

The Weekly Farbrengens



למען ישמעו • שופטים תשפ"ו • 892
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ELUL (I)

A UNIQUE TIME

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai for the final forty days to receive the second set of *luchos*. At the conclusion of those days, on Yom Kippur, HaShem forgave the Yidden completely and that day was designated as a day of forgiveness. For this reason, those forty days are auspicious for *teshuvah*.

(פרקי דר"א פמ"ו, וראה בדברי נחמ"י השלמה לסי' תקפ"א)

Though the month of Elul is an earnest time of *teshuvah*, it is during this very time that we experience a particular closeness to HaShem.

In a classic *maamar*, the Alter Rebbe explains this by the *marshal* of a king who, on the way to his palace, walks through the fields. There, everyone can approach him and he greets them all with a smiling countenance, until he enters his palace with only his chosen courtiers.

So, too, during the month of Elul, as HaShem prepares to enter his throne room on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, He passes through the mundane world. Thus, we are able to connect to Him more easily than usual. At that time in particular, He inspires us and empowers us to do *teshuvah* and return to Him.

(לקוטי תורה דברים לבא)

In Lubavitch, even though *Shabbos Mevarchim* Elul would still be a clear and sunny day, the air felt different. There was a smell of Elul in the air; you could feel the first stirrings of a *teshuvah-breeze*. Every person there was beginning to grow a little more deliberate, a little more thoughtful, and allowing his weekday affairs to fade from his memory.

From *Shabbos Nachamu* onwards, people would already begin to learn in groups after *Maariv*, in order to "cry out in the night." By the time *Shabbos Mevarchim* Elul came around one could sense the atmosphere of Elul. Anxiously, people now awaited the time when they could say "*LeDovid: HaShem ori*"; eagerly, they awaited the first blast of the *shofar* that would announce that the gates of *chodesh harachamim* had been thrown open. The *maamarei Chassidus* of *Shabbos Mevarchim* Elul, opening with the familiar words *Ani LeDodi*, were permeated with the spirit of Elul.

Every day of Elul was quite unlike every other day of the year. Lying in bed at six o'clock in the morning, you could hear that the *vasikin-minyan* in the *beis midrash* had already finished *Shacharis*. You could already hear the *shofar*. It woke you up to the fact that the world was now filled with Elul. You dress hastily, a trifle dissatisfied with yourself for having somehow slept in so late. You recall that this was the time that Moshe Rabbeinu spent on the mountain. These are propitious days, days in which you can accomplish more than usual. You tell yourself that you really should become a *mensch*; you cannot let these hours be lost on sleep.

By the time you arrive at the *beis midrash* you find quite a crowd already there. Some are saying *Tehillim*, some are learning *Chassidus*, some are reading *Tikkunei Zohar*, while others, whether standing or sitting, are davening.

(לקו"ד ח"א ע' 230)

correct any problems to ensure the business is profitable, the same applies in *ruchniyus* matters. After having served HaShem, and been occupied with Torah and *mitzvos* throughout the year, we have a month to make an accurate account of the past year, fix that which needs correcting and strengthen our positive traits. Through this excellent preparation, we merit a good and sweet year, *b'gashmiyus* and *b'ruchniyus*.

(היום יום כ"ז מנחם אב)

In the year תשי"ג (1953), the Rebbe gave instructions to the administration of the Yeshiva on how to inspire the *talmidim* with *yiras Shamayim* during the month of Elul: Firstly, they were to impress upon them the seriousness of the month by relating how chassidim in Lubavitch conducted themselves throughout Elul. Secondly, for fifteen minutes after *Maariv*, the *talmidim* were to learn *avodah'dike maamorim* relevant to this time of year.

(מיומנו של הר"ר משה לברטוב, וראה סה"מ תש"א ע' 207)

The month of Elul is compared to an *ir miklat*, to which one can escape from the *yetzer hara* who attempts to take revenge on a person.

