

Likkutei Sichos

Volume 20 | Lech Lecha | Zayin Mar Cheshvan

Home Again

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | **Senior Editor:** Rabbi Lazer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

Translated by Rabbi Zusya Kreitenberg

© Copyright by Sichos In English 2024 ◦ 5785

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 share your thoughts at info@projectlikkuteisichos.org

1.

ZAYIN CHESHVAN'S SIGNIFICANCE

The day of *Zayin Cheshvan*¹ always occurs during the week of *parshas Lech Lecha*.² Based on the known principle³ that the Festivals {מִוֶּעַדֵי הַשָּׁנָה} of the year (etymologically related to “מִוֶּעַד” — “a special occasion”) are connected with the *parshiyos* in which they occur, it is understood that *Zayin Cheshvan* shares a thematic connection with *parshas Lech Lecha*. (This shared connection is particularly evident because *Zayin Cheshvan* **always** occurs during the week of *parshas Lech Lecha*, unlike other Festivals whose corresponding *parshiyos* vary from year to year.)

Regarding *Zayin Cheshvan*, the Mishnah says⁴ that this is the day when “we {begin to} pray for rain” — “fifteen days after the Festival {of Sukkos}, allowing the last of the Jews to reach the Euphrates River.” This is codified in Jewish law in Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*⁵ and in *Shulchan Aruch*,⁶ where it says that in the land of Israel, we begin asking for rain on *Zayin Cheshvan*.

Understandably, this is not solely a preventative measure to ensure that rain does not cause undue hardship for the Jews who have not yet reached their homes at the farthest border.⁷ Instead, until *Zayin Cheshvan* arrives, the period is considered a continuation of the pilgrimage for the Festival of Sukkos. As *Sifsei Kohen* elaborates:⁸

Every time the Jewish people made their Festival pilgrimage, they would only {return and} reach their homes fifteen days after the end of the Festival. During their return home, they considered it as if they were **still in the land of Israel, engaged in festival-related matters**, as long as they had not crossed the Great River, the Euphrates.

This means that the day of *Zayin Cheshvan* emphasizes the end of their travels and the conclusion of the Festival pilgrimage. It signifies a descent (from their previous ascent) — the Jewish people returned from the perfect sanctity of the Temple in Jerusalem to their place of residence — each person “under his vine and his fig tree”⁹ — whether in the land of Israel or abroad, until the last of the Israelites (who lived abroad) reached the Euphrates River.

¹ {The seventh of the Hebrew month *Mar Cheshvan*. The significance of *Zayin Cheshvan* will be discussed below.}

² Either at the beginning of the week (on Sunday), the middle of the week (Tuesday or Wednesday — the way *Zayin Cheshvan* fell that year, 5742 [1982]), or at the end of the week — Friday.

³ *Shnei Luchos HaBris*, “*Torah Shebiksav*,” beg. of *parshas Vayeishev*.

⁴ *Taanis* 10a.

⁵ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Tefillah*,” ch. 2, par. 16.

⁶ *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beg. of sec. 117; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beg. of sec. 117.

⁷ {The Euphrates river is the most distant border of the land of Israel.}

⁸ *Sifsei Kohen* on *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Choshen Mishpat*,” sec. 43, subpar. 47.

⁹ *Melachim I* 5:5.

2.

THE QUESTION

On this basis, we need to clarify the connection between *Zayin Cheshvan* and *parshas Lech Lecha*, which discusses and emphasizes the opposite — “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you”¹⁰ — (Avraham’s) journey and ascent from his place and homeland in *chutz laaretz*¹¹ (Charan) toward the land of Israel.

Although at the beginning of the *parshah*, the Torah also recounts how “Avram descended to Egypt,”¹² it is known that each *parshah*’s main subject is expressed by its name. In our *parshah*, “*Lech Lecha*” signifies leaving the diaspora and ascending to the land of Israel. Moreover, and principally, most of the *parshah* focuses on Avraham’s life in the land of Israel.

Each concept in the Torah serves as a lesson for us. Thus, there is a lesson to be gleaned from both the weekly Torah portion (in line with the known teaching of the Alter Rebbe,¹³ “We must live with the times,” namely, “with that week’s *parshah*,”) and *Zayin Cheshvan*. In light of this, we need to clarify how to reconcile these two ideas, which seem opposite in their respective themes.

