

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF CHAUTAUQUA

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Kabbala and Meditation – Week 7 - 2020

1. My beloved is to me, and I am to him. (Song of Songs 2:16).
2. *I am to my beloved, and my beloved is to me.* (ibid, 6:3)
3. אָנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי, these words' first letters spell out Elul ל – ו – ל – א (Avudraham, The Order of the Prayers of Rosh HaShanah, ch. 1; *Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar Rosh HaShanah*, ch. 1, *Bach, Orach Chayim* 581.)
4. “My Beloved is to me...” represents a cycle where the initiative comes from Above (אתערותא דלעילא in kabbalistic terminology). This spiritual dynamic characterizes the Divine service of the month of Nissan in which G-d redeems the Jewish people even if they are unworthy. He takes them out of spiritual bondage and arouses them to turn to Him.

The months of Elul and Tishrei, by contrast, are characterized by the opposite spiritual dynamic: “I am my to Beloved...”. This phrase points to an אתערותא דלתתא, an arousal from below, where the initiative is taken by the Jewish people. They turn to G-d in teshuvah and sincere prayer and He responds with the revelations of the month of Tishrei.

...As mentioned above, the spiritual motif of Elul is that the revelation from Above comes in response to man’s Divine service below. Hence, it is necessary that man arouse his love for G-d to evoke this revelation. This arousal is alluded to by the phrase אנִי לדוֹדִי, “I am my Beloved’s.”

When the revelation of G-dliness is preceded by man’s Divine service, it will make a far more lasting and deep-felt impression. Even though the revelation from Above is more powerful than what man could achieve on his own, it is only when man prepares himself and takes the initiative on his own that he will become a k’li (“vessel”) for this revelation and be able to internalize it. (Sefer HaMaamarim 5627, p. 224)

5. [Thus,] it is known that Elul is a time when the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are revealed.

[If so, it is necessary to] understand: Why are [the days of Elul] ordinary weekdays and not festivals? The Shabbosos and the festivals [are distinguished] because they are days when [a dimension of] G-dliness [transcending the natural order] is revealed; [on them,] His G-dliness radiates [downward].

In particular, the revelation of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy reflects a very elevated level of G-dliness and [seemingly should merit distinction], for this is the level revealed on Yom Kippur.

Now, obviously, there is a great difference between Elul and Yom Kippur.

6. This concept can be illustrated by way of analogy: Before a king enters a city, its inhabitants go out to greet him and receive him in the field. At that time, anyone who so desires may approach and greet him. He receives them all pleasantly and shows a smiling countenance to all. As he proceeds to his city, they follow him. Afterwards, when he reaches his royal palace, one may only enter [his throne room] with permission — and this is granted only to the nation’s elite, to a select few.

[In the analogue, the fundamental revelation during Elul is the same as on Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are revealed as He is "in His throne room" with all the grandeur — but also with all the accompanying restrictions — implied. For that reason, Yom Kippur is a day when all worldly activity is forbidden.

During Elul, these same qualities are revealed "in the field," i.e., as they are encloded within the lower levels of the Spiritual Cosmos. Since they are not in the "Palace," the revelation does not call forth the restrictions of Yom Kippur.]

Although G-d's coming to the field invites the Jews to approach Him, as it were, since He comes to the field in ordinary clothes, i.e., encloded in the limitations of nature, it is not considered as an arousal from Above. To use the terms of the analogy, since the king is coming without all the splendor and majesty that is usually associated with his regal presence, there is nothing to arouse the people. His appearance does not motivate the people to approach him because he does not look kingly. It is necessary for the people to look within themselves, recall their bond with the king, and because of that bond, go forth to greet him. (Lekutei Torah, Re'eh)

