



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 18 | Yud Beis - Yud Gimmel Tammuz

Bad Is Really Good?

Translated by Rabbi Kivi Greenbaum

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

Content Editor: Rabbi Sholom Zirkind

© Copyright by Sichos In English 2022 ◦ 5782

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses are those of the translators or editors and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time maintaining readability. The translation, however, carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

TAMMUZ HAS A DOUBLE MEANING

As is well known, every month has its unique theme.¹ It is also understood (especially since everything is by means of Divine providence) that the theme of any month with a special day (or special days) in it is related with the theme of that special day (or days).

[For example, the month of Adar includes the days of Purim, which transform the entire month to a time of joy, as it says², “the **month** which was transformed for them, etc.” So much so, the law states that a person is allowed to read the Megillah any time during the entire month,³ and that “once Adar **enters**, we increase in joy.”⁴ Similarly, the month of Nissan is called **a month** of freedom⁵ because on the fifteenth of that month, the exodus from Egypt took place.]

Regarding the month of Tammuz, we find that it includes two opposing ideas: The special day of the month mentioned in the **Written Torah** (in the Prophets⁶) is the “fast of the fourth month” — the fast of the seventeenth of Tammuz; on this day, “the city {walls} were breached.”⁷ This is an overarching theme of the month, which is clear from the fact that the fast is linked with the entire month, “the fast of **the fourth**” (the fast of the fourth month).⁸

According to this, the theme of the month of Tammuz is connected with the opposite of joy — retribution. This is especially {noticeable} since from the

¹ See *Targum Sheini* on *Esther* 3:7. Every month has its unique *mazal* (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a), and on every month there radiates a unique combination of Hashem's name *Havaya*.

² *Megillas Esther* 9:22.

³ *Yerushalmi*, beg. of tractate *Megillah*. {This is allowed in certain specific circumstances, as outlined in *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 688, par. 7.}

⁴ *Taanis* 29a; *Magen Avraham* on *Orach Chaim* 686:5.

⁵ *Shemos Rabbah* 15:11. Our sages say that in the month **Nissan**, they were redeemed; and in the month of **Nissan**, they will be redeemed in the future.

⁶ *Zechariah* 8:19.

⁷ {*Taanis* 26b.} See *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Taanis*, 4:5.

⁸ *Rosh Hashanah* 18b.

seventeenth of Tammuz **and on**, {the three weeks known as} *bein ha'metzarim*,⁹ the days of mourning begin.

On the other hand, in our generation, another special day in this month was revealed, one with a contrary theme: The **festival of redemption** of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz (when the {Previous} Rebbe, my father-in-law, was liberated fully from prison and exile). This was not a personal liberation for him alone. Rather, as he wrote in his famous letter¹⁰: “On the 12th of Tammuz, Hashem did not just liberate me alone, but also all those who love our Holy Torah, those who keep the mitzvos, and even those who {just} bear the name Israel.” This includes **every** type of Jew, which means that it is a festival of liberation for **all** Jews.

From all the above it is understood that the theme of **redemption** is a fundamental and general idea for the entire month.

[As to why for so many generations, until recently, we didn't know that the message of Tammuz is (also) one of redemption, and on the contrary we **only** knew (from what was written in the Written Torah) of the idea of retribution — this is not a question, because in Torah, we find new ideas are constantly being revealed and innovated in Torah, yet, “Everything was given to Moshe at Sinai.”¹¹ The explanation is that every idea has **its** appointed time when it needs to be revealed¹² (and from that point on, we need to uphold it, like the holiday of Purim. etc.).

So, too, regarding our concept: Specifically now, in the generation of the footsteps of Moshiach (literally close to the coming of the final **Redeemer**, King Moshiach) is the time when the message of **redemption** conveyed by Tammuz needs to be revealed.]

⁹ {Lit., “between the straits or boundaries”; see *Eicha* 1:3, This refers to the 3 weeks from the 17th of Tammuz, the day on which the enemies attacked Jerusalem and broke through its walls, to the 9th of Av, the day on which the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.}

¹⁰ *Sefer Hamamarim* 5688, p. 146, et passim; and *Sefer Hamamarim* 5708, p. 263, et passim.

¹¹ See *Megillah* 19b; *Talmud Yerushalmi, Pei'ah*, 2:4; *Koheles Rabbah*, 1:9.

¹² See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, p. 207.

2.

