

ELUL • ALEF-LAMED-VAV-LAMED • what's in a name?

Let's start with the well-known classic - ANI L'DODI V'DODI LI.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine..." This quote from Shir HaShirim (6:3) is the well-known by its Rashei Teivot which spell ELUL. The phrase describes the mutual love between G-d and the People of Israel, which serves as an encouraging basis of our Elul-time task of sincere repentance.

Other phrases from Tanach are also associated with ELUL.

Notable among them are two other phrases which join ANI L'DODI to represent the three kinds of acts that help us avert an evil decree, T'SHUVA (repentance), T'FILA (prayer), and TZ'DAKA (chesed).

One of the p'sukim in the Torah that deals with the topic of T'shuva indicates G-d's help in the process: u'mol HaShem elokecha ET L'VOVCHA V'ET L'VAV zarecha - And HaShem your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your offspring, to love HaShem your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live. This pasuk (D'varim 30:6) is read on the Shabbat before Rosh HaShana and contains a four word sequence - ET L'VAVCHA V'ET L'VAV - whose initials spell ELUL.

Then there is a pasuk in Megilat Esther which contains an ELUL and features inter-personal acts of kindness: ...laasot otam... y'mei mishteh v'simcha umishlo'ach manot ISH L'REI-EIHU U'MATANOT LA-EVYONIM - to make them days of feasting and joy, and sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

And here are a few more -

Vayikra 12:8 & 5:7 - ECHAD L'OLAH V'ACHAD L'CHATAT and ECHAD L'CHATAT V'ECHAD L'OLAH. These p'sukim speak of two types of Korbanot, two types of sacrifices for different kinds of sins. The Chatat is for SHOGEH (inadvertent) violation of some prohibitions; the Olah for non-fulfillment of positive mitzvot. Both failings must be on our Elul agenda!

Prayer is an essential element of Elul. In Divrei HaYamim Alef 29:13 we find, "Now therefore, our God, we thank you, and praise your glorious name." With ELUL embedded therein: v'ata elokeinu modim ANACHNU LACH UM-HAL'LIM

L'SHEIM tifartecha.

**And look at this pasuk from Yirmiyahu (31:33), with ELUL embedded in it too:
...ki ESLACH LA'AVONAM ULCHATATAM LO ezkor od.**

"...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will no longer remember their sin."

**Yirmiyahu 12:15 shows us the other part of "Return". And it shall come to pass...
and have compassion on them, and will bring them back, every man to his
heritage, and every man to his land. v'haya acharei natshi otam ashuv
v'richamtim vahashivotam ISH L'NACHLATO V'ISH L'ARTZO - every man to his
heritage, and every man to his land.**

**One more. I had heard an ELUL shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz. He
presented three ELULs - ANI L'DODI... and ET L'VAV'CHA... and this is his third
one:**

**In Parshat Mishpatim, we are introduced to the IR MIKLAT, the city of refuge.
Anyone who kills another person goes to IR MIKLAT... The one who did not
intend to kill but was negligent in some way that caused the death, is confined
to IR MIKLAT (it's a bit more complicated than that...). In it, he is protected and
punished, but also undergoes a process of introspection, T'shuva, and
ultimately, KAPARA.**

**Sh'mot 21:13 says: If he did not plan to kill [his victim], but God caused (allowed)
it to happen, then I will provide a place where [the killer] can find refuge. The
words INA L'YADO V'SAMTI L'CHA have the Rashei Teivot of Elul. The month of
Elul is an IR MIKLAT - not in space, but in time - for each of us. When we sin, we
are taking part of our life away - in essence, killing ourselves - and are provided
by the IR MIKLAT of the month of Elul to help us with introspection, T'shuva...
and hopefully, to receive KAPARA and a new lease on Life.**

**On the lighter side, the gimatriya of the word ELUL is 67. So is the gimatriya of
KOL TUV - all good.**

