

utilize this day by increasing in *Tzedakah* and in many other positive matters, and in particular, by studying the Torah teachings and fulfilling the instructions of the Tzemach Tzedek.⁹⁹

FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

- In the merit of the Tzemach Tzedek, we should add in those matters through which the Tzemach Tzedek chiefly expressed his service of G-d. They are: the dissemination of Torah, and particularly Chassidus, and promulgating the service of prayer and of performing every single Mitzvah with embellishment, particularly the Mitzvah of *Tzedakah*.¹⁰⁰

TORAH AND TZEDAKAH

- In 5749 (1989) the Rebbe instructed: We should make certain to utilize this two hundredth anniversary of the Tzemach Tzedek's passing in order to increase in the study of the Tzemach Tzedek's Torah teachings, and to give *Tzedakah* in honor of the occasion – ideally in multiples of two hundred.¹⁰¹

מוקדש

לב"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח - המשורר - הרב צבי מאיר ב"ר שלמה דוב ע"ה

שטיינמץ

נפטר עש"ק בעלות המנחה י"ב אלול תשס"ה ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

נדפס ע"י ולזכות בתה ומשפחתה שיחיו טוב בער



יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

99. Erev Rosh Hashanah ,5752; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 360.

100. "In the merit of the Tzemach Tzedek, in addition to our own merit, we should add... [See main text above for continuation]." (Erev Rosh Hashanah, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 388)

101. **200 Pennies**

"Two hundred pennies – a goal that is within reach of everyone, including children. Those who wish to add in this matter could give two hundred coins of greater value, or two hundred dollar bills and the like – doing so further adds to the abovementioned matters." (Erev Rosh Hashanah, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 388)

a CALL to ACTION

- Special Edition -

ELUL

THE MONTH OF ELUL, THE 11TH, 13TH 14TH, 15TH OF ELUL, CHAI ELUL, THE 3RD DAY OF SELICHOS, SHABBOS MEVARCHIM TISHREI EREV ROSH HASHANAH, THE BIRTHDAY OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar

מוקדש

לכ"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח

✧

לזכות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' צבי מרדכי בן שרה

זוגתו שלומית בת שושנה

בניהם ובנותיהם:

יוסף יצחק, משה, מנחם מענדל, חנה וחי' מושקא

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לזכות

החייל ב"צבאות ה'" שמואל בן שרה פעסל לרגל הכנסו

ל"בריתו של אברהם אבינו" ב' אלול תשע"ב

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והוריו שיחיו

✧

יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

✧

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המעשה הוא העיקר

“HaMaaseh Hu Haikar”

538 Crown Street, Brooklyn, NY 11213

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

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SPEND TIME WITH YOUR WIFE

- Close to the commencement of Rosh Hashanah, the Chabad Rebbes would spend some time speaking with their wives. Since this custom has been revealed and publicized to us, after having been kept confidential for a long time, it is therefore to be taken as an instruction for every one of us.⁹⁷

The Birthday of the Tzemach Tzedek

A BRIEF HISTORY

The third Lubavitcher Rebbe is known as the Tzemach Tzedek. A grandson of the Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad Chassidus, the Tzemach Tzedek brought the Chabad movement to unprecedented heights in all matters. He was born on the 29th of Elul, Erev Rosh Hashanah 5549 (1789).

UTILIZING THE DAY CORRECTLY

- Every man, woman and child,⁹⁸ should make certain to

97. Shalom Bayis

“Since the quality of the Jewish woman is emphasized on Rosh Hashanah ... this is a directive for every person. The implication of this instruction is the great extent to which *Shalom Bayis*, domestic harmony, is important and imperative.

If they did it...

It is so very fundamental and easy to appreciate the immense value and quality that each moment in time held for the Rebbes – certainly on Erev Rosh Hashanah... Yet nonetheless, they would take the time to talk with their Rebbitzens...

Cosmic harmony

This practice assumes additional significance in light of the broadest sense of ‘*Shalom Bayis*,’ which includes “peace in the supernal retinue and the terrestrial retinue” [and between G-d and the Jewish people].” (2nd day of Rosh Hashanah 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 39)

See there for the particular significance of Rosh Hashanah to women, concerning the *Sefirah* of *Binah* and the entire concept of *Binyan haMalchus*; see fn. there for references.

There are many further significant links, among them: Sarah, Rochel and Chana were “remembered” regarding having children on the day of Rosh Hashanah; the birth of Rivkah is specifically mentioned in the second day’s Torah reading; Yitzchak’s stature (as seen in the Torah reading) was the result of his mother Sarah’s parenting; the Halachic sound of the Shofar is derived from the cries of a woman (either Sarah or the mother of Sisrah – as explained in *Avudraham*).

98. Erev Rosh Hashanah, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 388.

year. We should therefore be aware of the need to utilize the twenty-four hours of this day to their absolute maximum, in order to conclude and complete every matter connected with the month of Elul, and thus the entire year.⁹⁴

FESTIVE MEAL

- The Tur writes that on Erev Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish people “dress in white and enwrap in white” and hold a great feast – for they “rest secure that they will prevail in judgment.”⁹⁵ We should certainly do likewise (and hold a festive meal) this Erev Rosh Hashanah, whether during the preceding evening or at another time during the twenty-four hours of Erev Rosh Hashanah.⁹⁶

94. The King gives us power to act

“G-d certainly grants us the powers that are necessary to fulfill the positive resolutions we have accepted – and with an addition of His own too; moreover, He does so in the manner to which He is accustomed, namely, that the ‘addition’ exceeds the principle!

Further, G-d’s granting of power is greatly enhanced by that fact that we are currently in a situation where “the King is in the field” – as He is throughout the month of Elul. This last factor increases daily; for if all holy matters continually increase, then how much more so a direct bestowal from G-d Himself. Therefore, this [steady increase of power] continues until the last day of Elul, which constitutes the “total” of the entire month – the unique month when “the King is in the field”

...

A year in one day

All of the above adds further alacrity and insight to our utilization of this day, the conclusion and “total” of the entire month and the entire year.” (Eve of 29th of Elul 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p 383)

Use every moment

“The great virtue, value, and importance of this time is clearly understood – and likewise the extent to which we should utilize every single moment of this time.” (Rosh Hashanah after Mincha, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 387)

95. Farbrengen reaches Atzmus – preparation for the Shofar

“To quote the Tur, “already on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Jews dress in white and wrap themselves in white for they rest assured that they will prevail in judgment.” This is particularly true when on the eve of Rosh Hashanah we join together in a Chassidic *farbrengen*; such an occasion arouses great pleasure in the spiritual realms, and reaches G-d’s very “essence”! This then is a fitting preparation for the arousal of pleasure that will be generated by our blowing of the Shofar.” (*Sichos in English*, Vol.32, Erev Rosh Hashanah ,5747)

96. Tzom Gedalya, 5752; *Sichos Kodesh*, p. 31.

Foreword

In honor of the seventh Yahrtzeit of **Harav Hachassid Reb Tzvi Meir ben Shlomo Dov Steinmetz a”h** (renowned Hebrew poet, Tzvi Yair¹) on the 12th of Elul, we are pleased to bring you this newly revised and improved edition of **a CALL to ACTION**. This special edition covers all the highlights of the month of Elul, from Rosh Chodesh through Erev Rosh Hashanah.

Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe’s *Sichos* that pertain to the entire month of Elul and preparations for Tishrei.

HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar 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 HaIkar
Erev Parshas Ki Tzeitzei, 5772

1. see www.zviyair.com

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Erev Rosh Hashanah

INTRODUCTION

The last twelve days of Elul represent the twelve months of the year that is coming to a close (as discussed earlier, concerning Chai Elul).

Therefore, the last of these twelve days, Erev Rosh Hashanah, in addition to its other qualities and responsibilities, specifically concerns the outgoing month of Elul.

24 HRS TO COMPLETE OUR YEAR

- Today is the last day of the month of Elul and the entire

“Certainly they will resolve to hold a *farbrengen* this very night – “*Ah Shturemdiker*” *farbrengen*!”

It should specifically be held with immense joy, to the extent of *Ad deLoy Yoda* [a state in which a person is too inebriated to think straight], at least by *one* participant of the *farbrengen* – who will thus fulfill the obligation on behalf of all present...

Not Purim – but almost

The limits [on drinking alcohol in excess] still apply, for after all, it is not yet Purim... Nevertheless, Purim is connected to Yom Kippurim, which being the culmination of the Ten Days of Repentance, is also bound with their onset, namely, Rosh Hashanah and therefore also the prior days of Selichos!

As in Lubavitch

There is a well known account of the Previous Rebbe concerning the *farbrengen* in [the original town of] Lubavitch [that took place on the Motzei Shabos before Rosh Hashanah – which was *not* the first night of Selichos that year, as explained below].

