

a **CALL** *to* **ACTION**

11TH & 13TH OF ELUL

14TH OF ELUL

15TH - 18TH OF ELUL

CHAI ELUL

**PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752**

**A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar**



a CALL to ACTION

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Foreword

we are pleased to bring you this second, newly revised and improved edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. his special edition covers The 11th and 13th of Elul, The 14th of Elul, 30 days before Sukkos and the 15th – 18th of Elul anniversary of the founding of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim.

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

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

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

Editorial Office of
HaMaaseh Hu Halkar
Erev Parshas Ki Tzeitzei, 5766

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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 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.”¹ Moreover, the marriage date of a leader of a generation

1. 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, hold *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)

is highly significant for all Jewish men, women and children.²

CHASSIDIC WEDDING DISCOURSES

- We should study the Chassidic discourses from the Chabad Rebbes 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.³

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.”⁴ Their study should be continued during the six days following the anniversary, which correspond to the customary seven-day celebratory period (Shevah Berachos)

2. 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)

3. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos 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; Hisvaaduyos p.264)

4. 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.

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,⁵ since that day carries great spiritual significance.⁶

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.⁷

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.⁷

SPREAD THE WORD

- We should publicize these two directives concerning weddings.⁸

5. Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5748; Hisvaaduyos p.272.

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

Hashem 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, Hashem 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 Hashem's unlimited Presence came to dwell within the Mishkan on the eighth day of its inauguration festival.

7. **A wedding should include Tzedakah**

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

“See Chupas Chasanim, chapter 7.” (ibid, footnote 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)

8. 13th of Elul 5751; Hisvaaduyos p.225.

The 14th of Elul

30 days before Sukkos

INTRODUCTION

We inquire and expound the laws of the festival thirty days beforehand (Pesachim 6a).

We begin to expound the laws of the festival of Pesach from Purim and onward, the laws of Shavuot 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 Sukkos⁹ is intense rejoicing,¹⁰ we should make sure to include rejoicing in our thirty day preparatory period – which begins on the 14th of Elul.¹¹

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

9. Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5748; Hisvaaduyos p.263.

10. **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 Knesset haGedolah (“Men of the Great Assembly”), Sukkos is uniquely given the title, *Zman Simachseinu*, ‘the time of our rejoicing’.” (ibid, footnote 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 Shavuot and *no* explicit mention by Pesach.” (ibid, footnote 6)

11. “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)

to Sukkos and actively “seek” rejoicing.¹²

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.¹³

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

12. 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, footnote 7)

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

13. “...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)

Torah and divine service, as they cleave faithfully to the 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.¹⁴

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).¹⁴

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.¹⁵

PUBLIC CHASSIDUS SESSIONS

- In addition to increasing our personal study of Chassidus, we should also establish new study groups for the public study of Chassidus – wherever possible – as well as bolstering all

14. 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 Yeshiavs Tomchei Temimim ... in addition to it being the month of Elul, and the day 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].”

15. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos p.315.

existing sessions.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁷

FARBRENG WHEREVER THERE’S A TOMCHEI TEMIMIM

- In 5749 (1989)¹⁸ the Rebbe stated: in honor of the 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

16. 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)

17. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos p.315-316.

18. “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)

fitting to hold celebratory farbrengens wherever a Tomchei Temimim exists.¹⁹

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.²⁰

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.²¹ 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.²²

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.²³

19. 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; Hisvaaduyos p.302)

20. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos p.316.

21. **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.”

22. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos p.316.

23. **No greater festival**

“...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

HIGHLIGHT OF OUR EFFORTS

- These gatherings should be held with great fanfare, so that they become the principal focus and service of these days.²³

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 years²⁴ – just as it is their responsibility to lead the Yeshiva in all other regards.²⁵

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)

24. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos p.317.

25. **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 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

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.²⁶

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.²⁴

MA'AMOR KOL HAYOTZEI

- We should reprint the Sichah of the Rebbe Rashab entitled Kol haYotzei laMilchamas 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

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)

26. Parshas Ki Savo 5749; Hisvaaduyos p.317.

once again be studied, and in a manner that will lead to action.²⁷

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”.²⁸

EVERY HOME A MINI-TOMCHEI TEMIMIM

- We should publicize the unique mission of Tomchei Temimim in every location,²⁹ for in addition to the requirement 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.³⁰

27. 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” - footnote 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)

28. **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)

29. **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)

30. Ibid.

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a **CALL** *to* **ACTION**

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מוקדש

לכ"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לזכות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' צבי מרדכי בן שרה

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בניהם ובנותיהם:

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ל"בריתו של אברהם אבינו" ב' אלול תשע"ב

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ולחופה ולמעשים טובים לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח

והוריו שיחיו



יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד



a CALL to ACTION

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Foreword

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

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

Editorial Office of
HaMaaseh Hu Halkar
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Translated in the memory of Yitzchok Yosef ben Yaakov Mordechai

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 the unique virtue of Chai Elul as it relates to our Divine service of the month of Elul:¹

1. *Parshas Ki Savo*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, 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

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.

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.²

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)

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

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.³

3. *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.”

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*

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.⁴

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)

4. *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 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)

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.⁵

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.⁶

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.

FOCUS ON UNION WITH G-D IN STUDY

- Moreover, our study should reflect the aspect of prayer⁵ that is achieved through the study of Torah, namely, the union of the Jew with G-d.⁷

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

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

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

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:⁸ general hospitality (Hachnasas Archim), and specifically the form of hospitality universally known as *Eishel*⁹ (אֵשֶׁל, the Hebrew acronym for the provision of “eating, drinking and sleeping” requirements).⁷

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

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

9. **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)

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 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 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 3, for further explanation].

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 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.

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 Redemption¹⁰ – 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*

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

Kings)¹¹ – as well as in *Shulchan Aruch*'s treatment of the blessing for Redemption that we recite in the Amidah prayer¹², 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.]

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 בתו ומשפחתה שיחיו טוב בער



יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

11. In his Mishne Torah Chapter 11 & 12.

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