The need to reconcile the ideas is especially relevant as the idea mentioned above regarding *Zayin Cheshvan* is not limited to the era in which the Temple stood, and the Jews would make a Festival pilgrimage; it applies to the Jewish people at all times. This is why “we ask for rain” on *Zayin Cheshvan* in the land of Israel today as well, as noted by the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch*:¹⁴

Even after the destruction of the Temple¹⁵, they would gather from surrounding areas of Jerusalem for the Festival, as they do today. Therefore, the enactment of our Sages to ask for rain in the land of Israel on *Zayin Cheshvan* was never nullified.

¹⁰ {*Bereishis* 12:1.}

¹¹ {The lands outside of the land of Israel.}

¹² *Bereishis* 12:10.

¹³ *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, p. 29; note that the previous Rebbe heard this teaching from his father on *motzaei Shabbos*, *parshas Lech Lecha*.

¹⁴ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beg. of sec. 117, from *Ran* on *Taanis* 10a; cited in *Beis Yosef* on *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 117; *Levush*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 117; *Korban Nesanel* on *Rosh*, on *Taanis* 10a, sec. 4, par. 400; *Hagahos Yaavetz* on *Bava Metzia* 28a.

¹⁵ See also *Shir HaShirim Rabbah*, ch. 1, par. 15 (2); ch. 8, par. 9 (3); *Maharatz Chajes* on *Nedarim* 23a.

This is also relevant in all places, even in the diaspora. As *Sifsei Kohen* notes,¹⁶ if a person writes “after the Festival {of Sukkos}” in a **document**, this means “fifteen days after the Festival,” according to the Mishnah mentioned above. “Even though we are now in exile, the term ‘after the Festival’ retains its original meaning.”

3.

A POSSIBLE CONNECTION

The very concept that the Jewish people’s *avodah*¹⁷ while returning from the Temple has virtue — which is the reason to suggest that it is called “go for yourself,” indicating an ascent — is understood: It is precisely when each Jew returns to his home and his place, “A man plows and a man sows,”¹⁸ that each Jew makes his **physical** possessions into a dwelling for Hashem **in the lowest realms**¹⁹ by fulfilling Torah and *mitzvos*. As it says,²⁰ “all your actions shall be for the sake of Heaven,” and “in all your ways know Him.”²¹

This is not (as) germane when the Jewish people are in Jerusalem and the Temple during the Festival, as then they are not engaged in working the land or doing business, etc., and in general, involved with mundane matters — with the “lower realms.”

However, from *Zayin Cheshvan* onward (when the Jewish people resume plowing, etc., making these lowly matters into a dwelling for Hashem), there is increased light from the darkness²² — the Jewish people experience an automatic ascent: “Go for yourself.”²³

[This idea parallels the concept of the general descent explained in several places — the soul’s descent to earth.²⁴ Through the soul’s *avodah* on earth with physical matters in making the world a dwelling for Hashem, the soul ascends higher than before (before its descent below).]

However, this does not fully clarify the connection {that *Zayin Cheshvan* has} with *parshas Lech Lecha*, which, according to the straightforward meaning of Scripture, discusses Avraham leaving *chutz laaretz* for the land of Israel and emphasizes how “go for yourself” is fulfilled by leaving *chutz laaretz* for the land of Israel.

¹⁶ *Sifsei Kohen* on *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Choshen Mishpat*,” sec. 43, par. 47.

¹⁷ {Any act done to serve Hashem is called “*avodah*,” lit., “service.”}

¹⁸ *Berachos* 35b.

¹⁹ *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Nasso*,” sec. 16; *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 13, par. 6; *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36.

²⁰ *Avos* 2:12.

²¹ *Mishlei* 3:6; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 231.

²² Words of the verse *Koheles* 2:13.

²³ See at length later on {in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20}, p. 381 ff.

²⁴ See *Or HaTorah*, “*Lech Lecha*” (vol. 4), 688a – which explains that the underlying concept of “go for yourself” applies to the soul’s descent into the body.

4.

