

The HINDA Institute

Helping Individuals Ascend
Monthly Newsletter

Elul



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MENACHEM AV-ELUL 5777

As the last month of the Jewish year, Elul (August 23–September 20, 2017) is traditionally a time of introspection and stocktaking—a time to review one’s deeds and spiritual progress over the past year, and prepare for the upcoming “Days of Awe” of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Elul is a most opportune time for teshuvah (“return” to G-d), prayer, charity, and increased ahavat Yisrael (love for a fellow Jew), in the quest for self-improvement and coming closer to G-d.

The following are some of the basic customs and practices for the month of Elul:

-Each day of the month of Elul (except for Shabbat and the last day of Elul), we sound the shofar (ram’s horn) as a call to repentance.

-When writing a letter or meeting one another, we bless one another by including the greeting Ketivah vachatimah tovah—which roughly translates as “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.”

-Chapter 27 of the Book of Psalms is added to the daily prayers, in the morning and afternoon.

-We recite three additional chapters of Psalms each day, from the first of Elul until Yom Kippur.

-During the last week of Elul, in the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah, the Selichot prayers are recited.

The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, penned the following eloquent words regarding Elul, the final month of the Jewish calendar year:

The month of Elul is the month of reckoning. In the material world, if a businessman wishes to conduct his affairs properly and with great profit, he must periodically take an accounting and correct any deficiencies... Likewise in the spiritual service of G-d. Throughout the year all Israelis occupied with Torah, Mitzvot and (developing and expressing) good traits. The month of Elul is the month of reckoning, when every Jew - each commensurate with his abilities, whether scholar or businessman - must make an accurate accounting in his soul of everything that occurred during the course of the year. Each individual must know the good qualities in his service of G-d and strengthen them; he must also be aware of the deficiencies in himself and in his service, and correct these. Through this excellent preparation, one merits a good and sweet year, materially and spiritually.

Perhaps the first order of business for the month of reckoning is some soul-searching regarding our approach to our Jewish obligations. Do we run our spiritual business like an entrepreneur, or

like a low-level, nine-to-five employee?

Let's use the example of a retail establishment. The owner is preoccupied with the venture 24 hours a day. Even when he is sleeping, he dreams about his business. If sales aren't up to par - and even if they are - he is busy developing new advertising techniques and marketing gimmicks to drum up more business.

Conversely, even the best clerks and stockers have very limited interest in the success of the store. If a shopper walks in, they will offer superb customer service. If there are no customers—well, it's not their problem. And from the moment they punch their time-cards at the end of their shift until they show up for their next shift, the business is the farthest thing from their minds. Incidentally, that's why these fine workers get paid minimum wage; they have no emotional investment whatsoever...

Just as each of us needs a material occupation to provide us with financial income, so too we are required to make a "spiritual living," to bring holiness into our surroundings through the study of Torah and observance of mitzvot. Every individual is provided with the necessary talents and abilities to illuminate his particular and unique niche in this world.

There are two ways to approach this spiritual livelihood. We can sit in the store and patiently wait for customers, or we can pursue them. We can wait for someone to request assistance in studying Torah and/or the performance of a mitzvah, or we can actively search for such opportunities. We can wait for mitzvah opportunities to stumble upon us, or we can search for them like lost treasure. As King David said, "I rejoice over Your word as one who finds great spoil."

This is especially true regarding Ahavat Yisrael, loving and caring for our fellow Jews, the mitzvah which is the cornerstone of the entire Torah. Jews are naturally good-hearted and caring. It is second-nature (or maybe first-nature) for a Jew to respond generously - both financially and emotionally - to a fellow in distress. But we must go beyond that. We cannot wait to be confronted with tragedy, G-d forbid, before we exercise kindness and mercy. We must actively seek ways to help our brothers and sisters, even before they walk through our shop-front door asking for help.

Mitzvot are more than obligations. They are our life's ambition and goal.

So, for the next year, do you want to sit in Dilbert's cubicle, or would you prefer the corner office with the panoramic view? If you intend to ask G-d for the CEO's office—act the part!