[“Although we are not able to compare ourselves to the circumstances and stature of those times and that place, nevertheless, the matters were transmitted to each of us as our “inheritance” – and an heir inherits *everything*...” – subnote there]

They couldn’t walk straight

[The account includes the fact] that when they reached the time for Selichos, they were tottering; their having attained a state of *Ad deLo Yoda*, caused them to stagger even after the concluding blessing of the *farbrengen* and even after many of them had in the meantime immersed in a Mikvah and so on!” (*ibid.*)

“It is recounted regarding the Chassidim, that they would hold a *farbrengen* during the Melaveh Malka meal at the conclusion of Shabbos *Parshas Nitzavim*, which was also Erev Rosh Hashanah (Rosh Hashanah occurring on a Monday that year [and Selichos beginning on Motzei Shabos Ki Savo]). Following that, they would begin to recite the Selichos whilst yet tottering...!” (Chai Elul 5711, p. 327)

teachings which each of us should take and apply to our Divine service, thus increasing in Torah, Mitzvahs and Chassidus.⁹⁰

MAIN POINT IS TO PROCEED

- Regardless of whether or not one discovers the true reasons for the uniqueness of this day, the main point is for each of us to add yet further in Torah, and yet further in proper conduct and the like – for every addition in Torah, Mitzvahs and Chassidus is in itself the ultimate truth.⁹¹

AT LEAST PART OF A MA'AMOR

- Sometime during the twenty four hours of the third day of Selichos, each of us should study at least a section of one of the Chassidic discourses that were delivered for the third day of Selichos; due to the profusion of such discourses, a person has a large selection from which to choose...⁹²

PREPARE A LIVELY FARBRENGEN

- One should certainly make a resolution regarding the *farbrengen* that should be held tonight – so that it should be held with great *Shturem* (highly-charged and lively).⁹³

90. Yom Gimmel, *Parshas Haazinu*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 372-373.

91. Extra Tzedakah

“Accordingly, we should – for the first time – connect the unique virtue of the third day of Selichos with the distribution of *tzedakah*. This comes in addition to the fact that we are accustomed to increase in giving *tzedakah* throughout the month of Elul.” (*ibid.*)

See also 3rd day of Selichos 5751; *Toras Menachem*, p. 296 and onwards, in the main text and the fns., where the Rebbe points out the relevance that the number three and especially the third of Selichos contains to a variety of concepts.

92. Action counts

“It is known that this day, as we [clearly] saw, was one of the established occasions whereupon the Previous Rebbe would publicly deliver Chassidic discourses. We likewise saw that many of these discourses were published and distributed.

Being that the whole point in mentioning these matters is to lead to *action*, it is fitting that sometime during the twenty four hours ... [See main text above for continuation].” (*Roshei Devarim* from 3rd day of Selichos 5751)

93. One person should drink for the rest

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Translated in the memory of Yitzchok Yosef ben Yaakov Mordechai

The Previous Rebbe did not specify the cause for the added auspiciousness of the third day (but see footnote 88).

STUDY AND IMPLEMENT THE DISCOURSE

- The Previous Rebbe⁸⁹ expressed the uniqueness of this day through a Chassidic discourse, which he then instructed to be printed and publicized. This discourse contains a great number of

Three is Torah

To return to our subject: The number three carries unique significance – to the extent that even the Giving of the Torah was associated with the number three: “A threefold Torah [Torah, Neviim, Kesuvim], that was given to a threefold nation [Kohanim, Leviim, Yisraelim], on the third month [Sivan].”

Matan Torah and Rosh Hashanah

In fact, there is a link between the Giving of the Torah and Rosh Hashanah, which is reflected in the text of the Mussaf prayer on Rosh Hashanah: one of the reasons for sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is, “to recall the stand at Mount Sinai.” This then is the value of the third day of Selichos; it contains the virtue of the number three.

Three insights into the number three

Additionally, the third day of Selichos:

1) Always occurs on the *third* day of the week [Tuesday], “the day when ‘It was good’ was doubled” [i.e., G-d repeated “It was good” on the *third* day of Creation as opposed to the other five days.

The reason that the third day of Selichos must always be a Tuesday, is] because [the days of] Selichos always begin at the conclusion of the Day of Rest [Shabbos]. The uniqueness of being the third day of Selichos comes in addition to the [ever-present] quality that accompanies *every* Tuesday (during both day and night) throughout the year.

2) The entire [historical] context of forgiveness [of the Jewish people by G-d] comes from the *third* set of forty days and nights that Moshe spent on Mount Sinai, whereupon G-d announced, “I have forgiven as you have requested.”

3) We employ *three* expressions of forgiveness in our requests: *Mechilah, Selichah* and *Kaparah*, “forgiveness, pardon and atonement.”

There are many further concepts that apply [to the third day of Selichos in particular], but a hint is sufficient for the wise.” (3rd day of Selichos 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 336-337)

[In the spirit of the above license to derive further insights into the 3rd day of Selichos: note that the colossal events of 9/11 2001, the international and global impact of which are yet unfolding, occurred in New York, the “capital” of the Leader of our generation, on the *third day of Selichos* 5761 – Ed.]

89. “Note that the Previous Rebbe himself did not give a reason behind the uniqueness of this day, and every person is therefore able to seek an explanation according to their abilities. As far as we are concerned however, since the Previous Rebbe revealed ... [See main text above for continuation].”

Sure enough, in the later years after his arrival in America the Previous Rebbe publicly unveiled the previously unknown fact that, within the Selichos period itself, the third day of Selichos is a particularly spiritually-charged day. (The timing of this revelation carries further significance.⁸⁸)

Specifically following the [Previous Rebbe's] departure, it is certainly incumbent upon each of us to strengthen ourselves, and connect with the "tree of life" and our Leader, the Rebbe, with ever greater strength. With the aid of his treasures and the treasures of his ancestors [i.e., the earlier Rebbes of Chabad], who opened [these treasures] and delivered them to us, we will remove the concealments and obscurities. This is also a preparation and readying to our being "inscribed and sealed [on Rosh Hashanah] for the good."⁸⁸ (Sefer Hamaamorim 5710, p. 270-271)

88. **Why did he wait until he came to America?**

"He did not reveal this while he was yet in the "globe's upper hemisphere" [i.e., Russia, which is amongst those lands where "the influence of Matan Torah clearly permeated"]. Rather, he did so upon arrival in the "globe's lower hemisphere" [i.e., America, a land in which "the influence of Matan Torah did not clearly permeate"]." (Yom Gimmel, *Parshas Ha'azinu*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 372)

He even changed his schedule of delivering Ma'amorim

"In general, we strive to bolster matters of good conduct that existed in former years – certainly when public awareness of their existence has, for some reason, weakened.

What concerns us is that the Leader of our generation revealed and publicized the particular importance of the third day of Selichos. Further, he did so to the extent of altering his delivery of Chassidic discourses, and the [continued theme-related series of] Chassidic discourses that pertain to Rosh Hashanah, which were normally delivered on specific dates from Rosh Hashanah onward, began to be publicly delivered in the year 5705 (1945) from the *third day of Selichos*. (As the Previous Rebbe wrote in his notes [See intro. and fn. 7, above].)

Why is the third day so special?

True, he did not clearly record a revealed reason [for the importance of the third day of Selichos] in that discourse. Nevertheless, an obvious reason does in fact exist - so patently obvious that there is no need for lengthy research...

If your idea will advance Avodas Hashem with love and awe...

Although one must generally be wary of discovering allusions and explanations of matters on his own – for not every person is qualified to do so – there are, however, the familiar words of the Rebbe Rashab (in his letter that was also printed in *Kuntres Eitz Chaim*) concerning reading various interpretations into the words of the *Tanya*. He writes that although one must be wary of doing so, nevertheless, if it will *add to the service of G-d*, one is then able to state their interpretations.

Note that this message was transmitted even to the ordinary Chassidim, and not only to unique individuals. The message holds true for all matters – if finding one's own interpretations and explanations will increase the service of G-d with love and awe, it is then permissible to do so.

The Month of Elul

INTRODUCTION

Elul is a time of unique closeness between G-d and the Jewish people, a fact that is reflected in the acronym of "Elul" – which stands for *Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li*, (אני לי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי, "I [the Jewish people] am to my Beloved [G-d] and my Beloved is to me" – *Shir Hashirim* 6:3).²

The Alter Rebbe (*Likutei Torah, Devarim 32a*) presents the following parable to explain the divine service of Elul: As the king approaches his capital, 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. While he is yet in the field, all who wish may – and are given the ability to – personally greet the king. He in turn, greets them in a friendly manner and shows a smiling countenance to all.

It is likewise, concludes the Alter Rebbe, when we go forth during Elul to greet the light of G-d's countenance in the 'field'...³

[Every year, the Rebbe would further expound this parable – see fn. 21, for example.]

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 given the task of contemplating (according to the guidance of Torah) how we might deepen our personal connection with G-d. We will *certainly* achieve this goal by following the instructions that were issued by the Torah authorities of previous generations.⁴ [The flowing is a presentation of some of this direction.]

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

3. *Parshas R'ay* 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 200.

4. *Parshas Shoftim* 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 235.