A MESSENGER'S VIRTUE

This can be understood by first considering the difference between the state of the Jewish people when they ascended {to Jerusalem} for the Festival, where they appeared “in front of Hashem,”²⁵ as compared to their state after they returned home “under his vine and fig tree” — no longer “in front of Hashem.” Understandably, this latter state was a descent compared with their state standing before Hashem. Nonetheless, they are, in certain respects, in a state of ascent and possess an advantage precisely by their distant location, not “in the place Hashem will choose.”²⁶

This paradox has a parallel in the revealed dimension of the Torah, specifically in the distinction between an employee and an emissary: An employee typically works either at the owner's premises or (in a place) with the owner's equipment. Conversely, an emissary is generally not stationed in the place of the one who dispatches him (as indicated by the term “emissary — he is sent away from the dispatcher,) and his task is not necessarily connected to the dispatcher's objects. Being an emissary entails acting on behalf of the dispatcher wherever required.

There is also a difference in subject between an employee (or the like) and an emissary: The concept of an employee is that all of his actions are for **his own benefit**; he receives payment, “and he risks his life for it.”²⁷ Conversely, the concept of an emissary is that the actions and tasks he performs are ([primarily] not for himself but) for the dispatcher.

Thus, since an employee works for himself {for his personal benefit}, it is debatable whether his actions may be considered equivalent to his employer's actions, to be regarded as if the owner did the action.

Conversely, even though an emissary's actions are performed away from the dispatcher, the emissary performs them (primarily) exclusively for the dispatcher. Therefore, the emissary's actions are those of the dispatcher. Moreover, the actions themselves are attributed to the dispatcher, as if the dispatcher is acting through the emissary. On top of that, we say of an emissary of the highest rank²⁸ that “a man's emissary is like the dispatcher himself” — literally himself. Not only are the actions of the emissary and the power to act considered like

²⁵ As stated in many verses regarding the Temple and also Jerusalem (see *Devarim* 12:7,18; 14:23; see *Zevachim* 32a ff.; 119b; *Yuma* 45b).

²⁶ {*Devarim* 16:15.}

²⁷ *Devarim* 24:15.

²⁸ See at length beg. of *Lekach Tov* from Rabbi Yosef Engel; see Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 263, *Kuntres Acharon* 8.

those of the dispatcher, but the emissary becomes an extension of the dispatcher. [This is why an emissary can handle such matters that only the dispatcher must attend to].

5.

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE

We can similarly posit that this is the difference (in spiritual terms) between the Jewish people's *avodah* during their Festival pilgrimage, when they appeared “in front of Hashem” (“in the place of the Owner”), and their *avodah* “under his vine and his fig tree”:

On the Festival pilgrimage, they would witness G-dliness: “All your males shall appear {הִרְאֶה} before the L-rd, Hashem,”²⁹ “Before Hashem, your L-rd”³⁰ — “In the same manner that a person comes to be seen, he comes to see”³¹ — the Jewish people came to see and “soak up” the Divine revelation in the Temple.³² The Jewish people, witnessing the “ten miracles performed for our ancestors in the Temple,”³³ and “the place of the *Shechinah*,³⁴ the *kohanim* in their service, the *leviim* on their stage, and the Israelites in their stations,”³⁵ were all, in a sense, experienced “for themselves.” They experienced and “drew” upon themselves the revelation of the *Shechinah*. (This dynamic is similar to the souls in *Gan Eden* who “**derive benefit** from the radiance of the *Shechinah*.”³⁶

However, when they left the Temple and returned home, each to his place (on *Zayin Cheshvan*), their purpose was no longer “to appear before...”³⁷ — to experience and feel G-dliness. (On the contrary, they experienced this in a much higher form while “in the place that Hashem, your L-rd, chose to rest His name there,” “before Hashem,” in Jerusalem and in the Temple). —

Instead, the intention {of returning home} was to fulfill their **Divine** purpose and mission of observing Torah and *mitzvos* and, in general, to create a home for Hashem on the lowest plane of existence. —

Only then did they become **emissaries**, “A Man’s — the Supernal Man’s — emissary is like the Dispatcher Himself,” “literally like Him,”³⁸ like Hashem, so to speak.

²⁹ *Shemos* 34:23.

³⁰ *Shemos* 34:24.

