

# The Weekly Farbrengens

  
**MERKAZ ANASH**  
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## ELUL (II)

### 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.

(סה"ש תרצ"ו ע' 5, תר"מ חלה"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)

### CONSIDER

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 *teshuvah* and *cheshbon hanefesh* or checking *mezuzos* and other *mitzvos*?

### 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, שיח"ק תשל"ח ח"ג ע' 333)

In the year תרצ"ז (1937), at the request of the Pupa Rebbe, the Frierdiker 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*

*toivos*. 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 Frierdiker Rebbe required that they increase their learning of *Chassidus* and *daven* 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 toivos* and commitment to proper conduct."

(אג"ק מהר"י"צ ח"ד 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 *teshuvah*.

(מט"א סי' תקפ"א סי"א באל"מ, אג"ק ח"ט 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' 145, 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.

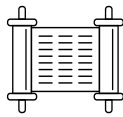
(אוצר מנהגי חב"ד ע' ט)

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WORKPLACE INTERACTIONS

What precautions must one take when working with coworkers of the opposite gender?

Chazal teach that the yetzer hara works intensely to facilitate forbidden connections between men and women, and one must therefore be vigilant whenever interacting with members of the opposite gender outside of one's immediate family.

The posuk instructs us to not even "come close" to forbidden relations, which prohibits any form of affectionate speech or touch.

Affectionate talk includes inquiring how the other is doing — even via an emissary — or asking any question that creates a personal connection.

If the question is work-related or chesed-related — e.g. she wasn't feeling well — it is allowed as long as it isn't asked in an affectionate manner.

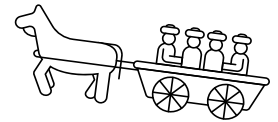
Giving a gift is included in this prohibition, thus a man may not give a present to a female co-worker.

Even with regard to non-affectionate conversation, the Mishna discourages excessive talking between men and women.

In order to uphold proper decorum in the workplace, it is advisable to establish clear guidelines of appropriate conduct between men and women.

- 1. ראה שו"ע אה"ע סי' כ"א ס"א וב"ש שם
2. ויקרא י"ח ו' סנהדרין ע"ה ע"א ר"ן ע"ז
3. ראה תורת האדם לרמב"ן ענין הסכנה, שעת"ת לרבנו יונה ג קלז, ועוד.
4. ח"מ אה"ע סי' כ"א סק"ז. ב"ש שם סק"ג.

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



REB YONA POLTAVER

Reb Yona Kahn of Poltava came from a frum family, though they were not chassidim. As a young bochur, the local shochet Reb Pinye Rakshiker advised him to go learn in Lubavitch, where he studied diligently, especially the maamorim of the Rebbe Rashab.

When people would complain to Reb Yona that the children refuse to or are scared to learn Torah, he would reply adamantly, "The children are not to blame. Their fears are very well understood. We must say Tehilim from the depths of our hearts, crying and asking Hashem to plant the desire to learn Torah in their hearts."

children stopped coming to learn, and possibly will not continue. That is why I'm saying Tehilim."

(כפר חב"ד גליון 550)

Reb Mendel Futerfas was very involved in arranging the rescue of Lubavitcher chassidim from Russia after World War II using forged Polish passports.

During the escape of Lubavitcher chassidim from Russia after the war, we were in the city Lvov and the work was very hard. Things were tense and I had no more strength left physically. In addition, I feared for my safety and the safety of my family.

Reb Mendel ended up sending his family out, and he himself remained in Russia for another 17 years.

(ר' מענדל ע' 238)

A Moment with The Rebbe



SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY

During the Frierdiker Rebbe's pioneering years in America, Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky once received a generous donation from a philanthropist for Lubavitch.

When Reb Shlomo Aharon went in to the Frierdiker Rebbe to report, he shared this incident and explained the predicament.

The Frierdiker Rebbe advised that he discuss the matter with the Rebbe's

younger son-in-law, the future Rebbe.

Now, Reb Shlomo Aharon was startled. He thought to himself that the son-in-law, as the administrator of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, couldn't possibly be objective on the matter.

The Frierdiker Rebbe sensed his thoughts, and remarked, "Er hot a de'ah shleima, a de'ah yeshoro, a de'ah chazokoh; er iz gor an andere - He has a full view, a straight view, a strong view; he is something else entirely."

(Bedarkei Hachasidim, page 206)