At a *farbrengen* in תשי"א (1951), the Rebbe delivered the following message which he asked to be publicized in all possible ways:

"HaShem tells the Yidden: 'I am giving you 30 days during which you can escape your old negative habits and follow the Elul lifestyle, thereby correcting the past, and you will be spared from the *kitrugim* of the *yetzer hara*. Through *teshuvah* you will be written and sealed for a good sweet year.'

(לקו"ת להאריז"ל פ' משפטים, לקו"ש ח"ב ע' 623)

During one *farbrengen*, the Rebbe spoke of the joyful attitude to be had during Elul. Though one should be bothered by any wrongdoings they may have done throughout the year, yet thinking of their closeness to HaShem during this month should bring one to tremendous joy. As discussed in Tanya, distress over ones wrongdoings should not detract from the joy of the *neshama*.

(שיח"ק תשל"ד ח"ב ע' 467)

CONSIDER

How does the joy of HaShem's presence not detract from the seriousness of the time?

How is it possible to feel the "Elul air" today if one's surroundings may not reflect the speciality of this time?

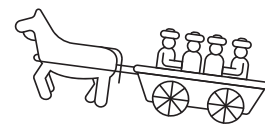
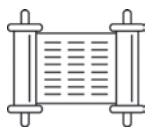
At one *farbrengen* the Rebbe emphasized that the Frierdiker Rebbe told this narrative long after he had left Lubavitch, in order to inspire others to follow this lifestyle. Even today, every Yid is capable of feeling the "Elul air."

(התועודויות תשמ"ה ח"ה ע' 2668)

ELEVATED AVODA

The month of Elul is a month of reckoning. Just as a businessman must take stock every so often and





THE BRACHA ON RICE

Which bracha do we make on rice?

The Gemara rules that on cooked *orez* one says Borei Minei Mezonos, since it sustains like the five grains, though its after-bracha is Borei Nefashos.¹ But what is *orez*? The Gemara speaks of two similar species, *orez* and *dochan*, and never settles which is which. Most *poskim* understand that *orez* is our rice and *dochan* is millet, but some hold the reverse.² This matters because the halachos of *dochan* are different.

Orez is Mezonos according to some Rishonim only when the kernels dissolved somewhat in cooking, while others apply it even to whole kernels, since it's normal to eat them whole. Because of this doubt, one would say Shehakol on whole cooked *orez*, though one who said Ha'adama or Mezonos has fulfilled his obligation.³

Dochan, however, when cooked whole is Ha'adama like other kitniyos, and when it loses its natural form, crushed or made into bread or a dish from its flour, it becomes Shehakol.⁴ Thus, depending on which identification is correct and the form it takes, rice could be Mezonos, Ha'adama, or Shehakol.

Because of this double *safek*, the Alter Rebbe advises a *yerei shomayim* to eat rice or millet, whether whole or mashed, only within a bread meal, where Hamotzi covers everything served in the meal.⁵ Even a small piece of bread is enough for this purpose, and one need not eat a *kezayis* to exempt the rice.⁶

What about rice eaten outside a meal? The Alter Rebbe paskens that one says Shehakol.⁷ However, some have suggested a *hiddur* of first saying Mezonos, Ha'adama, and Shehakol on three other foods with the rice in mind, so that it is covered whichever way the doubts fall.⁸ (Others note that ordinary cooked rice, even when the kernels were softened, is either Mezonos or Ha'adama, so two brachos are enough, and only rice-flour breads or dishes carry a Shehakol side.)⁹

Others argue, however, that the Alter Rebbe's silence here is deliberate. The Alter Rebbe suggests similarly in other cases, but only to save a person from a real doubt, like eating without a valid bracha. Here, a Shehakol on the rice already covers the obligation fully. All one stands to gain is the special quality of a specific bracha, and that is only possible when one knows what specific food he is praising Hashem for. On the other hand, rice eaten in a meal receives a true bracha through Hamotzi, the head of the entire *seudah*.¹⁰