REVIEW AND COMPLETE THE PAST YEAR

- Elul, beginning with the first day of Rosh Chodesh,⁵ 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.⁶

5. 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 belongs 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, fn. 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.*, fn. 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 the 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)

6. 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 G-d; 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 each

The 3rd Day of Selichos

INTRODUCTION

“Selichah” means forgiveness. In the week prior to Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, it is our custom to rise early each morning in order to recite the Selichos prayers before the regular morning prayers.

The Previous Rebbe wrote, in the year 5705, that the third day of Selichos was observed by the Alter Rebbe as a special day and he would privately and with utmost discretion deliver a Chassidic discourse to his son, the Mittler Rebbe. This secret practice continued on every third day of Selichos, from each generation of Rebbes to the next. The Rebbe Rashab, however, told the Previous Rebbe that he would eventually be instructed to publicize this practice.⁸⁷

Arousing a father’s mercy

The bestowal of G-d’s blessing at this juncture in the prayers is likewise emphasized in the prayer that follows [the recital of the two Yukan Purkan prayers]: Av Harachamim. For it is Chabad custom to recite Av Harachamim on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah [as opposed to almost every other *Shabbos Mevarchim*], as it is explained in numerous places that there is a immense virtue to the recital of Av Harachamim, and that it is far loftier that the level represented by our recital of Av Harachaman...” (*Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech* 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 299)

87. *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5705, p. 226.

Are we worthy of such revelations?

“For many years, the concept of Chai Elul and the third day of Selichos were concealed. However, now that permission has been granted to reveal them, the Previous Rebbe has publicized them to all corners of the world.

Although one could question whether [or not] our generation was worthy [to have received this information, especially when we are contrasted with the spiritual standing of former generations]...

Our low standing merits great revelations

The answer to that is that this [lowly standing] is *itself* the very point [of revealing such information]: due to the concealment and obscurity of [the present times, which are referred to as] “the heels of Moshiach,” that have grown overpowering[ly oppressive], as a counter-measure, “they even opened hidden storehouses containing precious wealth and treasures that had been sealed and concealed from the eyes of all” until now.

We will prevail with the treasures of Chassidus

PROMOTE THE PROVIDING OF FESTIVAL NEEDS

- It is extremely worthwhile that one who visits other Shuls for the abovementioned purpose, should also utilize this opportunity to encourage the congregations regarding providing the needy with their festival requirements.⁸⁵

AV HARACHAMIM

- The Chabad custom is to recite Av Harachamim on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah⁸⁶.

What blessing does G-d give?

In that Sichah, the Rebbe explains that the *content* of G-d's blessing is to be found in the Torah portion for this week, *Parshas Nitzavim*, which is always read the Shabbos preceding Rosh Hashanah. *Nitzavim* begins, "You are all standing today"; the word "today" refers to Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment – similar to the verse "And it was on *the day*," which Targum Unkelos translates as, "It was on the Day of the Great Judgment." The words "you *stand*" indicate that we stand firm and well-established, and are found meritorious in judgment.

On the Shabbos we bless the seventh month. The Hebrew word *Shevii*, "Seventh," is related to the word *Musbah*, "satiated" – indicating that the month "is itself satiated [with holiness] and satiates all Jewry with abundant goodness for all of the year."

Studying this teaching brings further revealed blessing

"Through studying the Torah teachings of the "three forefathers" of Chassidus concerning the blessing that G-d gives on Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei, namely, "You are all standing today," we increase this blessing itself. For these teachings include the great virtue that is associated with a universal Jewish custom, as well as the virtue of a teaching from Torah's inner dimension. Further, our study of these teachings results in "today," i.e., light and revelation – as in the verse, "And G-d called the light: Day." We further accomplish all this through studying the teachings of "the two great luminaries" ([the anniversary of whose births we recently celebrated,] i.e., the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe – through the 'mediation' of the Maggid of Mezritch)." (*ibid.*, p. 295)

See there, p. 294, for a thorough treatment of this topic, and *a Call to Action*, "Chai Elul".

85. *Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech* 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 302.

86. **When on Shabbos does G-d give this blessing?**

"Although it was not clearly stated *when* exactly during the Shabbos preceding the seventh month G-d gives His blessing, it would be logical to assume that His blessing comes at the very time that the *Jews* [would normally] bless the remaining eleven months of the year: [after the Amidah in the morning prayers,] following the recital of the two Yukan Purkan prayers – which reflects on a "doubling" of the Purkan, "Redemption", and is similar to the concept of a "doubled consolation" [see *a Call to Action*, "Shabbos Nachamu"].

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.⁷

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" [see below, starting on page 11]. These are: Torah-study, prayer, acts of kindness, penitence [*Teshuvah*] and Redemption [*Geulah*].⁸ [also see page 11-12 below]

Jew is able and *should* demand from himself based on the fact that they contain a soul that G-d 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.

7. *Parshas R'ay* 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 198.

8. *Parshas R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 208. For full details, see *ibid.*, p. 198, fn. 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, "G-d 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*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yehidah*. (*Parshas R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 198, fn. 8) For a lengthy insight into the theme of redemption during the month of Elul, see *Parshas*

GOOD COULD ALWAYS BE BETTER

- Obviously, our self-reckoning and *Teshuvah* [penitence] 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.⁹

ALL ADD IN PRAYER

- *Shulchan Aruch* states that Elul is a fitting time to increase in prayer and supplication.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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, G-d ‘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 G-d, 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.¹²

Furthermore, the most perfect *Teshuvah*-related service of Elul,

⁹ *R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 198 and onward.

9. Who can't improve?

As it is written (*Koheles*, 7:20), **כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא**, “There is no righteous man on earth who does good without sinning (*Yechehah*).” Now, the root of the word *Yechehah* also means “lacking,” as in the verse (*Melochim-Alef*, 1:22 – see *Rashi*), **והייתי אני ובני שלמה חטאים**, “I and your son Shlomo will be left lacking (*Chatoim*).” (*Parshas R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 198, fn. 4)

¹⁰ *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 315.

¹¹ *Roshei Devarim*, Chai Elul 5751.

¹² For a complete explanation into G-d'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 fn. 13.

proceeding the month of Tishrei, when we do not bless the coming seventh month.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that the reason behind this blatant exception is that G-d Himself blesses the month of Tishrei⁸⁴ and, in fact, it is through His doing so that the Jewish people receive the ability to subsequently bless the following eleven months of the year.

TEACH TORAH IN OTHER SHULS

- We should certainly make the effort, particularly on this Shabbos, to visit⁸¹ other Shuls and study halls in order to “gather congregations” for the purpose of Torah-study.⁸²

EXPLAIN SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SHABBOS

- In these gatherings, we should study topics which focus on timely themes, notably the teachings of the “three forefathers” of Chassidus⁸³ concerning G-d's blessing on this Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei, which is encapsulated in the opening phrase of this week's Parshah, “You are all standing today.”⁸⁴

81. The directive in the name of the Parsha

“[In the spirit of the opening words of this week's *second* Parshah,] Vayeilech, which means “And he went,” we should go visit other Shuls and study halls in order to gather congregations of Jewish people [in the spirit of the first words of this week's *first* Parshah,] Atem Nitzavim haYom Kulchem, “You are all gathered today,” for the purpose of Torah study.” (*Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech* 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 302)

82. *Ibid.*

83. The “three forefathers” of Chassidus are, 1) the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidus, 2) his disciple and successor, the Maggid of Mezritch, and 3) the Maggid's disciple and successor, the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad Chassidus.

84. *Ibid.*

The Alter Rebbe's words

“The Alter Rebbe related, “When I was in Mezeritch, I heard the following from my master and teacher, the Maggid [of Mezritch], in the name of *his* master and teacher, the Baal Shem Tov: [concerning] Tishrei, the seventh month, which is the first month from all the months of the year, G-d Himself blesses it on Shabbos Mevarchim, which is the final Shabbos of the month of Elul. With this power, the Jewish people then bless the [subsequent] months, eleven times during the year.”” (*ibid.*, p. 290)

TZEDAKAH BRINGS GEULAH – LEARN ABOUT THE GEULAH TOO

Furthermore – and most importantly in light of the fact that one of the acronyms of the word Elul represents the Redemption⁷⁸ – charity in general hastens the Redemption; and it certainly does so when we connect it with the study of the laws of the Redemption that are stated in Rambam – who dwells [on this topic] at length in the *Laws of Moshiach and the Wars (of Kings)*⁷⁹ – as well as in *Shulchan Aruch's* treatment of the blessing for Redemption that we recite in the Amidah prayer⁸⁰, and the like.

CONCLUDE WITH A BLESSING:

Through our adding in Torah study, prayer and charitable deeds, we also produce a tangible addition in the “inscribing and sealing” of each and every Jew and the entire nation as one – *leShanah Tovah Tichaseiv veSikaseim*, “may you be written and sealed for a sweet new year!”

[At this point, the Rebbe distributed two dollar bills to each person, to be given to Tzedakah.

This rendition of the Sichah is based on unedited notes that were taken by those present.]

Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei

INTRODUCTION

On the Shabbos preceding every new month, we recite a special prayer to bless the coming month; such a Shabbos is called *Shabbos Mevarchim*.