³¹ *Chagigah* 2a; see *Or HaTorah*, “*Vayeira*,” 103b ff. {Since the words in a Torah scroll are not vowelized, the word הִרְאֶה, which should be read as הִרְאֶה — “be seen,” or “appear,” could also be read as הִרְאֶה — “see.”}

³² See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Vezos HaBerachah*,” 98b.

³³ *Avos* 5:5.

³⁴ {Divine presence.}

³⁵ *Bava Basra* 21a, *Tosafos*, s.v., “*ki mitzion*”; see *Rashbam* on *Devarim* 14:23.

³⁶ *Berachos* 17a; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 8, par. 2; see *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” end of ch. 4.

³⁷ {*Shemos* 34:24.}

³⁸ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Vayikra*,” 1c.

6.

“GO FOR YOURSELF”

On this basis, it is understood why the *avodah* of *Zayin Cheshvan* — when the Jewish people returned from their Festival pilgrimage — is called “go for yourself”:

The underlying purpose of travel materializes specifically when a person reaches an entirely new and incomparably loftier level than their previous one, as known.³⁹

Since previously, during their pilgrimage, their *avodah* was focused on witnessing and experiencing G-dliness as created beings, and this constituted **their** existence, fulfilling the verse, “All your males shall appear,” it follows that the *avodah* of “under his vine,” etc., which involves carrying out the **Divine** intent and will, represents an incomparably more remarkable journey — for the gap between a created being and the Creator is a different order of magnitude.

Therefore, the *avodah* of performing Torah and *mitzvos* (to make a dwelling for Hashem in the lowest realms), which commences on *Zayin Cheshvan*, is connected with “go for yourself.”

7.

AVRAHAM’S JOURNEY

On this basis, we also understand the connection between *Zayin Cheshvan* and the name of the *parshah*, “לך לך, Go for yourself,” which discusses Avraham’s journey from *chutz laaretz* to the land of Israel:

Avraham, our forefather, while still in *chutz laaretz*, publicized G-dliness and introduced people to the service of Hashem — “The souls that they made in Charan”⁴⁰ — as discussed extensively in the midrashim of our Sages⁴¹ and as detailed by Rambam:⁴²

And he {Avraham} began to make known to the nation that it is fitting to serve only the G-d of the world, to bow down to Him, to offer sacrifices, and to pour libations so that all future created beings would recognize Him.... He {Avraham} began to stand and call out loudly to the world, making known that there is one G-d for the whole world, and it is fitting to serve {only} Him....

³⁹ See *Torah Or* end of *parshas Vayeishev*; *Or HaTorah* (“*Bereishis*,” vol. 5, p. 913 ff.); *Hemshech* 5666, p. 497; et al.

⁴⁰ *Bereishis* 12:5.

⁴¹ See also Rashi on *Bereishis* 11:28.

⁴² *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Avodah Zarah*,” ch. 1, par. 3.

However, since all this came about because Avraham recognized his Creator — “He grasped the true path and understood the righteous way **from his proper intellect**” — it turns out that he publicized G-dliness based on **his** recognition of G-dliness. —

“Once he recognized and knew, he began to respond... “ He proclaimed, “This is not the true path that you are following.”

8.

AVRAHAM’S MISSION

Regarding (and following) this *avodah*, Hashem commanded: “Go for yourself.” Avraham began a new system from then on — he revealed G-dliness due to **Hashem’s command** as Hashem’s emissary.

Therefore, specifically when Avraham came to the land of Israel, the verse says,⁴³ “He proclaimed the Name of Hashem,” even though he also publicized G-dliness to the world earlier, as explained above. By recording this here, the Torah tells us not (only) that Avraham **also** revealed G-dliness in the land of Israel but that this (his following Hashem’s command, “Go for yourself”) was in an entirely different manner. This explanation aligns with the following commentary of Rashi .⁴⁴

Now He is G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth, for I have familiarized Him in the mouth of people. But when He took me from my father’s house, He was G-d of the heavens but not G-d of the earth. For those who lived in the world did not recognize Him, and His name was not commonly mentioned on earth.

