

that we should now provide all who are needy with whatever is necessary for all of the coming festivals – beginning with their Rosh Hashanah needs³³ and then their Erev Yom Kippur, Motze Yom Kippur etc. requirements.³⁴

THIRTY DAYS IN ADVANCE

- We should publicize everywhere – this includes those who go to speak at other congregations³⁵ – that the drive to provide Sukkos requirements to all who are in need of them should begin thirty days before Sukkos.³⁶

FOR ROSH HASHANAH TOO

- Moreover, we should begin a drive for Rosh Hashanah thirty days in advance too – since we find that the prophet Nechemya instructed the Jewish people on Rosh Hashanah, “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet beverages and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, for today is sacred to Hashem!” (Nechemya 8:10).³⁷

מוקדש

לב"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח

◇

לזכות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' צבי מרדכי בן שרה וזוגתו שלומית בת שושנה
ומשפחתו שיחיו גודמאן

◇

לעילוי נשמת

ארי' בן צבי הלוי לאנג נפטר כ"ד מנחם-אב תשל"ו תנצב"ה
ולע"נ באשא עלקא בת נתן וויין נפטר כ"ה מנחם-אב תנצב"ה

◇

יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

thirty days before Sukkos.”

33. “When there is an obligation to “eat rich foods and drink sweet beverages and send portions to those who have nothing prepared” (Nechemya 8:10).”

34. “...And following that, Sukkos, Shimini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.” (Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5750 – Hisvaaduyos p.230-231)

35. Roshei Devarim, Parshas Ki Tzeitzei, 5751.

36. “In order that they will be able to prepare for Sukkos, “the time of our rejoicing,” amidst tranquility, joy and goodness of heart.” (Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5751 – Hisvaaduyos p.241)

37. Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5751 – Hisvaaduyos p.241.

a CALL to ACTION

THE MONTH OF ELUL

PART I

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar

Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this newly published edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe's Sichos that pertain to the month of Elul and preparations for Tishrei.

HaMaaseh Hu Halkar is a compilation of Hora'os ("directives") culled from the Rebbe's talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (Muga and Bilti Muga); we have expended great effort in our attempt to capture some of the Rebbe's calculated and instructive phrasing. This edition's English translation was provided by Rabbi **Yaakov Paley**.

At this time, when Moshiach's arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate 'the superiority of deed' above scholarship. May it happen now, completely and speedily!

Editorial Office of
HaMaaseh Hu Halkar
Erev Shabbos Mevarchim Elul, 5767

a CALL to ACTION

Published and Copyrighted by

המעשה הוא העיקר

"HaMaaseh Hu Halkar"

280 Troy Av, Brooklyn, NY 11213

Tel: (718) 363-3448 • Fax: (718) 467-6919

e-mail: info@iChossid.com

5767 • 2007

NEW! www.iChossid.com

TZEDAKAH "GIFTS"

• The acronym of 'Elul' which alludes to giving Tzedakah is found in the verse (Esther 9:22), "[Sending portions,] each man to his friend, and *gifts to the poor*." The Tzedakah that we distribute during Elul should assume the quality of "*gifts* (i.e., something of worth) to the poor"; both the amount and the quality of that which is given should be something that both the donor and the recipient consider of value.³¹

PREPARE NEEDY FOR UPCOMING FESTIVALS

• It is during Elul that we prepare for Rosh Hashanah and all the other festivals of the month of Tishrei.³² It is only correct

reciting Ledavid Hashem Ori Veyishi ("Hashem is my light and salvation" – Tehillim 27) throughout Elul and until after Hoshanah Rabah; the custom to recite three chapters of Tehillim daily (from the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur, and 36 chapters on Yom Kippur itself, all of these chapters being in addition to the regular daily chapters of Tehillim), and many more practices that differ according to location and the like." (Parshas Shoftim 5749 – Hisvaaduyos p.243)

31. Why not "charity" to the poor?

"Shabbos Mevarchim Chodesh Elul [the Shabbos prior to the new month, when we bless the coming month of Elul] has passed. It is therefore appropriate to mention one of the fundamental matters of Elul, which is also alluded to in one of the famous acronyms of 'Elul': **איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים**, "[Sending delicacies] each to the other and gifts to the poor" (Esther 9:22), which refers to Tzedakah.