Jewish Story

By Rabbi Tuvya Bolton

This week's Torah portion Ri'eh, is a continuation of Moses' final directions and warnings to the Jews before they enter the Holy Land without him. It begins:

"See, I have put before you today a blessing and a curse."

And then continues to explain what these blessings and curses are.

But at first glance there are a few questions here:

First: why did Moses begin with the word 'See' and not 'Listen' or 'understand'? 'See' seems to be inappropriate. What exactly did he want them to look at?

Second: why did he say 'I' have put etc.? Everyone knew that Moses was speaking; he didn't need to say 'I'.

In fact this entire introductory sentence seems superfluous. Moses could have just begun with the blessings and curses.

To understand this, here is a story I just heard from a dear friend Rabbi Y.Y. Gurevitz which he heard some 35 years ago from the man it happened to.

Mr. Alkebetz was a direct descendent of the holy, gifted Rabbi Shlomo Alkebetz of over four hundred years ago who wrote the beautiful and mysterious poem 'Lecha Dodi' found in every 'Siddur' beginning the Shabbat evening prayers.

But Mr. Alkebetz bore little similarity to his ancestor.

The holy Rabbi Shlomo Alkebetz had been totally devoted to the Creator and His Torah, while our hero was totally devoted to being a bank manager and he was one of the best in Israel perhaps in the world. But, except for a vague awareness that they were Jews, he and his wife had absolutely no visible connection to Judaism.

But this was to change. It began when he got a golden opportunity to travel to New York for three months to assume the management of a bank (I think it was Bank HaPoalim) in Manhattan with an option to stay if he liked it.

The pay was great, the accommodations would be excellent, the opportunity was fantastic. His wife encouraged him to try it out and off he went....alone.

And he succeeded. In one month he put the bank back on its feet and everyone was satisfied. But after the second month he decided that New York was not for him. He called his wife, they talked it over and they both decided that he would return to Israel.

So he notified his bosses and began to prepare for the return in true Israeli fashion; to load up on electrical appliances which used to be half the Israeli price! Buy! Buy! But where?

He had three weeks before his return date but being a practical man he decided to save time and aggravation by going to the Israeli consulate for directions to the cheapest and most dependable place to buy. They advised that he first try the Crown

Heights area of Brooklyn.

Some two hours later Mr. Alkebetz was in Crown Heights almost finished with his purchases; mix-masters, toasters, wireless phones, cameras; gifts for his house, his wife, friends, relatives etc.

But, as he was paying he noticed that on every wall of the store was hanging at least two pictures of the same rabbi; the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He had seen the Rebbe's face before in the Israeli newspapers; almost every day there was a small picture that someone must have sponsored but he knew nothing about the man. His curiosity was aroused.

So he asked the salesman about it and his reply was; just walk out the front door take a right, walk for five minutes, take a left and you'll be at a big building called the Chabad World Headquarters; the Rebbe is inside that building!

Alkebetz couldn't believe his ears. So close? Something told him to do it. He asked if he could leave his packages while he went to have a look and five minutes later he was entering the large building at 770 Eastern Parkway. People were friendly, especially the Yeshiva boys. They explained a bit about what was going on and told him that the Rebbe would be coming out of his room in a few minutes to pray the afternoon prayer (mincha) and if he waited in the entrance hall he would see him.

They gave him a prayer book (siddur) which he looked at for a few minutes until suddenly a door knob turned, everyone became silent the door of the Rebbe's office opened and he came out.

Alkebetz was instantly transformed. Suddenly he saw majesty, wisdom, power, blessing all in one. He said to himself 'to this man belongs everything I have' and decided right then and there to give him the most precious thing he had; a 400 year old Megilla (Scroll read on Purim) written by his ancestor Rabbi Shlomo Alkebetz that was so dear to him that he didn't want to leave it behind in Israel; he had it with him in New York.

But how to do it? He asked around till someone suggested he find the Rebbe's secretary Rabbi Groner. He located him, introduced himself, told him what he wanted to do and Rabbi Groner told him to write the Rebbe a letter and ask him if it was a good idea.