HEAT BELOW = HEAT ABOVE

Just as the month of Tammuz has two special days that have opposite messages, we find a similar paradox concerning the name of the month itself, “Tammuz”:

- a) “Tammuz” was the name of an **idolatry**, as mentioned in the **Written Torah** (*Ezekiel*):¹³ “There were women sitting, causing Tammuz to weep.” (It was an icon that they would heat.)¹⁴ This is the lowest extremity.
- b) Conversely, it is explained at length in Chassidus that the intense heat characteristic of the Tammuz season [the **meaning** of the word “Tammuz” is “an idiom of heating”¹⁵] when understood on a deeper level, is very lofty. This is because everything in this world is produced by a chain reaction from its spiritual source. {So, too,} the physical sun is {created} from a chain reaction, from its deeper and spiritual source, “the sun {as a symbol of} Hashem” (“For Hashem, the L-rd, is a sun and a shield”).¹⁶

[Therefore, the sun also serves as a metaphor and model for the absence of any change Above. (I am Hashem, I did not change {because of creation});¹⁷ and for the {idea} of **bitul ha’olomos**,¹⁸ which is the diametric opposite of idolatry.]

The summer sunshine is, at its core, the radiance of the sun {as a symbol of} Hashem,¹⁹ and the **intense** heat of the Tammuz season is connected with the intense revelation of the name *Havaya*.²⁰ This means that in the Tammuz

¹³ *Yechezkel* 8:14.

¹⁴ Rashi on *Yechezkel* 8:14. {“There was an icon that they heated from the inside, and its eyes, which were of lead, would melt from the heat of the fire, and appeared as though the icon was crying. And people would say, ‘It is asking for an offering.’ ‘Tammuz’ connotes heating.”}

¹⁵ Rashi’s wording, *ibid*.

¹⁶ *Tehillim* 84:12.

¹⁷ *Malachi* 3:6.

¹⁸ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 33; “*Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,” ch. 3. {Lit., the nullification of the worlds.” I.e., the continuous state of total absorption of all creation within the Creator. See reference source.}

¹⁹ End of *Mammar BaYom HaShemini Atzeres* 5632; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 4.

²⁰ {The Tetragrammaton, the four-letter name of Hashem.}

season, the name *Havaya* (which is beyond nature) shines more intensely than the entire year.

[Now, we can understand **straightforwardly** why Jews named a month after an **idol** given the prohibition:²¹ “Do not mention the names of other gods.”

True, “one is permitted to mention the name of any idolatry written in the Torah,”²² and Tammuz is “written in the Torah,” as noted above. However, it is merely “**permitted** to mention” its name, but it is not **mandatory**. So, why was a name (of an idolatry) chosen at the outset, for whose usage a dispensation must be found?

According to the discussion above, there is no question. **We** called the month “Tammuz” because of the positive meaning of this name — that during this season, the intense heat shines from the “sun {as a symbol of} Hashem.”

Although some may have used the same word for the name of idolatry, still, this would be **like** the adage of our Sages²³ (on a similar topic), “Should He destroy His world on account of the fools?” Just because some dullards made “Tammuz” into a name of idolatry, must we forfeit the opportunity to praise Hashem with the lofty aspect of the month of Tammuz, (when the “sun {as a symbol of} Hashem” shines intensely)?!]

Here, too, we see the same novelty (similar to what was explained at the end of Section 1): That which is written in the **Written Torah** and was well known throughout all generations, is the undesirable aspect of Tammuz²⁴ — this is a name of idolatry. Specifically, the deeper part of Torah, as was revealed in the latter generations through Chassidus, disclosed and publicized the loftier

²¹ *Shemos* 23:13.

²² *Sanhedrin* 63b.

²³ Mishnah and *Beraisa* in *Avoda Zara* 54b. {The gentiles asked the Jewish Sages who were in Rome: If it is not G-d's will that people should engage in idol worship, why does He not eliminate idolatry? The Sages replied: Were people worshiping only objects for which the world has no need, He would eliminate it. But they worship the sun, the moon, the stars and the constellations. Should He destroy His world because of the fools?}

²⁴ {In the original, “קצה הכי תחתון”; lit., “the lowest extremity.”}

aspect²⁵ of Tammuz, the **intense** “heat” from “the sun {as a symbol of} Hashem.”

3.

EXILE IS FOR REDEMPTION

It makes sense to explain that the two opposite aspects found within the **same** month [a fast day (for the *galus* and destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*) as well as a festival (for the redemption of the Previous Rebbe)] are complementary.