The exception to this universal custom is the Shabbos

78. The Acronym of Elul that corresponds to *Geulah*, is found in the verse (*Shemos* 15:1) **וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֹמֶר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה**, “[Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to G-d] and they declared saying: I will sing to G-d.”

79. In his *Mishnea Torah* Chapter 11 & 12.

80. See also *Tanya Igeret HaTeshuva* Chapter 11 where this is mentioned.

Teshuvah Ila'ah,¹³ comes about through the study of Torah.¹⁴ 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 G-d; the general study of Torah shares this theme to an extent, for we unite with G-d 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 G-d, which occurs when studying Torah¹⁵.

CHASSIDUS – INNER BOND WITH G-D

- 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 G-d.¹⁵

FIVE ACRONYMS OF ELUL

These are the five acronyms of the name “Elul” (אֵלּוּל) that are based on Torah verses. Each of the verses represents another aspect of divine service that we should emphasize throughout the month:¹⁶

1) **אָנָּה לִידּוֹ וְשָׁמְתִי לָךְ** – “[G-d] caused it to come to his hand, and I will provide for you [a place to which he shall flee]” (*Shemos* 21:13) – this corresponds to *Torah study*.

2) **אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי** – “I am to my Beloved [G-d] and my Beloved is to me” (*Shir Hashirim* 6:3) – this corresponds to *Avodah*, the service of Prayer.

3) **אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמִתְנֹת לְאֲבִיוֹנִים** – “[Sending delicacies]

13. *Teshuvah Ila'ah*, the highest form of *Teshuvah*, is explained in *Tanya, Igeres Hateshuvah*, Chapters 9 and 10.

14. *Parshas Shoftim*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 203.

15. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 255.

16. *Parshas R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 208. See also there, p.198, fn. 7.

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

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

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

FIVE TASKS OF ELUL

- We should publicize¹⁷ and promote everywhere, the spiritual tasks of Elul that are alluded to by its five acronyms: Torah-study, prayer, acts of kindness, penitence [*Teshuvah*] and Redemption [*Geulah*].¹⁸

ALL TOWARDS GEULAH

- We should lay special emphasis on the Redemption – whose acronym of Elul is found in the verse, “I will sing to G-d; and they declared saying”¹⁹ – in a manner that results in Redemption permeating *every* aspect of our divine service.¹⁸

THE TIME IS NOW

- In our present generation and time, the honest evaluation of our service should specifically encompass the fact that we

17. See also *Parshas Shoftim*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 203.

18. **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.

19. 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. [see *Exodus*, *Parshas Beshalach*, 15:1]

sweet beverages and send portions to those who have nothing prepared – for today is sacred to G-d!”

INCREASE TZEDAKAH – IT’S GOOD FOR YOU TOO

Further, *Tzedakah* contains a unique association with Chai Elul – and “all who add, are added to [by Heaven]” (which is a concept that starts on the 15th of Av and continues after it – for that same *Mishnah* [which contains the above quote] also links the 15th of Av with Yom Kippur, as we have mentioned on numerous occasions).

In conclusion: we have mentioned clear and tangible directives in the categories of Torah study, prayer and charitable deeds.

IMMEDIATE APPLICATION – “DOLLARS”

On the topic of charitable deeds: we will now conclude by following our regular practice of [distributing dollar bills, thus] making each person an emissary to give charity.

In addition to a single coin, which is the minimum for charity, a second coin will be added (and regarding bills – a second bill) in honor of Chai Elul.

The key points are:

- 1) That “all who add, are added to [from Heaven]” in all their affairs,
- 2) That this is especially true regarding being inscribed and sealed for a sweet new year – *Kesivah veChasimah Tovah leShanah Tovah u’Mesukah*, and
- 3) That the main concern is to immediately bring vitality into every aspect of Elul.

PONDER-FREE PROPOSALS

In light of the above, even if it appears to an individual that deep contemplation is indeed necessary in order to discover something to which he can “add vitality” (i.e., in connecting with his additional activities), nevertheless, we hereby present him with an already prepared directive [i.e., the abovementioned proposal regarding Tehillim] which is “tangible” to all Jews alike.

2) CHAI ELUL IN TORAH

[Having translated the theme of Chai Elul into an easy-to-fulfill, practical directive for the service of prayer,] we can apply the same to our Torah study:

LAWS OF THE FESTIVALS

There are Torah subjects that are time-related – for example, the laws of Elul, Rosh Hashanah and the subsequent days [of Tishrei]. Moreover, these laws are particularly relevant now, for we are within thirty days of Sukkos, when one should begin studying and contemplating its laws. In fact this period [that carries the obligation to study the laws of Sukkos,] already began on the 15th of Elul – it is certainly relevant now, on the 18th of Elul!

3) CHAI ELUL IN CHARITABLE ACTS

Further, [we could find a tangible way to express the theme of Chai Elul] with regard to charitable deeds too. ([Charitable deeds] fall under the general category of Tzedakah.)

So, in order to prevent the debate over what to do or what not to do [I will again spell out the directive in full]:

PROVIDE NEEDY WITH FESTIVAL SUPPLIES

For a start, there is [now] the [requirement of] Tzedakah to aid our fellow Jews in their necessities for the festival of Sukkos, and likewise regarding their Rosh Hashanah needs – concerning which it is written (*Nechemya* 8:10), “Go, eat rich foods, drink

currently stand at the threshold of Redemption. Every Jew 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 G-d Himself, as it were – that by all accounts (as recorded in His very own Torah) He should have brought the Redemption long ago!²⁰

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”²¹ and that the Jews are

20. Moshiach will be here this year

According to all of the calculations that G-d 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)

21. 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 G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d’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 G-d accepting each and every Jewish person with ‘a benevolent countenance and displaying a smiling face to them all’!

connected to the Essence of G-d, is a joy that exceeds all measure and limitation.²² Consequently, being joyful in Elul does not take the form of a Biblical command or even Rabbinical obligation – for even

Overjoyed – beyond a command

[Rather, the explanation is that] the joy of the month of Elul is *beyond* any 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 G-d in His palace and accept His Kingship, during Elul, G-d comes to our ‘field’ and reveals his very Essence, as it were. The love that G-d then shows us stems from His Essence – beyond His being our ‘King’ and ‘Commander’. Similarly, the reciprocating love for G-d 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 G-d that is now manifest.]

The joy that a Jew derives from the fact that “I am to my Beloved [G-d] and my Beloved is to me,” and from the fact that his existence is bound with the Essence of G-d – 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)

22. 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 Hishtalshelus* [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, fn. 93)

hand” and could be “pointed to with a finger” [i.e., they all concern something physical that is within reach of every Jew].

It is true that even after being given a physical directive, a Jew must still contemplate exactly what to do and the like, but he is at least able to immediately formulate and picture the matter in his mind.

HOW DO WE APPLY CHAI ELUL IN PRACTICE?

This [that it is far easier to implement a message containing a practical directive] is certainly true now, during the month of Elul; we could easily connect this [above] information [regarding the theme of Chai Elul] to the concerns of Elul.

1) CHAI ELUL IN PRAYER

For a theme that is emphasized by all Jewry at this time, is the addition in prayer; why, even Torah scholars subtract time from their study schedules in order to augment their prayers during Elul.

ALL TEHILLIM IS PRAYER

[It is therefore certain, that] regarding the service of prayer (which is generally called “The Service”), every Jew is able to join the abovementioned theme [of Chai Elul] with *the chapters of Tehillim* that are connected to the entire month of Elul, and especially the chapters that relate to Chai Elul.

They can do so with the three additional chapters which are recited specifically during the month of Elul, with the daily portion for the 17th of the month and the 18th of the month etc., as well as with the special prayers that are said during Elul.

This all contains particular relevance to Chai Elul, [whose theme – the “vitality” of Elul – is the essential bond between the Jews and G-d; a theme that is shared with prayer. See above, footnote 71, for further explanation].

additional vitality in the above [three areas], on Chai Elul.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ABSTRACT?

Having said that, it is patently obvious when informing someone of a purely spiritual concept, although on some occasions he will comprehend the practical directive on his own, there are times when he will simply not understand what is being asked of him.

SAVE TIME –SPEAK PRACTICALLY

[In order to crystallize the abstract concept into an applicable message,] he will launch into a debate on the topic, thus squandering his time in utterly unnecessary fashion.

Here is a remedy to avert such a situation – and it is a solid piece of advice regarding countless spiritual matters: connect the spiritual theme with something physical which everyone, or at least the great majority of people, are equally able to perform.

THEORY DIVIDES – ACTION UNITES

[Leaving someone with] a purely spiritual matter, on the other hand, is to a far greater degree relying on the feelings of his heart and the comprehension of his mind [to find a tangible expression of the abstract teaching]. And it is specifically in the heart and mind that the key differences between people exist.

That [concern] is not the case regarding *actions*, and particularly among the actions of Jews, who were *all* commanded [by G-d] concerning these deeds – which are [directly] included within the Torah's 248 positive commands, and, in a converse manner, within its 365 prohibitions.