Often replies took months but surprisingly fifteen minutes later there was an answer. The Rebbe thanked him for the offer but gave three reasons why he could not accept the scroll. First, one who rejects gifts lives longer. Second, one should never give away an inheritance. Finally, it would be fine if he just gave him a photocopy of the Magilla.

Mr. Alkebetz returned to the store, then to his hotel room, and then returned to the Chabad Library to make the copies. But while doing so he had a chance to ask a lot of question and get a lot of explanations. He knew very little about Judaism and nothing what so ever about the Rebbe. But, for some reason, it didn't surprise him that the Rebbe had such an effect on him.

A few days later Alkebetz heard a knock on his hotel room door

and opened it to a pleasant surprise; his wife! She took a week off of her job, got permission from his bank, and decided to join him for the remaining few weeks to tour New York together.

It didn't take long for her to realize her husband had changed; he could talk about nothing else than the Rebbe, how he saw him, how he felt, what he thought etc. At first she tried to calm him down and when that didn't work she declared that she wanted to judge for herself. She never saw her husband like this; he had always been so logical and practical. They would begin their tour at 770.

Mr. Alkebetz called Rabbi Groner and the next day he and his wife were crowded together with another hundred people (women on one side of the entrance hall, men on the other), waiting for the Rebbe to leave the small synagogue where he prayed with some one hundred of his Chassidim and return to his office.

The knob turned, the door opened and the Rebbe exited. Mrs. Alkebetz wasn't expecting it but as the Rebbe passed her she suddenly burst out crying; weeping like a baby! When her husband heard it he also began sobbing as well.

The Rebbe stopped for a moment, looked at both of them bawling uncontrollably, then at his secretary Rabbi Groner and shrugged his shoulders in wonder. Rabbi Groner explained that this was Mr. Alkebetz and his wife and that he was the manager of the Bank HaPoalim that wanted to give the Rebbe his Megilla. The Rebbe looked at them, smiled, nodded slightly wished them good news and continued to his room.

Mr. Alkebetz later said that when they left the building he looked at his wife and asked her what happened? She had been a non-religious, normal person that had no love for the orthodox and especially not their Rabbis. What made her burst out crying?! She answered. "I don't know what happened but looking at the Rebbe made me feel like someone who saw his father for the first time in thirty years!"

Then, a few minutes later as they were in the taxi back to the hotel she turned to him and said. "Listen, I don't know what happened there by the Rebbe, but one thing for sure; our lives from now on can't be the same as before."

At that moment they both decided to keep Shabbat, eat only kosher food and a third thing that Rabbi Gurevitz (the one telling me the story) couldn't remember.

One second of seeing transformed their lives.

This answers our questions.

The biggest obstacle to believing in G-d is that we don't see

him. G-d intentionally created this physical world in a way that he would be concealed (the Hebrew word for 'world' and for 'concealment' is the same HLM). But on the other hand this physical world and only this physical world reflects G-d's true essence; only here was the Torah given, the Temple built and only here will be the raising of the dead. But despite all that, the world hides the truth.

That is why the Jews needed Moses and need a Moses in every generation: to show them how to SHOW G-d's unity and transform the concealment to a meaningful, blessed, happy place. But without Moses it can't happen.

That is why, as soon as the Jews thought they would never SEE Moses again they got scared and worshiped the Golden Calf! (Ex. 32:1)

That is what Moses meant here by the word "SEE". He was telling the Jews; don't just HEAR or UNDERSTAND that G-d is the source of all blessings but rather look at me and SEE it! SEE that G-d is close, loves and creates you and will solve all your PHYSICAL problems. That is the message that he wanted them to take into the Holy Land.

And that is why he said "I"; because just seeing Moses, the "G-d man" (Deut.33:1) made people realize their true "I"; namely that they too are G-dly and that not only can the world never prevent them (and us) from realizing this but we can transform the world and reveal the Creator in every detail of His creation.

As we saw in our story; the Rebbe caused everyone involved to SEE and feel a new identity... a new "I".

This will be the job of Moshiach; to make everyone realize how close and caring the Creator is... indeed, that He is our true "I" (that is why the Ten Commandments begin with 'I').