Although Avraham also publicized G-dliness in *chutz laaretz*, “those who lived in the world did not **recognize** Him, and His name was not **commonly mentioned** on earth.”⁴⁵ Specifically, because while he was in the land of Israel (after the command “go for yourself”) “he proclaimed the Name of Hashem, L-rd of the universe,”⁴⁶ therefore, Avraham declared, “**I have familiarized Him** in the mouth of people.”

Put differently, because publicizing G-dliness in *chutz laaretz* was interlinked with Avraham’s recognition {of Hashem}, the world remained distinct, albeit subordinated to G-dliness. Conversely, when Avraham publicized G-dliness following the command “go for yourself,” *due to the Creator’s command*, Avraham’s work is described in Scripture, “There he proclaimed the Name of Hashem, ל-א-ל הַעוֹלָם, L-rd, the universe”⁴⁷ (and not, “ל-א-ל הַעוֹלָם, L-rd of the

⁴³ Bereishis 12:8.

⁴⁴ Bereishis 24:7.

⁴⁵ See the extensive explanation of this commentary of Rashi in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 158 ff.

⁴⁶ Bereishis 21:33.

⁴⁷ See *Sotah* 10a ff.

universe”). This description intimates that the world and G-dliness were, so to speak, one entity.⁴⁸

9.

BECOMING HASHEM’S MESSENGER

This is also why the verse says, at length, “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house (to the land that I will show you).” The emphasis in the verse is not that Avraham should go to the **land of Israel**, but rather, (the primary focus is that) Avraham should **relinquish** (his identity —) “your land,” “your birthplace,” and “your father’s house.”

— As Chassidus interprets this verse:⁴⁹ “From your land” — from your desires;⁵⁰ “from your birthplace” — from your habits (and emotional attributes); “and from your father’s house” — from your wisdom (“father” and wisdom).⁵¹ Even though Avraham was wholly absorbed in holiness and G-dliness, Hashem still instructed Avraham to leave “from **your** land, from **your** birthplace, and **your** father’s house” — to depart from **his** desires, emotions, and intellectual faculties (which were indeed holy but were still a holy “something”).⁵² Avraham was to make his way “to the land that I will show you.” He had to journey to the land (*avodah*) that **Hashem** would show him (and in the way that Hashem would show him). —

This process propelled Avraham to an incomparable higher level: He became **Hashem’s emissary**, forging a link between creation and the Creator. This prepared the way for the connection between the higher and lower realms at the Giving of the Torah.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Likkutei Torah*, “Savo,” 42d, 43c; *Hemshech* 5672, ch. 133; et al.

⁴⁹ See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5705, s.v., “*lech lecha*,” towards the end; et al; later on {*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20}, p. 305 ff.; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 18.

⁵⁰ {The word ארץ — “land” is etymologically related to the word רצון — “desire.”}

⁵¹ {The attribute of *chochmah*, “wisdom” is referred to in Chassidus as the “father.”}

⁵² {Being a “something” connotes that his faculties were not completely surrendered to Hashem.}

⁵³ In contrast to Avraham’s *avodah* prior to this point (see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 84, and fns. 13, 14 there, **and other sources cited there**).

10.

THE LESSON

Herein lies the lesson from the fact that, as mentioned earlier, *Zayin Cheshvan* always coincides with the week of *parshas Lech Lecha*. In the time of exile as well, when we transition from “being involved in matters of the Festival” to the weekdays,⁵⁴ every Jew must understand that this transition should not cause a feeling of melancholy, Heaven forbid. On the contrary, he must do so with great joy, knowing that specifically through **this avodah**, he becomes Hashem’s emissary — {Supernal} Man’s emissary is literally like the Sender himself — carrying out the Divine intent to make a dwelling for Hashem in the lowest realms.

This will be revealed in actuality in the entire world, with the real and complete redemption through our righteous Mashiach, when “the glory of Hashem shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together, for the mouth of Hashem has spoken.”⁵⁵

— From a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Lech Lecha*, 5741 (1980)

⁵⁴ See below {*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20}, p. 301 ff., **and the sources cited there**; *Kuntres VeYaakov Halach Ledarko* 5740 (printed below {*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20}, p. 367 ff.); and the sources cited there; below {*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20}, p. 381 ff.; et al.

⁵⁵ *Yeshayahu* 40:5.