There is precision in the wording of the verse, "*gifts* to the poor": when people say "a gift," there normally mean a bestowal of something of worth – certainly not a mere penny or two. The reason for this wording here can be understood in light of our Sages' teaching that, "One gives a gift to a person from whom he has received some sort of benefit." In other words, the recipient had previously caused *pleasure* to the benefactor. From this it is understood that the gift ought to be something of *value* to the benefactor; if the benefactor is an important person, he should give a more valuable gift in direct proportion with the recipient's status. Why, when the recipient recounts how he received a gift "from so-and-so" or when someone witnesses the gift being given, it should be clearly discernable that a valuable 'gift' has been given. After all, that's the way things are amongst family members on various gift-giving occasions – "Here's a present from so-and-so!" obviously means a gift of value...

A gift is a gift

From all the above we have a clear lesson and instruction regarding the giving of Tzedakah during the month of Elul ... What we give should be a "gift" that is worthy to be given to one who has "caused pleasure to the benefactor." Obviously, the gift should *itself* indicate how much the recipient is worth in the eyes of the benefactor and how worthy he is to receive the gift – there is *no place*, obviously, for a bestowal that is *disrespectful* and the like..." (26th of Menachem-Av 5749 – Hisvaaduyos p.209)

32. "Starting from Rosh Chodesh Elul, which is thirty days before Rosh Hashanah, and certainly from the 15th of Elul, which is two weeks before Rosh Hashanah and

the blessing to be “inscribed and sealed for a good, sweet year.”²⁷

PUBLICIZE THIS CUSTOM

- It is worthwhile and highly appropriate that besides having our own Tefillin and Mezuzos checked, we also make an effort to publicize this practice wherever we can and to whomever we can.²⁸

MISSED SHACAHNIS SHOFAR, HEAR MINCHAH

- If, for whatever reason, one is involved in a matter of Torah or Mitzvos that cannot be delayed and therefore failed to sound the Shofar at the end of the morning prayers, the correct custom would then be to blow the Shofar directly following the *afternoon* prayers.²⁹

PUT OTHERS FIRST

- During the month of Elul, we should accentuate our efforts on behalf of the community and outreach activities. We should give priority to these efforts even if the involvement with others will cause us to temporarily forego advancing our personal affairs. Ultimately, such activities will not cause us any form of loss whatsoever.³⁰

27. Parshas R'ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.209. See Mateh Efraim, Orech Chaim 581:10.

28. Parshas R'ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.209.

29. **Mincha's fine too**

“...If, for whatever reason (even a good reason such as one who was occupied in a Mitzvah Shehazeman Geramah (a ‘time-bound’ Mitzvah) ... they should then blow the Shofar directly following *afternoon* prayers – as has been stated numerous times; there are also hints to this practice in numerous places.” (24th of Elul 5751, at an address to Chabad women and girls – Hisvaaduyos p.314, footnote 81, and in Roshei Devarim)

30. **Aid fellow Jews**

“In fact, working with others causes one’s heart and mind become refined a thousand-fold.

Not only should we increase all aspects of our personal divine service during Elul, but we should also step up our community efforts – for both the welfare of all Jewry as well as each individual Jew. This includes helping each Jew to augment *their* divine service surrounding Elul.

Shofar, Tehillim and more

Generally speaking, we should take stock of our past year’s divine service and prepare for the coming year. Our preparation should include the fulfillment of the unique customs of the month of Elul – such as blowing the Shofar daily and

Table of Contents

The Month of Elul

Introduction	4
Review And Complete The Past Year	5
Plan For The Coming Year	6
Stock-Taking In All Areas Of Service	6
Good Could Always Be Better	7
All Add In Prayer	7
Bring The King – Increase Torah Study	7
Make Your Studies A Prayer	8
Chassidus – Inner Bond With Hashem.....	8
Five Acronyms Of Elul	8
Five Tasks Of Elul	9
All Towards Geulah	9
The Time Is Now	9
Unlimited Joy Of Elul	10
Farbrengens Of Joy	12
Bless Every Jew	12
Kesivah Vachasimah Tovah.....	12
Use Any Method	12
Bless Again For Greater Results	12
Children May Bless Adults	13
Check Tefillin And Mezuzos	13
Publicize This Custom	14
Missed Shacahnis Shofar, Hear Minchah	14
Put Others first	14
Tzedakah “Gifts”.....	15
Prepare Needy For Upcoming Festivals.....	15
Thirty Days In Advance	16
For Rosh Hashanah Too.....	16

The editors of *HaMaaseh Hu Haikar* seek dedicated individuals who would like to sponsor future editions of a CALL to ACTION. Please contact Levi at 347-268-3299. Thank you.