THE MAIN THING IS WHAT – NOT HOW

Now, although within the actual observance of the Torah's commandments differences may exist – differences that vary from one extreme to another – the commandments nevertheless share a common denominator: they could all be “touched with a

these would fail to ‘contain’ our boundless joy.²³

FARBRENGENS OF JOY

- We should make many joyous gatherings [*farbrengens*] in connection with the month of Elul.²⁴

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.²⁵

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!”²⁵

USE ANY METHOD

- This should be done through any available method – face to face, by word of mouth or in writing.²⁵

23. The difference between a Yom Tov and Elul

“This also explains why the very parable (“the King in the field”) that is brought in 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 G-d – now that is something which is beyond *any* constraining boundaries. There is therefore *no* command to rejoice.” (*Parshas Shoftim*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 234)

24. *Roshei Devarim Parshas Ki Tzeitzei* 5751.

25. 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 G-d'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;

BLESS AGAIN FOR GREATER RESULTS

- Even if we have already blessed a particular individual, we 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 G-d for each Jew and for all Jewry to an incomparably greater extent.²⁶

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.²⁷

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

Hisvaaduyos, p. 209)

26. **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 Motzei 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*, pp. 332-333)

27. **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 G-d’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)

Practical Applications of Chai Elul

We present a free-translation of *Roshei Devarim* from the Sichah of Chai Elul 5751 (following Maariv), with added subtitles.

Most Sichas on Chai Elul underscore its central theme of “vitality” – the need to permeate each aspect of our Divine service with vitality, by focusing on the essential bond that any particular service creates between the one who performs the service with He who commanded it.

However, the Rebbe devoted this entire Sichah to accentuate the need for guidance in the practical application of Chai Elul; since “the main thing is the deed,” the Rebbe highlights a number of straightforward directives for Chai Elul.

WHAT IS THE THEME OF ELUL?

It has been mentioned many times by the Rebbes of Chabad and has further been published, that among the many insights into Chai Elul, there is but one primary message: Chai Elul’s main theme amongst many is to cause vitality to permeate every aspect of Elul.

TORAH, AVODAH AND GEMILAS CHASSADIM

It is therefore clear, that because Elul is the month for self-reckoning concerning the outgoing year, and the month of preparation for the coming year, Elul should therefore contain both a reckoning and a preparation regarding 1) Torah, 2) prayer and 3) charitable deeds. After all, [these comprise the “three pillars] upon which the world stands” (*Pirkei Avos* 1:2).

ADD VITALITY

Now, this is certainly true of each Jew’s personal “world,” all the more so since the entire universe was only created for the sake of each Jew[’s Divine service]. Therefore, there needs to be an

FOCUS ON UNION WITH G-D IN STUDY

- Moreover, our study should reflect the aspect of prayer⁷³ that is achieved through the study of Torah, namely, the union of the Jew with G-d.⁷⁵

PROVIDE FESTIVE NEEDS

- From Chai Elul onward, we should add in the performance of charitable deeds in general, and particularly in the drive to provide the needy with their festival requirements – in generous and ample proportions.

FOR ALL COMING FESTIVALS

- The provisions we provide should include necessities for Rosh Hashanah, Erev Yom Kippur, Motzei Yom Kippur – and all the more so, for “the time of our rejoicing,” Sukkos and Shmini Atzeres.

YOM TOV HOSPITALITY

- Our preparations should include the Mitzvah that is basic to Yom Tov:⁷⁶ general hospitality (Hachnasas Archim), and specifically the form of hospitality universally known as *Eishel*⁷⁷ (אֵשֶׁל, the Hebrew acronym for the provision of “eating, drinking and sleeping” requirements).⁷⁵

75. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 260.

76. “See *Torah Or*, beg. of *Parshas Chayei Sarah*, and in many other locations.” (*ibid.*, fn. 113)

77. **We all contain Eishel seeds**

[On the verse (*Breishis* 21:33), “[Avraham] planted an *Eishel* in Be’er Sheva,” the commentaries explain that *Eishel* refers to a guest house that Avraham established; *Eishel* is the acronym of Achilah, Shetiyah and Linah, “food, drink and a place to sleep” – the requirements that Avraham provided to his many guests – Ed.]

“This alludes to the fact that our forefather Avraham “planted” within the nature of all Jewish people the trait of hospitality (as indicated by the verse (*Breishis* 18:19), “[Avraham] will command his sons and household after him (to follow in these righteous paths),” by providing *Eishel* – food, drink, and sleeping requirements.” (*ibid.*, fn. 112)

performance of Mitzvahs; this is a fine custom.” Indeed, this is a way to increase the blessings we receive from G-d – especially the blessing to be “inscribed and sealed for a good, sweet year.”²⁸

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.²⁹

MISSED SHACHARIS 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.³⁰

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.³¹

28. *Parshas R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 209. See *Mateh Efraim, Orech Chaim*, 581:10.

29. *Parshas R'ay*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 209.

30. **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, fn. 81, and in *Roshei Devarim*)

31. **Aid fellow Jews**

“In fact, working with others causes one’s heart and mind to 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.

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.³²

PREPARE NEEDY FOR UPCOMING FESTIVALS

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 reciting *Ledavid Hashem- Ori Veyishi* (“G-d 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; Hisvaadyos, p. 243*)

32. 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,” they 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; *Hisvaadyos, p. 209*)

FOCUS ON THE CONNECTION OF PRAYER

- In addition to our general enhancement of our prayers throughout the month of Elul, we should now lay fundamental emphasis on (not merely using prayer to appeal for Heavenly pardon, but rather on) our attachment with G-d.⁷³

WHEN RECITING TEHILLIM

- Each of us should reflect this particular mode of prayer in our daily recital of Tehillim – when reciting both the three chapters that we add during Elul as well as the regular daily portions; we should do likewise regarding the additional prayers of Elul – for Chai Elul contains particular significance for *all* forms of prayer, as mentioned earlier.⁷⁴

LEARN ABOUT THE FESTIVALS

- From Chai Elul onward, we should add in the general study of Torah, and particularly in topics pertaining to Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

NIGLEH AND CHASSIDUS

- This addition should be in both “Nigleh” and Chassidus, the revealed and the inner part of Torah.

Amidah, within the month of Elul, is Chai Elul. It is then that the bond between the Jews and G-d, the bond that constitutes the very life-force of our Divine service and likewise of our souls, is emphasized – Ed.]” (*ibid.*, fn. 56)

Eighteen: vertebrae, blessings and Chayus

“This is alluded to in the number of vertebrae within the spine, and the corresponding number of blessings in the Amidah, which total *eighteen* (Chai!)” (*ibid.*, in the subnote to fn. 56)

73. *Parshas Ki Savo, 5750; Hisvaadyos, p. 255. See a Call to Action, “The Month of Elul”.*

74. *Roshei Devarim, Chai Elul, 5751. See also below, for the full text of the Roshei Devarim.*

BOND THROUGH PRAYER

- Since Chai Elul represents the bond of Jewry with G-d, we should specifically increase our service of prayer from Chai Elul onward – for prayer, by definition, is the bonding of the Jew with his Creator.⁷²

Post-Chai Elul service simply cannot be the same

With the above in mind, our truthful stock-taking during these final twelve days of Elul that stretch from Chai Elul until Rosh Hashanah (and which correspond to the twelve months of the past year), is transformed into a completely new service!

Cheshbon Nefesh – before and after Chai Elul

For the self-accounting that we perform during the first part of Elul, *prior* to Chai Elul, focuses mainly on the *generalized* entirety of our Divine service; an inclusiveness that by default includes the many details of the service we performed during the entire past year. [In other words] we contemplate the state of our *total* service of Torah, prayer, charitable deeds, and our conduct as expressed in thought, speech and action.

Conversely, the self-accounting that we make on Chai Elul and the final days of Elul primarily addresses our *essential bond with G-d* and the amount and manner of its revelation within our actual service. In *this* self-accounting, the detailed aspects of the service – whether Torah study, charitable deeds or the like – are not felt to such a great extent. Rather, our main focus is on the essential connection of the Jew to G-d which is the *Chayus*, “life-force,” of all service.” (*ibid.*, pp. 253-254)

Spread the good news: each moment of Elul is priceless

“Elul is the month of reckoning concerning the outgoing year and the month of preparation for the coming year. Within Elul itself, we are currently within the last twelve days, which, one day per month, correspond to the twelve months of the past year.

This does not merely relate to each individual day alone – it is true of each *moment* within each of these twelve days! With this knowledge we can appreciate the value and significance of each moment of these days – to the extent that it is of great importance to inform every Jew that we meet [of the necessity to cherish and utilize each moment of Elul]. It was for that reason, that we devoted the central theme of this farbrengen to the value of time within Elul.” (*Roshei Devarim, Parshas Ki Savo 5751*)

72. *Ibid.*, *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*.

Shemonah Esrei corresponds to the spine

“Note that it is explained in Likutei Torah how the spine is a parable for prayer. [As our Sages state, “These eighteen blessings of the Amidah, correspond to the eighteen vertebrae that form the spine.”]