The purpose of the fast day is (not the distress or fasting for itself, that we should forever remain with the fast, G-d forbid, but) that the fast should be transformed “to joy, happiness and festival(s).” This can be understood by *a fortiori* from the cause of the fast, which is *galus*. *Galus* is not an end unto itself, G-d forbid, but exists in order for us to **get out** of *galus* and merit Redemption.

In order to remind a Jew of this, so that he should be inspired and actually do all that he is charged with to ending *galus* (by eliminating {sin, that is} the cause of *galus*, “because of our sins we were exiled from our land”),²⁶ Hashem inserted into the month of Tammuz (which is a time of retribution,) a day of redemption. This is like the month of Av that also contains the festival of 15th of Av,²⁷ (and Shabbos *Nachamu*) when we recall the consolation that will come for the mourning on the 9th of Av (and for the {disciplining} severities and judgements of the month of Av.)

This explanation, however, does not suffice because of the following reasons:

a) This explanation would have been fitting had the day of redemption come **after** the day that emphasizes the *galus* (like the month of Av, in which the 15th of Av (and Shabbos *Nachamu*) follows the 9th of Av).

²⁵ {In the original, “קצה הכי עליון”; lit., “the highest extremity.”}

²⁶ From the prayers of *Musaf* of *Yom Tov*.

²⁷ *Mishneh* at the end of *Taanis*.

However, since the 12th and 13th of Tammuz come **before** the 17th of Tammuz (and the three weeks of mourning), this would imply that the redemption of Tammuz is (not a type redemption that comes [**later**] as a result of and is the purpose of exile, but on the contrary, it is actually) a redemption that is a preparation for *galus*.

b) If the two ideas of *galus* and redemption would come **together** in one period (in one month), then it would make sense to say that we should focus primarily on the ultimate purpose, which is the **redemption**.

Even when we say that attention must be paid to the idea of *galus* because through it, the idea of redemption is enhanced — that it is specifically because the “punishment {exacted on Jerusalem} was doubled” that “the consolation will be doubled.”²⁸ However, *galus* is secondary to redemption, and is only a cause for the (subsequent) higher state of redemption.

[Possibly, this is the reason for the Jewish custom, to add the word “*menachem*, comfort” to the name of the month of Av, as noted in the Targum²⁹ and in Mishnah,³⁰ making the name *Menachem Av*. The name instantly tells us that the month’s main point is (not severities and judgment, but) the **consolation** for the {negative} things that happened in Av.]

Clarification is needed: If we say that in Tammuz there is also the (main point, i.e., the) theme of redemption, how could it be that for so many generations, we only knew about what was secondary (the fast), while the **central** point was unknown?

²⁸ See *Yalkut Shemoni* on *Yeshayah*, *remez* 445.

²⁹ *Targum Sheini* on *Esther* 3:7.

³⁰ *Mishnah Taanis* ch. 5:5-6.

4.

LOVE IS HIDDEN IN ANGER

From all this, it is understood that the theme of the month of Tammuz is indeed the message of the “fast” in it. However, there are two ways to understand the idea of the fast:

- a) On the **surface**, it appears as a form of punishment.
- b) The **deeper understanding** of the fast is its transformed state in the Future Era, when the glory of Hashem will be **revealed**.³¹ The fast day will become a day of joy, happiness and a festival. This means that the fast day will be perceived not just as a punishment **for the sake of** redemption. Rather, the **fast itself**, at its core, will be recognized as a point of “joy” and “happiness,” because the retribution itself, at its core, expresses Hashem’s **love** toward the Jews. Therefore, “just like the analogy of a great and awesome king who out of great love, notwithstanding his dignity, personally washes the filth of his only son ,” so, too, “Hashem will cleanse the filth from the daughter of Zion³² {i.e., the Jewish people}.”

[We could say that this is also hinted at in the established order of the various days in the calendar (alluded to using *at-bash gematria*,³³ etc.), as cited from the great Sages and codifiers of Israel.³⁴ The 9th of Av (and similarly, the 17th of Tammuz, on which the destruction of the 9th of Av began) always falls on the **same day** of the week as the first day of Passover.³⁵ Meaning to say that this hints that at their core, they are both the same idea — an expression of Hashem’s **kindness**.]

³¹ *Yeshayah* 40:5.

³² *Yeshayah* 4:4. *Iggeres Hakodesh*, sec. 22.

³³ {A system of *gematria* correlating the first letter of the *aleph-beis* with the last letter, the second letter with the second-last, etc.}

³⁴ *Tur*, and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 428, par. 3.