Translated in the memory of **Yitzchok Yosef ben Yaakov Mordechai**.

The Month of Elul

INTRODUCTION

Elul is a time of unique closeness between Hashem and the Jewish people, which is even reflected in the acronym of “Elul” – which stands for Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li, אָנִי לְדוּדֵי וְדוּדֵי לִי (“I [the Jewish people] am to my Beloved [Hashem] and my Beloved is to me” – Shir Hashirim 6:3).¹

The Alter Rebbe presented the following parable to explain the divine service of Elul: As the king approaches his capital city, the city’s inhabitants leave their homes and enter the fields beyond the city limits in order to greet the king and escort him into the city. All who so wish may – and are given the ability to – personally greet the king. He in turn greets them with a benevolent countenance and displays a smiling face to them all.

It is likewise, the Alter Rebbe concludes, when we go forth during Elul to greet the light of Hashem’s countenance in the ‘field’...²

Now, the detailed manner in which we are expected to perform our service during Elul was not clearly spelled out in the Written and Oral Torah – but rather, each of us has been tasked with contemplating how we might deepen our personal connection with Hashem (within the framework of the Torah’s regulations). Nevertheless, we will certainly achieve our goal by following the instructions that were issued by the Torah-greats of previous generations.³ [See footnote 20 for further explanation on Elul].

should nevertheless continue to bless them time and again throughout Elul. Our additional blessings can amplify the revealed goodness that had already been designated by Hashem for each Jew and for all Jewry to an incomparably greater extent.²⁵

CHILDREN MAY BLESS ADULTS

- It is customary that even children under the age of Bar and Bas Mitzvah wish this blessing to everyone – including adults. This is done, despite that fact that it is generally not considered proper for a child to bless an adult.²⁶

CHECK TEFILLIN AND MEZUZOS

- Shulchan Aruch states that, “The scrupulous are accustomed to have their Tefillin and Mezuzos checked during Elul, as well as seeing to the repair of all other aspects that concern the performance of Mitzvahs; this is a fine custom.” Indeed, this is a way to increase the blessings we receive from Hashem –especially

25. Crescendo of blessings

“It is customary to bless each other with a Kesivah Vechasimah Tovah from Rosh Chodesh Elul onward. Understandably, we should constantly amplify this custom as the month of Elul progresses – from one day to the next, and certainly on special days like the 18th of Elul [the birthday of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe] – and yet further on the Shabbos before the beginning of the Selichos recitation (which are begun on Motze Menuchah, “the night following [Shabbos,] the Day of Rest.” We begin reciting Selichos after most of Elul – which we spent together with “the King, in the field” – has already passed. Then, on each new day of Selichos we should yet further augment our blessing each other ...

For on those auspicious days there is a manifold and even incomparably loftier power to bless; we should therefore grab the opportunity to bless each other again and again...” (22nd of Elul 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.332-333)

26. Kids have the power too

“The fact that there is a custom for even *youngsters* to bless everyone – including adults – is itself an indication that they too have been granted the power to elicit Hashem’s blessing. Indeed, there are *numerous* instances where youngsters have equal powers to adults ...

Turn Chutzpa to Brochah

True, the proper procedure would be for children to request a blessing *from* the adults; nevertheless, since in our times children do not act in a respectful manner towards their elders to begin with, it would only be correct to channel this behavior towards positive matters such as blessings – all the more so during these auspicious days.” (24th of Elul 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.339)

1. Pri Eitz Chaim (Shaar Rosh Hashanah), Avudraham (Seder Rosh Hashanah) and others.

2. Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.200.