Chai Elul: the spine of Elul

The reason for this relationship is because [the spine] supports and establishes all the other limbs of the body, and it is through the spine that life-force is drawn from the brain to all the limbs. [The parallel to the function of the “spine,” i.e., the

- It is during Elul that we prepare for Rosh Hashanah and all the other festivals of the month of Tishrei.³³ It is only correct that we should now provide all who are needy with whatever is necessary for all of the coming festivals – beginning with their Rosh Hashanah needs³⁴ and then their Erev Yom Kippur, Motzie Yom Kippur, etc. requirements.³⁵

THIRTY DAYS IN ADVANCE

- We should publicize everywhere – this includes those who go to speak at other congregations³⁶ – that the drive to provide Sukkos requirements to all who are in need of them should begin thirty days before Sukkos.³⁷

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 G-d!” (*Nechemya 8:10*).³⁸

The 11th and 13th of Elul

The Wedding Anniversaries of the Rebbe Rashab and the Previous Rebbe (respectively)

INTRODUCTION

On Motzei Shabbos, the 11th of Elul 5635 (1875), the Rebbe Rashab (the fifth Chabad Rebbe) was married to

33. “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 thirty days before Sukkos.”

34. “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*).”

35. “. . .And following that, Sukkos, Shimini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.” (*Parshas Ki Tzeitzei, 5750; Hisvaadyos*, p. 230-231)

36. *Roshei Devarim, Parshas Ki Tzeitzei, 5751*.

37. “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; Hisvaadyos*, p. 241)

38. *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei, 5751; Hisvaadyos*, p. 241.

Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, a granddaughter of the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Chabad Rebbe).

Twenty-two years later, on the 13th of Elul 5657 (1897), the Rebbe Rashab's only son, the Previous Rebbe (the sixth Chabad Rebbe), was married to Rebbetzin Nechamah Dinah, daughter of Reb Avraham Schneersohn.

On each anniversary of these weddings, the spiritual joy and influence that were then created are again manifest. In fact, each year brings an added quality to this manifestation – “We always ascend in holy matters.”³⁹ Moreover, the marriage date of a leader of a generation is highly significant for all Jewish men, women and children.⁴⁰

CHASSIDIC WEDDING DISCOURSES

- We should study the Chassidic discourses from the Chabad

39. *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 264.

Everything is connected to the Rebbe

“It is customary to connect everything to the leader of our generation; the current time, however, holds *particular* relevance to him, being that his wedding anniversary was this week.

This past Shabbos likewise held particular connection with the Rebbe, being the anniversary of his Ufrufenish [lit. “call up”; the ceremony where a groom is summoned to the Torah reading on the Shabbos prior to his wedding].

How can we “call up” the most elevated person – the Rebbe?

The most basic from the many explanations of Ufrufenish is that they “call” him and he “steps up” from below [i.e., he ascends the steps from the synagogue floor to the platform where the Torah is read. This “call up” is done] even for those [lofty] individuals who are already considered “above” – since [G-d is infinite] there are numerous and even an *infinite* number of ascents to which the term Ufrufenish can be applied.

The greatest Ufruf

In fact, to someone on that [refined] level [i.e., of Rebbe], the ascent accomplished through the Ufrufenish will occur with far greater intensity [than it does for the average groom].” (*Roshei Devarim* to 11th of Elul 5751)

40. **A marriage for all Jewry**

“The marriage of the leader of a generation, viewed in light of our Sages’ statement, “A leader of a generation is [equivalent to] the entire generation,” is pertinent to each Jew in our generation – men, women and children.” (Eve and night of 13th Elul 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 289)

Chai Elul adds *Chayus*, “vitality,” to Elul – to the extent that it is on this day that we begin our truthful self-accounting regarding all twelve months of the past year. Now, the month of Elul is *itself* a month of stock-taking, so Chai Elul constitutes the ‘Elul’ within Elul.⁷⁰

GIVE YOUR DIVINE SERVICE A FACE-LIFT

- From the 18th of Elul onward, we should increase all aspects of our Divine service of Elul – to the extent that it is as if a brand new nature of service has begun.

ESSENCE OF ELUL – UNITING WITH G-D

- We can achieve this through introducing the “life-force” of Elul into every area of Divine service, in a manner that makes discernable and emphasizes the essential *soul* of all service. In other words, we reveal and highlight the core connection that unites the Jewish people with G-d in every aspect of our service.⁷¹

70. *Ibid.*, *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5750.

71. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 259.

In this Sichah, the Rebbe defines two aspects of our Divine service:

1) The *essence* which is equally present in each area of Divine service; this is the vivifying force behind all service and uniformly includes all the myriads of detail that emerge on the practical level.

2) The *details* and compartmentalized realms of practical service, e.g., the mode of prayer, study or charity etc.

While the details must necessarily differ from each other, yet they share the same essence and *soul* that, by definition, must constantly fill their every particular.

What is this “essence”? The Rebbe defines it as *the connection between the Jewish people and G-d* that is generated by any mode of Divine service:

Our existence is our connection with G-d

“The entire month of Elul represents the Jewish people’s “general” Divine service [since each moment within Elul has an effect and can rectify the entire service of the previous year, as well as prepare for the entire coming year]. On Chai Elul, however, there is added an emphasis on the very *life-force*, the inner-self and essence of this general service, namely, *the bond between the Jewish people and G-d*. In fact, this bond is also the life-force and essential existence of the *Jewish people*, (i.e. the Jew who performs the Divine service,) for “the Jews are one with the Holy One.”

the unique virtue of Chai Elul as it relates to our Divine service of the month of Elul:⁶⁹

1) “Chai Elul is the day that brought – and brings – vitality into the month of Elul.”

He then added by way of explanation: Chai Elul gives a vitality to the service of Ani leDodi veDodi Li, “I [the Jewish people] am to my Beloved [G-d], and my Beloved is to me.”

2) “Chai Elul is the first of the final twelve days of the month of Elul – each of which corresponds to another of the twelve months of the year; a day for a month.

In these twelve days, one should take stock of the Divine service he performed over the twelve months of the outgoing year.

Thus, on the actual day of Chai Elul, one takes stock of last year’s month of Tishrei; and so on regarding each of these twelve days that culminate with Rosh Hashanah.”

THE REBBE – TODAY IS THE ELUL OF ELUL

It is clear from the above sayings, that it is not merely the individual details of our Divine service that receive a boost on Chai Elul – but rather, our entire service of Elul is advanced.

69. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5750; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 250.

The power of Chai Elul: eighteenth of Elul or two luminous births?

“The unique virtue of Chai Elul is also due to the birth of two great luminaries: the Baal Shem Tov, who was born in the year 5458 (1698), [that spells the word Nachas, “pleasure”], and the Alter Rebbe, who was born in the year 5505 (1745) (or ‘Kehos’).

In fact, these two aspects [1) the quality of the day due to the birth of these two luminaries, and 2) the fact that today is the Chai, the “life-force,” of Elul,] are interdependent.

It is because of the great importance of Chai Elul that the entire service of the month of Elul is elevated and renewed.” (*ibid.*, fn. 1)

Rebbs that explain the spiritual concept of a wedding (these discourses are known as *Derushei Chasunah*).

PREVIOUS REBBE’S WEDDING DISCOURSES

- We should especially study those discourses that were delivered in honor of the Previous Rebbe’s wedding, beginning with the famous series *Samach Tesamach*.⁴¹

SAMACH TESAMACH – 8 DAY WEDDING GUIDE

- We should *certainly* study the series of discourses entitled *Samach Tesamach*. After all, they constitute the “Chassidic Laws of the Festival.”⁴² Their study should be continued during the six days following the anniversary, which correspond to the customary seven-day celebratory period (*Shevah Berachos*) following a wedding; it was during the days after the Previous Rebbe’s wedding that these discourses were originally delivered. We should study them on the eighth day too,⁴³ since that day carries great spiritual significance.⁴⁴

41. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 315.

The virtue and power of joy

“During the Previous Rebbe’s wedding which took place on the 13th of Elul, the Rebbe Rashab began to deliver a series of discourses that are known as “*Samach Tetzamach*.” In these discourses, the Rebbe Rashab explains at great length and detail, the concept of joy in general and particularly the joy of a wedding and enters into a lengthy exposition of the virtue of joy ‘that breaks through all restrictive boundaries.’” (*Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 264)

42. **Ma’amorim – the theme of each Yom Tov**

See *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim* 429:4, where he describes the tradition (that was introduced by Moshe *Rabbeinu*,) that the rabbis of each city expound the laws of each festival during the festival itself. Nowadays, however, continues the Alter Rebbe, when all the laws have been printed and are readily available to all, it is customary to instead expound on the *theme* of each festival.

The Rebbe borrows the term “laws of the festival” and applies it to the *Chassidic* festivals – we are to study the Chassidic discourses that expound the *theme* of each Chassidic festival on the relevant dates and apply their lessons in our divine service.

43. *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 272.