7. When I ascended the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant which the L-rd made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water; And I fell down before the L-rd as before, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sins you had committed, by doing evil in the eyes of the L-rd to anger Him... And I prayed to the L-rd...
 - a. **RASHI:** And I fell down before the L-rd, as before, forty days: As it says, "And now I will go up to the L-rd, perhaps I will atone [for the golden calf]" (Exodus 32:30). At that ascent, I stayed there forty days; consequently, these ended on the twenty-ninth of Av, since he [Moses] ascended on the eighteenth of Tammuz.
On the same day, G-d was reconciled with Israel and He said to Moses, "Hew for yourself two tablets" (ibid, 34:1). He [Moses] remained there another forty days; consequently, these ended on Yom Kippur [the tenth of Tishri]. On that very day, the Holy One, blessed is He, was joyfully reconciled with Israel, and He said to Moses, "I have forgiven according to your words" (Numbers 14:20). Therefore [Yom Kippur] was designated [as a day] for pardon and forgiveness.
And from where do we know that [G-d] was reconciled [with Israel] in complete acceptance? Because it says referring to the forty [days] of the later tablets, "And I remained on the mountain as the first days" (Deuteronomy, 10:10). Just as the first [forty days] were with [G-d's] good will, so too, the last [forty days] were with [G-d's] good will. We may now deduce that the intermediate [forty days] were with [G-d's] anger. — [Seder Olam , ch. 6]
At that time, the L-rd said to me, "Hew for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to Me onto the mountain... And I remained on the mountain like the first days forty days and forty nights. (Deuteronomy, 9:9, 18, 26 – 10:1-10)
8. And the L-rd passed before him and proclaimed: L-rd, L-rd, benevolent G-d, Who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness and truth, preserving loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and rebellion and sin; yet He does not completely clear [of sin] He visits the iniquity of parents on children and children's children, to the third and fourth generations. (Exodus, 34:6-7)
9. Now, please, let the strength of the L-rd be increased, as You spoke, saying.
'The L-rd is slow to anger and abundantly kind, forgiving iniquity and transgression, Who cleanses [some] and does not cleanse [others], Who visits the iniquities of parents on children, even to the third and fourth generations.'
Please forgive the iniquity of this nation in accordance with your abounding kindness, as You have borne this people from Egypt until now."

And the L-rd said, "I have forgiven them in accordance with your word. (Numbers, 14:17-20)

- a. RASHI: The L-rd is slow to anger: [both] towards the righteous and towards the wicked. When Moses ascended on high, he found the Holy One, blessed is He, sitting and writing, "The L-rd is slow to anger." He said to Him, "Towards the righteous?" The Holy One, blessed is He, answered him, "Even toward the wicked" He [Moses] said to Him, "Let the wicked perish!" He said to him, "By your life, you will have need for this [patience for the wicked]. When Israel sinned at [the incident of] the [golden] calf and at the [time of the] spies, Moses prayed before Him [making mention of] "slow to anger." The Holy One, blessed is He, replied to Him, Did you not tell me "Toward the righteous"? He [Moses] responded, But did You not reply to me, "Even toward the wicked"? - [Talmud, Sanhdrin 111a]

10. Seek the L-rd when He is found, call Him when He is near. (Isaiah 55:6)

11. "Seek the L-rd while He may be found; call upon Him when He is near" (Isaiah 55:6)... the verse is referring to an individual, to whom G-d is near only at certain times... With regard to an individual, when is G-d near to him? Rabba bar Avuh said: These are the ten days between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. (Talmud, Rosh Hashana 18a)

12. Rabbi Mana of Shav and Rabbi Yehoshua of Sakhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi, "[There is a relevant] parable about a province that owed a [certain tax] to the king and the king went to collect it. [When he was] within ten *mil*, the leaders of the province went out to laud him, [so] he cancelled a third of [that tax]; within five *mil*, the middling people of the province went out to laud him, [so] he cancelled another third; when he entered the province, all of the residents of the province - men, women and children - came out and lauded him, and he cancelled it all. He said, 'What is past is past. From now, let us start a [new] reckoning.'

So [too] on the eve of [before] Rosh Hashanah, the greats of the generations fast, and the Holy One, blessed be He, cancels a third of their iniquities; and from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, the [select] individuals fast, and the Holy One, blessed be He, cancels [another] third of their iniquities; and on Yom Kippur, everyone fasts - men, women and children. So the Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel, 'What is past is past. From now, let us start a [new] reckoning.'" (Medrash Rabah, Leviticus 30:7)

13. Based on this Medrash, many communities have the custom to wake up in middle of the night to pray in shul, every Monday and Thursday of the entire month of Elul just as is done during the ten days of repentance (between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur). (Meiri, Chibur Hateshuva, pg. 250)

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