



THE MONTH OF ELUL (2)

Making the Best of this Time

When the Mittlerer Rebbe was five years old, he studied under Reb Ber the *melamed*, in the home of Reb Avraham the doctor. Once he overheard Reb Avraham bemoaning, "We are already far into Elul, but I haven't yet prepared the leeches!" Leeches were used for healing purposes and were only out during the warm summer months.

When the Mittlerer Rebbe came home after *cheder*, he used to spend time in the company of the chassidim who were in the room next to the Alter Rebbe's room. One day he saw them sitting around and talking, when they suddenly began to laugh. Hearing them, the young boy reprimanded them, "We are deep into Elul, you haven't yet prepared the leeches, yet you sit here laughing?!"

And he left the room.

They immediately assumed that this was a *vort* he had heard from his father, the Alter Rebbe, and began to think deeply into its meaning. They concluded that just as leeches are used to draw out a patient's diseased or overheated blood, during the month of Elul one should do away with one's negative desires in preparation for Rosh HaShana.

When word of their discussion reached the Alter Rebbe, he said, "Such is the way of the Baal Shem Tov – to learn a lesson in *avodas HaShem* from every physical thing that one sees or hears. Whoever follows this path and uses all physical things for *avodas HaShem*, will instill in himself and in his descendants a spark of inspiration in *avodas HaShem*."

Chassidim recall: That Rosh HaShana, the floor was wet with tears from the impact of the Mittlerer Rebbe's *vort*, and on Simchas Torah, the shoes of the chassidim were worn out and torn by the exuberant dancing inspired by the Alter Rebbe's promise.

(ס"ה ש"ת רצ"ו ע' 5, תו"מ חל"ה ע' 126)

The chossid Reb Foleh Kahn related: Once, as I was sitting alone, I heard the Rebbe Rashab muttering to himself, "It's Elul in the world and time is just flying away." Hearing these words, a shiver went down my spine.

When I later shared this experience with my

fellow chassidim, they all told me, "Don't you understand? The Rebbe was speaking to *you*."

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 145)

During the month of Elul, the Rebbeim would be preoccupied with their personal *avoda*, leaving less time than usual for correspondence. Chassidim would therefore keep their correspondence to a minimum, to allow the Rebbe to prepare for Rosh HaShana.

(אוצר מנהגי חב"ד ע' יא)

Preparing Oneself

The month of Elul is called the month of *teshuva*. It is a most auspicious time to make a *cheshbon* and to correct whatever needs to be corrected. For this reason, we sound the *shofar* to awaken us to do *teshuva*.

Though we are assured that during this month HaShem greets us lovingly, nevertheless it is incumbent upon us to reveal those thirteen *midos harachamim* through *davening*, learning and *teshuva*.

(טור או"ח סי' תקפ"א, שיה"ק תשל"ח ח"ג ע' 333)

In the year תרצ"ז (1937), at the request of the Pupa Rebbe, the Friediker Rebbe wrote a letter addressed to all *talmidei yeshiva*, arousing them to prepare fittingly for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur:

"The month of Elul is a time for accounting of the past year, when one regrets whatever was negative, and commits to fulfill *mitzvos behiddur*, to be diligent in one's Torah and *davening*, and to cultivate *middos tovos*. The Baal Shem Tov taught that the *avoda* of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur depends on one's *avoda* during the month of Elul and the week of *Selichos*. One's emphasis should be on learning *Chassidus* and other *seforim* that will heighten his *yiras Shamayim*."

As to the *talmidim* of Tomchei Temimim, the Friediker Rebbe required that they increase their learning of *Chassidus* and *davening* deliberately. "What matters most is not the study, but the *cheshbon hanefesh* at night and in the morning. Every individual should arouse his friend concerning *middos tovos* and commitment to proper conduct."

(אג"ק מהור"י צ"ח ע' קלא, אוצר מנהגי חב"ד ע' ג-ד)

During the month of Elul one should designate more time for *davening* than usual. The Rebbe writes that similarly in the realm of Torah learning, one should learn those areas of Torah which focus on *avodas Hashem*, and those *maamorim* of Chassidus which arouse one to do *teshuva*.

