement of sins and their rectification, and any shortcomings in behavior and Torah study and mitzvah observance, emanate specifically from this plane.³⁵

The converse is also true: The intent of making Hashem our sovereign on Rosh Hashanah — “crowning” Hashem as King over the Jewish people on the level of *malchus* at which the people are insignificant (“ל’א”), as discussed above — is to bring us to serve Hashem through Torah study and mitzvah observance, implementing the King’s laws perfectly (“ל’ו”).

By doing so, we bring about that Hashem choosing us on Rosh Hashanah does not remain beyond the continuum of Creation (“ל’א”). Instead, this choice is revealed in the world (“ל’ו”). Hashem writes and seals us for good, for a good and sweet year, for every Jewish man and woman, with discernable and revealed good within the world.³⁶

— Based on the talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Re’eh*, 5733 (1973)

³³ *Or HaTorah*, “*Re’eh*,” p. 797.

³⁴ {Repentance.}

³⁵ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Acharei*,” 26c (end); **et al.**

³⁶ {In the original, למטה מעשרה טפחים, lit., “below ten cubits.”}