3. Parshas Shoftim 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.235.

FARBRENGENS OF JOY

- We should make many joyous gatherings [farbrengens] in connection with the month of Elul.²³

BLESS EVERY JEW

- Each of us should endeavor to bless all other Jews – and to be blessed by them in turn. Men should bless other men; women should bless other women; boys to their friends and girls to theirs.²⁴

KESIVAH VACHASIMAH TOVAH

- We should wish each individual Jew and all Jews as one, Kasivah Vachasimah Tovah, Leshanah Tovah U'mesukah – “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year!”²⁴

USE ANY METHOD

- This should be done through any available method – face to face, by word of mouth or in writing.²⁴

BLESS AGAIN FOR GREATER RESULTS

- Even if we have already blessed a particular individual, we

order to explain why Elul is *not* a Yom Tov ... The joy of a Yom Tov is caused by a revelation of G-dly light that shines forth during that festival; the joy is therefore limited to that particular revelation and is also the reason why it is able to be ‘contained’ in the form of an obligation. The joy of Elul on the other hand, stems from the fact that the King Himself [and not merely His radiance] is “in the field,” and that the Jewish people are bound to the Essence of Hashem – now that is something which is beyond *any* constraining boundaries. There is therefore *no* command to rejoice.” (Parshas Shoftim 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.234)

23. Roshei Devarim Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5751.

24. **We bless, Heaven bestows**

“It is brought in the writings of the later Rabbis that, “It is our custom for one who writes a letter to a fellow Jew between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Yom Kippur, that he hints in his writing that he is praying for him to be found meritorious on the approaching Day of Judgment and that he be written and sealed in the Book of Good Life.”

The blessings of a Jew – especially when given in an auspicious time such as the month of Mercy [Elul], when “the King is in the field” and when He “displays a smiling countenance to them all” and “fulfills their requests” – serves to increase Hashem’s blessings in fulfillment of each person’s request – for all their physically and spiritual needs, and as the two are fused together.” (Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.209)

REVIEW AND COMPLETE THE PAST YEAR

- Elul, beginning with the first day of Rosh Chodesh,⁴ is a month for self-evaluation and penitence. In this time, we should take stock of our divine service over the past year – with the intention of rectifying and completing all that is lacking.⁵

4. **On which day of Rosh Chodesh does Elul really begin?**

“The actual days of the month of Elul [i.e., the 1st, 2nd, 3rd of Elul] begin from the *second* day of Rosh Chodesh Elul [since the *first* day of Rosh Chodesh belong to the outgoing month of Av, being its last day (the 30th)].

Nevertheless, our divine service of Elul *does* in fact commence on the first day of Rosh Chodesh – *despite* it being the last day of Menachem-Av.” (Parshas Shoftim 5749, footnote 1 – Hisvaaduyos p.236)

Each day in Elul affects days of the past year

“There is a distinct divine service that is required on each day of Elul individually – “each day has its own service.” It is important that we perform the service unique to each day, since every day in Elul parallels that same day of the month throughout the year that passed; we can retroactively affect those days during Elul [e.g., on the 5th of Elul we are able to correct or perfect the 5th Av, the 5th of Tammuz etc.].

Like Yemei Teshuvah

[“Similar to the seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur which encompass the seven days of the weekly cycle; each one of those seven days retroactively affects the same day of the week throughout the entire past year” – *ibid*, footnote 6]

Each day influences our coming year too

In fact, the days of Elul influence both the past year and the *coming* year. So, on the 1st of Elul we perform the divine service for 1st of every month of the future year too, and likewise concerning the rest of the days of the month of Elul – until the 29th of Elul, when we perform the service that relates to the 29th day (as well as the 30th) of every month in the year.” (*ibid* p.236)

5. **Three stages in Cheshbon Hanefesh**

“A fundamental point that must be present in our Elul stock-taking is that a true accounting of our entire past year’s divine service should include the following three aspects:

Elevating ourselves and the physical world

1) How was my service of Ani Ledodi [“I am to my Beloved” – the “I” referring to the Jewish people and the “Beloved” meaning Hashem; see Intro.] – the service from “below to above”? How much personal effort did we invest in this service? Generally speaking, “below to above” means taking stock of our efforts to refine our corporeal bodies and our “portion” in the physical world around us [refining the “below” and elevating it].

Eliciting G-dliness

2) Additionally, it is insufficient to simply make an accounting of our regular, gradual-ascent in divine service; we should also make a calculation regarding the service of Vedodi Li (“My Beloved is to me”) – the service from “above to below.” This entails a complete and *perfect* service such as that of Shabbos, which

PLAN FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Most essentially, we should do so as a preparation for the service of the *coming* year – thus ensuring a far loftier and even a perfect future service.⁶

STOCK-TAKING IN ALL AREAS OF SERVICE

- We should promote all of the spiritual tasks connected with the month of Elul (i.e., spiritual stock-taking, rectifying and completing the outgoing year’s service and preparing for the coming year) concerning all branches of spiritual service hinted to by the five acronyms of the word “Elul”. These are: Torah-study, prayer, acts of kindness, penitence and Redemption.⁷

each Jew is able and *should* demand from himself based on the fact that they contains a soul that Hashem Himself, the “Living and Eternal King,” placed within them – and moreover replaces it afresh every single morning! [“Above to below” means starting out with perfection, by harnessing the powers of our divine soul.]