(מט"א סי' תקפ"א סי"א באל"מ, אג"ק ח"י ע' תלב)

Special Practices

The chossid Reb Avrohom Pariz was in charge of the *pidyon shvuyim* fund in Lubavitch. One day in Elul, the Rebbe Rashab sent him on a mission to Vitebsk, and requested that while there he should buy a *Tehillim* for him. The Rebbe then added with a smile, "Now is the season for it."

We have a tradition from the Baal Shem Tov, who heard it from his Rebbe, Achiya HaShiloni, that each day of Elul and *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* we should recite three *kapitlach* of *Tehillim*, concluding the *sefer* on Yom Kippur.

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 541, היום יום א' אלול)

During this month, it is the custom of *anshei mayseh* to check their *tefillin* and *mezuzos* and any other *mitzva* that needs attention. The Rebbe urged that this directive be widely publicized.

(מט"א סי' תקפ"א, סה"ש תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 610)

During the month of Elul and *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* we *bentch* one another with *berachos* for a *kesiva vachasima tova* and *leshana tova umesuka*. This exchange of *berachos*, which should be done both in speech and in writing, increases the *berachos* that HaShem bestows upon Yidden.

(אוצר מנהגי חב"ד ע' ט)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Why would the Rebbeim spend more time on personal *avoda* during the month of Elul? Is caring for the needs of *klal Yisroel* not enough of a holy endeavor?
- What constitutes the primary *avodah* during Elul: inner *teshuva* and *cheshbon hanefesh* or checking *mezuzos* and other *mitzvos*?

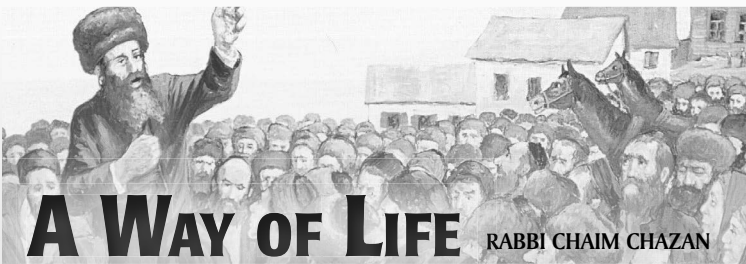
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A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

OUR HEROES

י"ג אלול

Reb Yaakov Yisroel of Tcherkas



Reb Yaakov Yisroel of Tcherkas was born in תקנ"ד (1794), to Reb Mordechai of Chernobyl. He married the daughter of the Mitteler Rebbe, Rebbetzin Devorah Leah. During his father's lifetime, he became a *maggid* in Hornostaiple and later moved to Tcherkas. He passed away Shabbos the 13th of Elul, תרל"ו (1876).

Bal Tashchis

May one purchase something for more expensive when one is able to buy the same thing for cheaper? In other words: Is needless spending of money included in the prohibition of *Bal Tashchis*?

The *halachic* definition¹ of *Bal Tashchis* is to actively damage or destroy anything that people can benefit from. Therefore the prohibition includes:

A) **Destructive Manner:** *Bal Tashchis* pertains to ruining something in a destructive manner, but if the destruction serves a beneficial purpose it is not considered *Bal Tashchis*. This includes several : (1) Personal benefit - demolishing a building for the purpose of rebuilding another in its place²; (2) Mitzvah benefit – destroying something for the sake of a mitzvah such as destroying *chametz* before *Pesach*³; or (3) Standard practice – trashing disposable tableware after one use (which is the expected method of use for that product)⁴.

B) **Causes Detriment to Mankind:** *Bal Tashchis* pertains to destroying something which benefits mankind⁵. Therefore, hunting animals in a forest with no intention of use is not considered *Bal Tashchis* (although other issues may be involved), since humans don't benefit from them⁶. Likewise chopping down a non fruit-bearing trees is not prohibited⁷, unless it is part of a garden or the like which provides pleasure to mankind⁸.