44. **Six and seven – mundane and sacred**

G-d created the world with seven divine *Sefiros* or “attributes” – six on the first six days of creation and the seventh on the holy day of Shabbos. In doing so, G-d

HOLD WEDDINGS ON THIS DAY WITH IMMENSE JOY

- Those who are set to be married on the anniversary or newlyweds celebrating their *Shevah Berachos*, should do so with increased rejoicing – truly immense joy.⁴⁵

PLAN FOOD FOR THE POOR

- Those about to hold a wedding should prepare an extra number of place-settings at the wedding feast for the poor. This is in keeping with ancient Jewish custom, whereby the choicest food would be laid out specifically for the sake of the poor.⁴⁵

SPREAD THE WORD

- We should publicize these two directives concerning weddings.⁴⁶

The 14th of Elul 30 days before Sukkos

INTRODUCTION

We inquire and expound the laws of the festival thirty

installed the natural order of the world, which includes the concept of “six” (the mundane) and “seven” (the holy).

For that reason, the number seven is used to express both natural and sacred cycles: we celebrate a wedding or mourn a relative for seven days (the natural cycle), and two of the major festivals, Pesach and Sukkos, are seven days long (the sacred cycle).

Eight – unlimited revelation

The number eight by contrast, represents a level entirely beyond and removed from the natural order – even its holier aspects (“seven”). Eight represents an unlimited manifestation of G-dliness. Being unlimited, however, nothing can prevent it from being elicited into all aspects of creation, as it did for example, when G-d’s unlimited Presence came to dwell within the Mishkan on the eighth day of its inauguration festival.

45. A wedding should include Tzedakah

“Every wedding included a meal that was reserved for the poor.” (*ibid.*, 5751)

“See *Chupas Chasanim*, chapter 7.” (*ibid.*, fn. 52)

“They should all increase in joy – and in a manner by which the joy is connected with meals for the poor, which constitutes the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah*.” (*ibid.*, p. 226)

46. 13th of Elul 5751; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 225.

that every Jewish home become a house of Torah, prayer and charitable deeds, *every home should also become a mini-Tomchei Temimim* – through its occupants studying Chassidus in addition to their general Torah study.⁶⁸

Chai Elul – 18th of Elul

Birth of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe

BRIEF HISTORY

The 18th of Elul is a luminous day of truly immense proportion; the Hebrew number eighteen spells Chai, “life,” and on this day two lofty souls entered this world to introduce unprecedented G-dly light and life:

Reb Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism, was born on the 18th of Elul 5458 (1698); on the 18th of Elul 5484 (1724), the prophet Achiyah Hashiloni began teaching the Baal Shem Tov – and on the same auspicious date in the year 5494 (1734), the Baal Shem Tov revealed himself and his teachings to the world.

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad Chassidus, was born on the 18th of Elul 5505 (1745), whereupon the Baal Shem Tov proclaimed: A new soul has descended into this world, and it will illuminate the world with the light of the revealed parts of Torah and the light of Chassidus; it is a soul that will offer itself for the good of Chassidus and whose accomplishments will usher in the era of Moshiach.

Two Sayings that Capture the Theme of Chai Elul

THE PREVIOUS REBBE – TWO QUOTES

The Previous Rebbe highlighted two adages that explain

68. *Ibid.*

Kol haYotzei laMilchemas Beis David, “All who go forth in battle for the House of David” – which describes the goals of a student in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim – in order that it may once again be studied, and in a manner that will lead to action.⁶⁵

OPEN NEW BRANCHES

- We should strive to open new branches of Tomchei Temimim in every appropriate location. This could be accomplished – with the written permission of the heads of the Central Tomchei Temimim – by either opening a new Yeshivah or renaming a pre-existing Chabad Yeshivah, “Tomchei Temimim”.⁶⁶

EVERY HOME A MINI-TOMCHEI TEMIMIM

- We should publicize the unique mission of Tomchei Temimim in every location,⁶⁷ for in addition to the requirement

65. *Ibid.*

Fresh off the press

“It is worthwhile and fitting to reprint the Sichah [“Including an introduction explaining the history and significance of the date – describing the original founding of the Yeshivah and also the opening of its first branch in America” - fn. 32]. For it is human nature that a matter which is printed afresh – despite it having been printed in the past – arouses similar endearment to that of a brand new publication.

Repair the breach

This is particularly important, seeing as from the time of the previous printing and distribution of the Sichah, there has been a truly significant *interruption* in its study (for whatever reason), and certainly a lack of study that leads to action...

[The Rebbe smiled, and then continued:] There is no need to dwell upon matters that are not as they should be. Rather, from now on we should strive with redoubled effort to fulfill the Rebbe Rashab’s words concerning the purpose and goal of the Yeshivah.” (15th of Elul 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 302)

66. **Its all up to them**

“Clearly, this must be done with the written permission of the central heads of the Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim here in Brooklyn. They will clarify whether any given location is deemed appropriate to adopt the name “Tomchei Temimim – Lubavitch”, depending on the identity of those heading that particular branch, its students and the like.” (*Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 317)

67. **Brightening the globe**

“...Which continue to wield their influence as “lamps that illuminate,” in every corner of the world.” (*Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5751 – *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 241)

days beforehand (*Pesachim* 6a).

We begin to expound the laws of the festival of Pesach from Purim and onward, the laws of Shavuos from the 5th of Iyar and onward, and the laws of Sukkos from the 14th of Elul and onward (*Alter Rebbe, Orech Chaim*, 429:1-3).

PREPARE FOR SUKKOS – THIRTY DAYS OF JOY

- We should begin familiarizing ourselves with the laws of Sukkos thirty days before its arrival. Now, since the quality that is unique to Sukkos⁴⁷ is intense rejoicing,⁴⁸ we should make sure to include rejoicing in our thirty day preparatory period – which begins on the 14th of Elul.⁴⁹

ACTIVELY SEEK JOY

- Moreover, the Sages chose the word Dorshin, “we expound the laws of the festival etc.” Dorshin also means “we seek”: throughout the entire thirty days that stretch from the 14th of Elul until Sukkos, we should place extra effort into the theme unique to Sukkos and actively “seek” rejoicing.⁵⁰

47. *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 263.

48. **Why the fuss over Sukkos – aren’t all festivals days of joy?**

“Now, although *all* the festivals are called “festivals for rejoicing” – due to the Torah’s command *veSamachtah beChagechah*, “You shall rejoice on your festivals” – nevertheless, in the text of the Amidah prayer and Kiddush that was established by the *Anshei Knesses haGedolah* (“Men of the Great Assembly”), Sukkos is uniquely given the title, *Zman Simachseinu*, “the time of our rejoicing.” (*ibid.*, fn. 2)

“On the scriptural level too, the joy of Sukkos is given greater emphasis than that of all other festivals; as the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Emor* 654) states, “Three ‘rejoicings’ were written in the Torah concerning Sukkos,” as opposed to just *one* mention regarding Shavuos and *no* explicit mention by Pesach.” (*ibid.*, fn. 6)

49. “The month of Elul is always “lacking” [it contains 29 as opposed to 30 days]. Therefore, thirty days before the 15th of Tishrei [the festival of Sukkos] equals the 14th of Elul.” (*ibid.*)

50. *Ibid.*, 5748.

“...In addition to the joy that accompanies the *entire* month of Elul due to the revelation of ‘the King in the field.’” (*ibid.*, fn. 7)

ESPECIALLY AT THE BEGINNING

- We should be especially joyful at the very onset of these thirty days; for “every beginning is difficult” and the way to nullify any hardship is through intense and bountiful joy that “breaches all restraining boundaries.” On the other hand, the very fact that we are entering a new period makes it easier to feel cheerful, for a new matter naturally and easily arouses joy.⁵¹

The 15th – 18th of Elul

Anniversary of the Founding of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim

INTRODUCTION

On the 15th of Elul 5657 (1897), the Rebbe Rashab announced the founding of a Yeshivah that would combine the study of the Torah’s revealed and inner teachings: “For ten years I have dreamt of founding this Yeshivah and have paid many visits to the burial site of my father and grandfather ... The intention is not only a place to study Torah, but rather to radiate light...”

Actual studies commenced on the 18th of Elul of that year, whereupon the Rebbe Rashab announced, “Today, the 18th of Elul, is the date made luminous by the birth of the Alter Rebbe and the Baal Shem Tov. On this holy day, I founded the Yeshivah at the request of my saintly ancestors ... which will send forth into the world students capable of sacrificing their lives for the study of Torah and divine service, as they cleave faithfully to the

See also *Parshas Ki Tzeitzei*, 5751; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 238, and *a Call to Action*, “The Month of Elul” – regarding the joy of Elul.

51. “...As opposed to the following days, when [the matter is no longer fresh, and] a specific command is necessary in order to create [a sense of novelty], ‘It should be new in your eyes every day.’” (*ibid.*, 5748)

PLAY YOUR PART

- Whoever is suitable to aid the Yeshivah administration, should certainly offer their assistance in arranging these gatherings under the administration’s instruction.⁶⁴

PRINT CHASSIDUS

- In honor of these celebrations, we should publish some of the teachings of Chassidus that pertain – and will add – to the study of Chassidus.⁶²

MA’AMOR KOL HAYOTZEI

- We should reprint the Sichah of the Rebbe Rashab entitled

he performed for many years; he even continued in this position after assuming the mantle of leadership as Rebbe, after the passing of his father in 5680.