Merging physical and spiritual

3) Furthermore, the previous two concepts should be fused together, so that even when we have attained perfection in divine service, we should nevertheless connect it with the aspect of Li (“me”), i.e., ourselves, as we exist in this physical world whereby our souls are housed in corporeal bodies. In fact, it is specifically via the service of “I am to my Beloved,” that the concept of “my Beloved is to me” is revealed.” (Parshas Ekev 5751 – Hisvaaduyos p.167-168) See there at length.

6. Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.198.

7. Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.208. For full details, see *ibid* p.198, footnote 7 and Parshas R’ay 5746.

Teshuvah encompasses them all

“Teshuvah includes literally all of Torah and Mitzvahs. Therefore, the verse concerning Teshuvah in which the acronym of Elul is found, “Hashem your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring,” likewise includes all the other acronyms of Elul, namely, the three pillars of Torah, prayer, and charitable deeds, the Mitzvah of Teshuvah (as an individual Mitzvah) and Geulah. (Eve and night following 18th of Elul 5749 – Hisvaaduyos p.330)

All are included in Geulah

“Similarly concerning the acronym of Geulah: in addition to its particular theme [of redemption], it also encompasses the entire Torah – and therefore also the remaining acronyms of Elul.” (subnote, *ibid*)

Five soul-levels

“In Kabbalistic and Chassidic terminology, the service of Elul exists on five levels which correspond to the five names (tiers) of the soul: Nefesh, Ru’ach, Neshamah, Chayah and Yechidah.” (Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.198, footnote 8) For a lengthy insight into the theme of redemption during the month of Elul, see Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.198 and onward.

connected to the Essence of Hashem, is a joy that exceeds all measure and limitation.²¹ Consequently, being joyful in Elul does not take the form of a Biblical command or even Rabbinical obligation – for even these would fail to ‘contain’ our boundless joy.²²

command or even a custom that can be ‘constrained’ to the extent of being recorded in legal works!

[Generally speaking, a command is issued to one who would not have performed that particular act had he not received the command to do so; a king who sits on his palace throne is a supreme ‘commander’, whereas a king who chooses to enter the worker’s fields and lovingly engage his subjects in their place and on their level, clearly does not approach them as a ‘commander’ – he rather reveals to them something deeper: his personality as a fellow man (albeit a king).

G-d’s Will commands – but we have His Essence

Likewise regarding “the King in the field” during Elul: as opposed to Rosh Hashanah when we approach Hashem in His palace and accept His Kingship, during Elul, Hashem comes to our ‘field’ and reveals his very Essence, as it were. The love that Hashem then shows us stems from His Essence – beyond His being our ‘King’ and ‘Commander’. Similarly, the reciprocating love for Hashem that is aroused in our hearts during Elul pours forth from the essence of our very being. For that reason we do not require a command (or even an officially recorded custom) regarding this love – why, any command would be entirely out of place in face of the essential bond between us and Hashem that is now manifest.]

The joy that a Jew derives from the fact that “I am to my Beloved [Hashem] and my Beloved is to me,” and from the fact that his existence is bound with the Essence of Hashem – which is beyond even the description of ‘King’, stands far beyond the limitative definition of a command!” (*ibid* p.234)

Natural, self-understood and logical

“The same applies to rejoicing during Elul – it is not clearly explained and defined in Torah because it is so very self-obvious. In fact, the joy that is caused by the revelation of “the King in the field” is in a way *far loftier* than the experience in the royal capital or even the palace. Further, since this joy is a Jew’s *natural* response – and certainly the *logical* response – it should be utilized to further our divine service [i.e., we should obviously perform our service during Elul with intense joy].” (*ibid* p.239)