C) **Actively Destroying:** Allowing something to rot is not considered *Bal Tashchis*⁹. For example: It is permitted to abstain from watering a plant and let it wither. Likewise, it is permitted to cook a fresh supper although one has leftovers from yesterday's supper that will end up going to waste¹⁰ (in addition, his desire is a fresh supper and he has no destructive intent) or to leave a pile of unwanted clothes in the street¹¹ (besides the fact that others may take them for use).

In our case: Since when one spends more money than needed the seller is profiting, it is not considered destructive, and not *Bal Tashchis*¹².

1. ראה שוע"ר חו"מ דיהי שמירת גוף
2. שם סעי' טו.
3. שם, וראה שו"ת תורה לשמה שאלה ת, הר צבי או"ח ח"ב ס' קב, שבט הלוי
4. ספר חיי משה יו"ד איסור בל תשחית.
5. ראה שו"ת חו"מ דיהי שמירת גוף
6. שם סעי' טז.
7. שם, וראה שו"ת תורה לשמה שאלה ת, הר צבי או"ח ח"ב ס' קב, שבט הלוי
8. שם סעי' טז.
9. שם סעי' טז.
10. שם סעי' טז.
11. שם סעי' טז.
12. שם סעי' טז.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

לזכות החתן סעדי ליבעראווי שיי והכלה מינה לאה כהן תחי לרגל חתונתם ביום ד' אלול

לזכות חיי דריזל מערקא בת מלכה לרפו"ש בקרוב ברוח ובגשם, לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות

לזכות הילד לוי יצחק שיי אלטיין לרגל יום האפשרוניש שלו - י"א מנחם אב

The *shidduch* between Reb Yaakov Yisroel and the Mitteler Rebbe's daughter came about as follows:

The Alter Rebbe was once visiting Reb Nochum of Chernobyl, and the Alter Rebbe reminded him that their Rebbe, the Mezritcher Maggid, had once said that Moshiach will be a descendent of either his oldest or youngest disciple. The eldest talmid was Reb Nochum of Chernobyl and the youngest was the Alter Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe suggested, "Let us not remain in doubt and arrange a *shidduch* between our children."

The alter Rebbe then entered the room were Reb Nochum's young grandchildren were sleeping, and felt each one's head. When he reached Reb Yaakov Yisroel, he said that he is choosing him as a husband for his granddaughter Devorah Leah, the daughter of the Mitteler Rebbe.

When the couple grew older, the *chassunah* took place in the presence of the Alter Rebbe who said the *maamar* "Shir Hashirim Asher Lishlomo". After the *chassunah*, Reb Yaakov Yisroel remained in Liadi to learn with his brother-in-law the Tzemach Tzedek and they set up a fixed *shiur* with the Alter Rebbe.

There was once an intense discussion between Reb Yaakov Yisroel and the Tzemach Tzedek about taking away the job of a *shochet* who had committed a grave *aveirah*. In the end of the *halachic* correspondence, Reb Yaakov Yisroel wrote to the Tzemach Tzedek that the *shochet* himself was by him and he had not noticed any remnant of the *avairah* on his forehead. The Tzemach Tzedek replied that indeed the mark had been washed away with tears of *teshuvah*, but because there were witnesses to what he had done, the *din* that "the *dayan* has to follow what his eyes have seen" still stands and hence, his *shechita* is forbidden.

The Rebbe told this story and concluded, "This teaches us that although *teshuvah* does not help as far as the earthly *beis din* is concerned, yet, it does help one's judgment in the *beis din shel maalah*."

(ש"פ עקב תשי"א)

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שיי בן רבקה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

The Second Dollar



The Faltachiner Rebbe had a small shul in Boro Park. One day, a desperate widow came to him asking for a donation, to help her make ends meet.

Seeing her desperate plight, instead of just giving *tzedakah*, he decided to make a real change. He assisted her in starting a small business, and let her use the *ezras noshim* of his shul to work in. From then on, the Faltachiner shul became a little storefront.

One day, this woman decided to come get a dollar from the Rebbe. As she came past, the Rebbe *bentched* her, and gave her a dollar. The Rebbe then gave her a second dollar.

Before she had a chance to ask for an explanation, the Rebbe told her, "The second dollar, pass on to the person who assists you..."