Consulting with the Rebbe in the World of Truth

Moreover, since he declared that he would never waive the position, G-d Forbid, he continues to be its active head in a fixed and eternal manner. It was only due to the requirement to devote body and soul to this position that the Previous Rebbe appointed his eldest son-in-law to act in his place (a son-in-law is like a son). The Previous Rebbe gave him the necessary powers to carry out his tasks, and he actually did so during his lifetime; his actions continue to have an effect even *following* his departure – in addition to the continuing effects of the active head, the Previous Rebbe himself.

[“Even after his son-in-law departed to the World of Truth, his affect on the Yeshivah continues, concerning all that was dependent on him. This is specifically so in the light of his current location in the World of Truth, where he has opportunity to consult with the active head, the Previous Rebbe himself” – *ibid.*, 15th of Elul, p. 301-302.]

Spiritual and physical boards

This is especially true regarding the administrators who were appointed by the Previous Rebbe’s son-in-law, and who continue to lead with self-sacrifice – and are successful in their tasks. Their power to accomplish this comes from the active head of the Yeshivah – the Previous Rebbe – who gave them and continues to grant them these powers. This includes both those appointed to oversee the *spiritual* welfare of the Yeshivah as well as those appointed over the *physical* welfare.

Two boards that work through a third

Note that the spiritual and physical administration should constitute *two distinct boards*. At the same time, it is imperative that they, or a representative from each board, meet from time to time. To ensure the most *successful* performance, it is worthwhile to establish a [third] *joint board* that is comprised of some members from the spiritual administration and some members from the physical administration.” (*ibid.*, p. 316)

64. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 317.

HIGHLIGHT OF OUR EFFORTS

- These gatherings should be held with great fanfare, so that they become the principal focus and service of these days.⁶¹

FOLLOW YESHIVAH ADMINISTRATION

- Obviously, the farbrengens should be led by the heads of the Yeshivah, i.e., the central administration and the administrators of each branch, who have been officially appointed and have been executing their duties for many years⁶² – just as it is their responsibility to lead the Yeshiva in all other regards.⁶³

“...To the extent that it could be said, ‘The Jewish people have no festival greater than the fifteenth of Elul.’” (*ibid.*)

An unending farbrengen

“...Beginning with the 15th of Elul itself and then continuing on the subsequent days until the 18th of Elul – which is the anniversary of the commencement of study in the Yeshivah ... in a manner that they could be considered one continuous celebration, stretching from the 15th until the 18th of Elul.

Take a “break” to eat and pray

Clearly, we will need to take breaks in our celebrating for the sake of eating and drinking – and certainly for prayer and Torah study, including the study of Chassidus (starting with the daily portion of *Tanya* and the like), and likewise regarding all other aspects of divine service that is required during this period, for each day comes with its unique spiritual service that must be performed.

The Rebbe’s personal heartfelt request

This directive is being issued in the spirit of “impart unto the wise and he will grow yet wiser” [by adding to the matter from his own understanding]. Therefore, all who will completely submerge themselves (‘throw’ themselves) into this service, with total dedication and with all the proper fanfare (*Shturem*) and enthusiasm (*Bren*), with their entire inner selves and with vitality – will certainly increase many times over what was explicitly instructed here ... They will undoubtedly carry out the directives here in Brooklyn, NY, as well as in every location where word of my personal heartfelt request (*Bakasha Nafshis*) will reach.” (15th of Elul 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 302-303)

62. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 317.

63. **Appointed by the Rebbe**

“Clearly, the Yeshivah administration should direct the celebration – just as they are to lead all other matters that concern the Yeshivah. After all, they are the administrators who were appointed by the active head of the Yeshivah whilst he was yet alive in this physical world.

The Previous Rebbe is the Yeshivah’s active head

This position of active head was held by the Previous Rebbe, who was himself appointed as its active head by his father, the Rebbe Rashab, a capacity in which

path of Chabad Chassidus.

I am hereby kindling the lights that we inherited from the Baal Shem Tov and the Rebbes of Chabad, so that the promise [that Moshiach made, to arrive when] “the wellsprings of your teachings will stream outwards” may be fulfilled, and that the arrival of Moshiach will be hastened.”

TORAH AVODAH U’GEMILAS CHASSADIM

- In connection with the anniversary, it is extremely fitting that each of us increases our Divine service in the three fundamental areas of Torah, prayer and charitable acts.⁵²

STUDY CHASSIDUS

- Each of us should add in the study of Torah in general and Chabad Chassidus in particular, since it bears great significance to the current days (the 15th – 18th of Elul).⁵²

FOCUS ON THE DATES

- Within our study of Chabad Chassidus, we should particularly increase our study of the works of the Baal Shem Tov, the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab [see Intro.], and certainly the discourses of [the Previous Rebbe] the Leader of our generation.⁵³

PUBLIC CHASSIDUS SESSIONS

- In addition to increasing our personal study of Chassidus, we

52. **Auspicious days in an auspicious month**

“We are currently within the seven days of celebration that follow the weddings of the 11th and 13th of Elul and the founding of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim ... in addition to it being the month of Elul, and the days preceding the 18th of Elul – the day which draws “life-force” (Chayus) into our divine service of Elul (“18” in Hebrew spells Chai, “life”).” (*Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 315)

[See the continuation there, regarding the three pillars of divine service and Torah study in particular, and the relevance of Chassidus to the month of Elul – even *before* the addition of many important Chassidic dates within Elul].”

53. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 315.

should also establish new study groups for the public study of Chassidus – wherever possible – as well as bolstering all existing sessions.⁵³

ADD IN SERVICE OF PRAYER

- Since the Sages state that the month of Elul in general is conducive for additional prayer and supplication, we should add in our service of prayer. This is especially so during the anniversary of the founding of Tomchei Temimim – a Yeshivah that lends special significance to the service of prayer.⁵⁴

MORE TZEDAKAH

- It is customary to proliferate in distributing Tzedakah throughout the month of Elul; we should further increase in Tzedakah on these auspicious dates.⁵⁵

SPREAD TEACHINGS OF CHASSIDUS

- We should simultaneously perform *spiritual* Tzedakah, whereby we become [in the words of the Rebbe Rashab] a “flame that illuminates” the world through disseminating Torah, Judaism – and particularly, the teachings of Chassidus.⁵⁵

FARBRENG WHEREVER THERE’S A TOMCHEI TEMIMIM

- In 5749 (1989)⁵⁶ the Rebbe stated: in honor of the

54. *Ibid.*

“Know the G-d of your fathers and serve him with a complete heart”

“Regarding prayer: the emphasis on prayer and the innovation in its service that was added through the Yeshivah is legendary.

This concerns the students’ service of prayer that serves to prepare them for Torah study and also their contemplation and concentration during prayer that results from their study of Chassidus – in the spirit of the verse, “*Know the G-d of your fathers and [thereby] serve Him with a complete heart*”; as our Sages state, ‘What is the service of the heart? It is Prayer.’

All of this is explained at length in the Rebbe Rashab’s “*Kuntres haTefillah*” and “*Kuntras hoAvodah*.” (*ibid.*, p. 313)

55. *Parshas Ki Savo, 5749; Hisvaadyos*, pp. 315-316.

56. “This year completes 92 years since the founding of the Yeshivah and 50 years (a Yovel, “Jubilee”) since the Yeshivah relocated and took root in America.” (*ibid.*, p. 315)

upcoming anniversaries of the *Shevah Brachos* from the Rebbe Rashab and the Previous Rebbe’s weddings, along with the anniversary of the founding of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim, it is fitting to hold celebratory farbrengens wherever a Tomchei Temimim exists.⁵⁷

ALL BRANCHES

- Naturally, we should hold such celebrations in the Central Tomchei Temimim in Brooklyn, NY – and likewise by each branch of the Yeshivah, both in the Land of Israel and worldwide, whether it is called Tomchei Temimim or Achei Temimim and the like.⁵⁸

DRAW CROWDS, ALL ALUMNI

- We should arrange matters so that these celebratory gatherings will have high turnouts and that all alumni of every branch of Tomchei Temimim should participate.⁵⁹ This includes those who send/t their sons to the Yeshivah, those who were positively affected by the Yeshivah or its students and certainly those studying there at present.⁶⁰

FOUR OR MORE DAYS OF FARBRENGEN

- We should maintain these farbrengens until and including, the 18th of Elul; if local conditions permit, we should extend them even beyond the 18th.⁶¹

57. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

A special event

“It is appropriate to mark this date with a special celebration, for it is human nature to become more enthused from participating in special celebrations.” (15th of Elul 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 302)

58. *Parshas Ki Savo, 5749; Hisvaadyos*, p. 316.

Once a Tomim, always a Tomim

“For holiness does not depart from its location – if one entered the Yeshivah even once, then the influence it has on him will remain forever, throughout his lifetime, and in a steadily increasing and radiant manner.”

60. *Parshas Ki Savo, 5749; Hisvaadyos*, p. 316.

61. **No greater festival**