³⁵ {Tisha B’Av, תשעה באב, which starts with the last letter, ת, always falls on the same day of the week as the first day of Pesach, יום א' של פסח, which is alluded to by the first letter, א.}

Moreover, a **deeper** love is embedded in judgment. The love is revealed more in the negative (in severities {i.e., discipline}). This is analogous to a father who punishes his son for misconduct. The father's strictness springs from the father's **powerful** love. (His child's misbehavior affected the father so much that he acted against his {loving} nature.) The deepest love is expressed by the opposite of love — through strictness.

With this, Chassidus explains why in the Future Era, Tisha B'Av will become a festival (and, in fact, it will be a greater Yom Tov than other festivals).

{Without this explanation of Chassidus, we would be left wondering:} True, after the third Temple is built, there will be no need to mourn on Tisha B'Av for the destruction of the previous Temples. But why should the day then become a **festival**? “Won't this constitute just escape from agony? Thus, it will be as if the Temple was never destroyed, at which time, the 9th of Av was not a bitter day”?³⁶

The reason {why the 9th of Av will become a festival} is because at its core, Tisha B'Av {even} **now** is {an expression of} the deep love of Hashem. However, as long as what openly prevails is the strictness and “anger” (during *galus*) and the inner love remains hidden, then the day of Tisha B'Av carries the theme of a fast (with all the laws of a fast day).

However, after the period characterized by the phrase, “the judgment is executed and the anger **is over**,”³⁷ which will transpire with Moshiach's arrival, then only the day's aspect of inner love will remain and will be revealed. Naturally, then, the fast day will become a day of joy and happiness.

³⁶ Or Hatorah, “Masei,” p. 1385.

³⁷Ibid., p. 1386.

5.

NOW IS A TIME TO TASTE THE HIDDEN LOVE

We could say that the reason previous generations only knew (openly) about the fast {and the negative side} of Tammuz is because, as mentioned, the intense and deep love (and redemption) of Tammuz is expressed specifically through severity.

However, in the generation preceding Moshiach, when there is already a “taste” and a “flicker” of the future redemption,³⁸ the time has come also to have a “taste” of **this** matter. We can feel how the inner dimension of the fast (and the days of *bein ha'metzarim*, in general) is really an expression of a lofty idea.

Therefore, as an introduction to, and preparation for, these {sad} days of *bein ha'metzarim*, Hashem made the miracle of 12th and 13th of Tammuz.

In particular, these two (above) extremities (related to *galus*, in general) are noticeable within this redemption {of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz}, as well. First, there must be severity [because “greater light” comes specifically “from darkness”].³⁹ But “after the judgment is completed,” we see how the darkness and severity was actually (for the sake of, and — even more so, itself — contains) an intense kindness and powerful light.

On the one hand, the Rebbe suffered the afflictions and torments of his imprisonment under the harshest conditions. He was even {originally} sentenced to the “opposite of life.”

On the other hand, we see in the redemption on 12th of Tammuz (not only that the Rebbe was liberated, but) how the complete process of his imprisonment was inwardly not a “restraint” {of his activities to disseminate *Yiddishkeit*}. On the contrary, it was a powerful kindness: It paved the way to

³⁸ *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 59.

³⁹ *Koheles* 2:13.

expand the work of spreading Torah, etc., in a **completely** different and superior way, reaching all corners of the globe.

[In the words of our Sages⁴⁰ (which the Rebbe Rashab⁴¹ used regarding the imprisonment of the Alter Rebbe): “The olive yields its oil (specifically) when it is crushed.” Crushing is a necessary step in the process of the ‘olive exuding its oil.’]

Furthermore, the redemption of the 12th of Tammuz even transformed one of the days (prior to the 12th of Tammuz) from one of **imprisonment (and exile)** to a day of joy and happiness. Not only was it transformed into a preparation for, and a beginning to, the **later** outstanding {day of the} redemption of the 12th of Tammuz, but the day **itself** is one of **redemption**. (Similar to how the **fast itself** will be transformed into joy and happiness.)

Regarding the third of Tammuz, when the Rebbe was liberated from prison and was sent into exile for three years: **Then** (in that year), it seemed as though it was another stage of incarceration, since he was being **exiled**, which in some ways is worse than a death sentence (as *Chinuch*⁴² explains.) So much so, that then, it wasn't known whether being sent to exile in Kostroma was an act of clemency. Perhaps it was merely a ploy to avert the international pressure demanding the Rebbe's release; and afterward, they would again seek to frame him.