21. Beyond Purim

“The joy of Purim is described as Ad Delo Yada [“One is obliged to drink on Purim until one cannot discern (Ad Delo Yada) between ‘Baruch Mordechai’ and ‘Arur Haman’”], i.e., it is a joy that defies all constraint of reason and comprehension and is due to the immense revelation on Purim that reaches us from beyond Seder HistaShelus [the entire physical and spiritual cosmos]. Nevertheless, since there is at least a *written command* to rejoice on Purim (“One is *obliged* to drink...”), that itself is an indication that the joy is yet limited to a particular ‘form’ – and it is simply that its ‘form’ is beyond our comprehension. Elul, however, is totally different. (Note: This matter requires further examination.)” (*ibid*. 5748, p.234, footnote 93)

22. The difference between a Yom Tov and Elul

“This also explains why the very parable (“the King in the field”) that is brought in

contains the great ability that is necessary to come to the full realization that it is high time for the Redemption – and we should influence others to reach this realization too. Most importantly, we should ‘persuade’ even Hashem Himself, as it were – that by all accounts (as recorded in His very own Torah) He should have brought the Redemption long ago!¹⁹

UNLIMITED JOY OF ELUL

• The joy that we experience in the month of Elul as a result of the fact that “The King is in the Field”²⁰ and that the Jews are

19. Moshiach will be here this year

“According to all of the calculations that Hashem has shown us in His Torah and indicated with all of the miracles that He has performed in the world ... especially this year – according to all of the calculations and signs this is “the year in which the King Moshiach will be revealed.”” (Parshas Ekev 5751 – Hisvaaduyos p.170)

20. The King has come to visit – why weren’t we told to rejoice?

“This point requires clarification: being that during the month of Elul, “the King is in the field,” and Hashem is found together with each and every Jew – along with our involvement in even mundane affairs – then we should certainly be experiencing the greatest possible joy!

This should especially be the case considering the emphasis on the love and closeness between Hashem and the Jewish people that is born out in the very name of this month – in the acronym, “I am to my *Beloved* and my *Beloved* is to me.” And as the Bach expounds this verse, “His heart is close to his Beloved in penitence and then his Beloved is close by to receive the penitence with love.” For as mentioned previously [see Intro.], “the King is in the field” and “He displays a smiling (Sochakos) face to them all”; Sechok is a form of great joy.

All of this ought to bring Jewry to a state of utmost rejoicing, “as water reflects the image shown to it” [likewise Hashem’s display of love and closeness should evoke joyful dedication from Jewry].

Why isn’t Elul a month-long Yom Tov?

However, there is *no* obligation to experience pleasure or to rejoice during the month of Elul. Furthermore, the very parable which mentions that the King “displays a smiling countenance,” was taught by the Alter Rebbe in order to explain why Elul is *not* a Yom Tov – apparently *negating* the obligation to rejoice in the month of Elul!” (Parshas Shoftim 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.230)

Why is rejoicing not mentioned at all?

“There is *no command* to rejoice in the month of Elul, and not only is there no command in the Torah or Halachic authorities, but it is not even mentioned in the writings of the later Rabbis or in the explanations of Chassidus! This is in spite of the fact that there could not possibly be a greater source of joy than Hashem accepting each and every Jewish person with ‘a benevolent countenance and displaying a smiling face to them all’!

Overjoyed – beyond a command

[Rather, the explanation is that] the joy of the month of Elul is *beyond* any

GOOD COULD ALWAYS BE BETTER

• Obviously, our self-reckoning and Teshuvah should not be limited to negative aspects, G-d Forbid. Rather, even one who has never sinned should likewise take stock of his service – he will undoubtedly notice *numerous* aspects within his service that are yet lacking, where he could have accomplished many times more than he actually accomplished.⁸

ALL ADD IN PRAYER

• Shulchan Aruch states that Elul is a fitting time to increase in prayer and supplication.⁹ This is of such great significance to all Jewish people, that even *Torah scholars* should detract from their regular times of study to devote more time to prayer.¹⁰

BRING THE KING – INCREASE TORAH STUDY

• There is the well-known expression that encapsulates the theme of Elul: The King in the field. In other words, in order that we may draw close to Him, Hashem ‘lowers’ Himself from the ‘palace’ to the ‘field’ to meet us on our level.