But it all depends on us to make it happen sooner. Especially this Shabbat which will begin the Hebrew month of Elul, hinted at by "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me" (Songs 6:3). Namely that every Jew find his/her true 'I' and realize that HaShem is our 'beloved'

Then, one more good deed, word or even thought and the entire world will SEE ... Moshiach NOW!

Wishing all our readers a Ksiva VChasima Tova!

Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Dean of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim

Kfar Chabad, Israel

yeshiva@ohrtmimim.org

Jewish Joke

Jewish mothers don't differ from any other mothers in the world when it comes to bragging about their sons. Rivkah, trying to out-do another when it came to opportunities available to their just-graduated sons said, "My Irving has had so many fine interviews, his resume is now in its fifth printing."

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9401 Margail Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Phone: 847-296-1770
Email: chabad@chabadandfree.com



HINDAHELPS.COM

In loving memory of
Mrs. Hinda Scheiman OBM

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NOTICES:

Please make a request to your Chaplain that you would like a visit from a Rabbi in SEPTEMBER.

HINDA Family Division Connect your family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child etc.) with our Family Division! Please contact us for more information.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: All mail sent to the Hinda Institute should be addressed to our Inmate Advocate. Letters should NOT be addressed to Rabbi Scheiman. Please use this mailing address to contact us by mail:

Inmate Advocate
The Hinda Institute
9401 Margail Ave
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Housing Resource: For any families trying to

find a rental for their loved one to parole to upon release. Contact Mr. Marcus. This applies even to register with the state upon release. There is a fee for his services. Don Yosef Marcus—(847) 361-7770

Upcoming Holidays:

Rosh Hashanah: Begins sunset of Wednesday September 20, 2017—Ends nightfall of Friday, September 22, 2017.

Tzom Gedalia: Sunday, September 24, 2017.

Yom Kippur: Begins sunset of Friday, September 29, 2017—Ends nightfall of Saturday, September 30, 2017.

Sukkos: Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 4, 2017—Ends nightfall of Wednesday, October 11, 2017.

Simchas Torah: Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 11, 2017—Ends nightfall of Friday, October 13, 2017.

Contact your Chaplain for guidance how to observe these holidays.

Doses of the Rebbes Vision

Adapted by Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

Here is a collection of thoughts and statements that express the Rebbe's vision. Some are direct translations. Some are paraphrased. All attempt to remain faithful to the sense of urgency and promise we heard in the Rebbe's words.

A World Becoming

The times in which our generation lives are not ordinary times. We dwell on the interface between two worlds—a world as it was and a world as it is meant to be.

Everything is in place, all the infrastructure to bind the world together as one, the technology by which all of humanity can share deep wisdom, all that is needed so that the secret of oneness can be grasped within the human mind.

The stage is set. All that's left is for us to open our eyes.

Revolution

If you were there and the forces of destruction were about to destroy Jerusalem and you had the power to do something about it, would you sit and mourn and cry?

Or would you turn the world upside-down to change history?

So what is stopping you? Turn over the whole world now!

One Last Adjustment

Our deeds are the medicine by which the world heals itself. It's not size and quantity that mat-

ters. Only one small, good deed and everything could fall in place.

Which deed will that be?

It could be any one.

Whatever you can do, do it believing that this is the one to tip the scales.

Technology

Technology is not here simply to provide utility. It is also meant as a springboard to wonder, allowing us to conceive our reality

in ways previously unimaginable.

Technology provides an ever-expanding bank of metaphor to crystallize the most abstract ideas into tangible forms.

Don't think that this is a mere side benefit of technology.

On the contrary, for this purpose these ideas were embedded into the universe from the six days of creation, only to unfold in our times.

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 15, pp. 42-48.

Open Eyes

After 33 centuries, all that's needed has been done.

The table is set, the feast of Moshiach is being served with the Ancient Wine, the Leviathan and the Wild Ox—and we are sitting at it.

All that's left is for us to open our eyes and see.

Sefer Ha-Sichot 5752, page 165.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3366409/jewish/Ten-Doses-of-the-Rebbes-Vision.htm