The liberation of the 12th of Tammuz revealed that, in truth, the third of Tammuz was (not the beginning of an exile, but it was) the first stage of the **redemption**. It was a day of rescue and salvation. Furthermore, the rescue and salvation (kindness) of **that** day (when the Rebbe was released from **prison**) in certain ways was greater than was exhibited on the 12th of Tammuz (which was a release only from **exile**).

⁴⁰ *Menachos* 53b.

⁴¹ *Sefer HaSichos, Toras Shalom*, p. 26.

⁴² *Sefer HaChinuch*, mitzvah 410.

6.

TAMMUZ TODAY

Now, we can also better understand the idea behind the paradoxical aspects conveyed by the name “Tammuz”:

In previous generations, when we only noted the outward message of Tammuz (the fasting and the retribution associated with this month), it was only widely known that *Tammuz* was the name of an idol. This shows that the month of Tammuz was a time of concealment and obscurity of G-dliness, to the point of *utter* concealment and obscurity ({as reflected in being called by} the name of **idolatry**).

However, as we came closer to the time of redemption, the inner aspect of Torah — which reveals the inner dimension of everything — revealed and publicized the deeper understanding of “Tammuz”: Specifically in the darkness lies (the power for) the “**greater** light,” which is {alluded by} the **intense** heat from the “sun {as a symbol of} Hashem.”

After this idea was revealed in the **Torah**, it then manifested in the world by the miracle of the 12th of Tammuz. With our fleshly eyes, we witnessed the great supernatural revelation of the “sun {as a symbol of} Hashem,” which dispelled the most intense concealment and darkness — the fiercest and worst opposition to Torah and mitzvos — so much so, that they {the enemies} themselves agreed to release the Rebbe, knowing full well that this itself would strengthen those who were spreading Torah in that country. Meaning, those same people who had arrested the Rebbe for his work in spreading Torah, they themselves “consented” to an **expansion** of those efforts in that country!

FOCUS ON WHAT EXILE REALLY IS

One of the more obvious lessons to learn from the above: As the days of *bein ha'metzarim* approach, and a Jew reflects on the enormity of the darkness of *galus*, in general, and the time preceding Moshiach, in particular; the Jew could fall into a state of despair, at a loss as how to overcome all the hardships.

He certainly knows that through (and from) the struggles and suffering in *galus*, **afterward** an advantage will be achieved at the time of redemption. However, **now** he finds himself, after all, in such a dark and bitter *galus* that {he doesn't see} how he can **presently** overcome the difficulties.

Concerning such a sentiment comes the lesson that teaches and strengthens us: On the contrary, specifically in **this** generation — the generation on the footsteps of Moshiach — we have the revelation of the inner teachings of the Torah. These teachings reveal and promulgate the deeper message of the three weeks, i.e., the intense love of Hashem for the Jews. As a preparation for these days, we have the festival of redemption of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz. We are shown how, in **this** time of *galus* itself, the lofty inner dimension {of this time} can be **uncovered** (in a way that the concealment and darkness is removed even on an external level).

This strengthens and inspires a Jew during these days, to focus enthusiastically on the **inner** meaning of *galus*, and certainly not to be affected by the bitterness and sadness of exile.

[One must observe all the laws of mourning for *bein ha'metzarim*, as mandated by the Code of Jewish Law, with all its details; however, one finds ways, **according to Torah**, to engage in joyful matters, even during these days. One way is by making a *siyum* on a tractate of Talmud, which is deemed a “festival for the Rabbis”⁴³ even these days. (So much so, one is permitted to eat a

⁴³ *Shabbos* 118b; *Rama, Yoreh Dayah*, 246:26.

meat meal when making a *siyum* during the Nine Days).⁴⁴ Or, one can get more enthusiastically involved in Torah learning, “which gladdens the heart,”⁴⁵ especially by learning the laws of the *Beis Hamikdash* (about its construction, and so on). By reviewing passages in the Torah governing the “design of the Temple,” Hashem declares,⁴⁶ “I credit them for such learning, as if they were busy in the Temple’s construction.”]

Such conduct brings to the surface the inner dimension of the *bein ha’metzarim*, as it will emerge in the Future Era. Then, these days will be transformed “into joy, happiness, and festivals.”

— Based on talks delivered on Shabbos, *parshas Shelach* and *parshas Chukas*, 5737 (1977)

⁴⁴ *Rama, Orach Chaim*, 551:10.

⁴⁵ {*Tehillim* 19:9.} *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 554, par. 1.

⁴⁶ *Tanchuma*, “*parshas Tzav*,” 96: sec. 14.