We achieve this closeness mainly through studying Torah, the Wisdom of Hashem, in which He lovingly ‘lowered’ Himself to the physical level – by providing us with laws from the ‘King of Kings’ that suffuse the ‘field’ of our mundane world; when we study these laws, we unite with the King.¹¹

Furthermore, the most perfect Teshuvah-related service of Elul, Teshuvah Ila’ah,¹² comes about through the study of Torah.¹³

8. Who can’t improve?

“As it is written (Koheles 7:20), כִּי אָדָם אֵין צָדִיק בְּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא, “There is no righteous man on earth who does good without sinning (Yechetah).” Now, the root of the word Yechetah also means “lacking,” as in the verse (Melochim-Alef 1:22 – see Rashi), וְהֵייתִי אֲנִי וּבְנֵי שְׁלֹמֹה לְיָמֵינוּ חֲסֵימִים, “I and your son Shlomo will be left lacking (Chatoim).”” (Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.198, footnote 4)

9. Parshas Ki Savo 5749 – Hisvaaduyos p.315.

10. Roshei Devarim Chai Elul 5751.

11. For a complete explanation into Hashem’s loving “descent” to our level and the union achieved with the ‘King’ by studying Torah, see Tanya, Ch.46 (and 5). See also reference in footnote 13.

12. Teshuvah Ila’ah, the highest form of Teshuvah, is explained in Tanya, Igeres

We should therefore place particular emphasis on increasing our Torah-study.

MAKE YOUR STUDIES A PRAYER

- Prayer is the form of divine service dedicated to cleaving to Hashem; the general study of Torah shares this theme to an extent, for we unite with Hashem by studying Torah. During the month of Elul however – when we increase our study – we should *specifically embrace* the aspect of prayer, i.e., the emphasis on the cleaving to Hashem, which occurs when studying Torah¹⁴.

CHASSIDUS – INNER BOND WITH HASHEM

- We should be particular in doing so when studying the inner and mystical dimensions of Torah – for it is through learning the Torah’s inner dimensions that the inner dimension of our own soul is connected to the Inner Dimension of Hashem.¹⁴

FIVE ACRONYMS OF ELUL

These are the five acronyms of the name “Elul” (אֱלוּל) that are based on Torah verses. Each of the verses represents another aspect of divine service that we should emphasize throughout the month:¹⁵

1) אנה לידו ושמתו לך – “[Hashem] caused it to come to his hand, and I will provide for you [a place a place to which he shall flee]” (Shemos 21:13) – this corresponds to *Torah study*.

2) אני לדודי ודודי לי – “I am to my Beloved [Hashem] and my Beloved is to me” (Shir Hashirim 6:3) – this corresponds to *Avodah*, the service of *Prayer*.

3) איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים – “[Sending delicacies]

Hateshuvah, Chapters 9 and 10.

13. Parshas Shoftim 5750 – Hisvaaduyos p.203.

14. Parshas Ki Savo 5750 – Hisvaaduyos p.255.

15. Parshas R’ay 5748 – Hisvaaduyos p.208. See also there, p.198, footnote 7.

each to the other and gifts to the poor” (Esther 9:22) – this corresponds to charitable deeds; *Tzedakah*.

4) את לבבך ואת לבב – “[Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise] your heart and the heart of your offspring [to love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live]” (Devarim 30:6) – this corresponds to *Teshuvah*.

5) ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה – “[Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem] and they declared saying: I will sing to Hashem” (Shemos 15:1) - this corresponds to *Geulah*.

FIVE TASKS OF ELUL

- We should publicize¹⁶ and promote everywhere, the spiritual tasks of Elul that are alluded to by its five acronyms: Torah-study, prayer, acts of kindness, penitence and Redemption.¹⁷

ALL TOWARDS GEULAH

- We should lay special emphasis on the Redemption – whose acronym of Elul is found in the verse, “I will sing to Hashem; and they declared saying”¹⁸ – in a manner that results in Redemption permeating *every* aspect of our divine service.¹⁷

THE TIME IS NOW

- In our present generation and time, the honest evaluation of our service should specifically encompass the fact that we currently stand at the threshold of Redemption. Every Jew

16. See also Parshas Shoftim 5750 – Hisvaaduyos p.203.

17. **Living with Moshiach constantly**

“...Through completely filling ourselves with the theme of the coming redemption – and especially through studying those areas of Torah that discuss redemption, Moshiach and the Beis Hamikdash – amidst expectant yearning and an absolute certainty that we will literally and immediately see with our corporeal eyes that “Behold! The King Moshiach comes!”” (Parshas R’ay 5751 – Hisvaaduyos p.188) See also Parshas Shoftim 5750 – Hisvaaduyos p.203.

18. From the opening verses of Az Yashir (the Song of the Sea) that was sung by Moshe and the Jewish people as they passed through the split Red Sea.