In practice, prominent Chabad rabbanim of the previous generation reported this *minhag* among chassidim, and it is a worthy *hiddur*.¹¹

1. ברכות לו ע"א. ראש ברכות פ"ו ס"ח. ר"ח. של"ה שער האותיות צנ ע"א. וראה סדר ברכת הנהנין פ"א ה"י. מ"א סי' ר"ח סק"ט. ט"ז שם סק"א. סדר ברה"נ שם ה"א. 2. ראה רש"י ותוס' ברכות לו ע"א. ב"י סי' 10. הר"ל ר"אסקין בסידור רבה"ז עם ציונים. מילואים לסי' לו, ע' א'תקפז ואילך. העצות נמצאים בסדר ברה"ז פ"ז ה"ב (לשנות תחלה דבר שבכרתו שהכל כדי לפטור מי ביטול הפרי) שם ה"ג ופ"א ה"ט ופ"ג ה"ב (לענין ברכה אחרונה). ובמעלת ברכה פרטית — ראה שו"ע ר"ח סי' ר"ב. ומ"מ מעיר בסידור שם ה"ע 8 שאם כבר בירך על מיני מזונות ופרי האדמה ושבו הביאו לפניו אורז. מסתבר שאף י"ש יכול לאלול שלא בתוך הסעודה.

11. סידור רבה"ז עם ציונים (ראסקין) ע' א'תקצב הע' 19 הערת הר"ל ע"ה בשם הר"ש דבורקין והר"י גיינקובסון ע"ה. והעיר הרא"ה קוין בסידור ה"ל שיהיה לברך על מה שמזונות לכו"ע ולא על פת הבאה ביסודו וכי"ב שנמצא מחליף ספק ברכות קל בספק חמור ממנו.

לע"נ מרת מרת מוסיא בת ר' אברהם ישיעי ע"ה שטראקס לכבוד יום הולדתה כ"ו מנחם אב

R. MORDECHAI DOV BER SLONIM

R. Mordechai Dov Ber Slonim was the son of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, the daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe, and R. Yaakov Slonim. Born in 5600, he was a child when his family moved from Lubavitch to Eretz Yisrael.

A resident of Chevron, R. Mordechai Dov Ber served as one of the directors of Colel Chabad and was a leading figure in the local Chabad community. He was said to closely resemble his grandfather, the Mittlerer Rebbe, in his physical appearance. He visited Lubavitch multiple times and developed a close relationship with Rebbe Maharash and Rebbe Rashab. R. Mordechai Dov Ber passed away on 5 Teves, 5676.

Having lived for decades in the Holy Land, R. Mordechai Dov Ber decided to make the trip to Lubavitch to visit the Rebbe Maharash for the

first time. Though he and the Rebbe Maharash had played together as children, his devoted *hiskashrus* pushed him to travel to his Rebbe.

The trip had been a sudden decision, and he did not inform the Rebbe Maharash in advance that he would be coming. After a long journey, he arrived in Lubavitch at 2 am. Certain that the Rebbe was awake, he went straight to the Rebbe's home and knocked on the door. The door opened and there stood the Rebbe who greeted him warmly, "Ah! *Shalom aleichem* R. Moteh Ber!"

R. Mordechai Dov Ber was understandably shocked that the Rebbe recognized him, having last seen him as a young boy almost forty years ago. The Rebbe addressed his wonderment, "Who else would come and bang on my door at 2 am if not R. Moteh Ber!..."

(מגדל עז ע' ר"ז)

A Moment with The Rebbe



PLAYING BALL AT 770

When a child enjoys playing ball, the Rebbe explained at the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5740, the correct approach is not to force the child not to play, but rather to channel his natural desire in the proper way.

"We should teach him to do it *'lsheim Shomayim*,' so that he will have the energy to learn Torah better."

R' Leibel Posner AH related:

"In the early 1940s, our melamed, R' Zalman Gurary, decided that it was not dignified for young bochurim to play ball in the courtyard of 770 where we learned at the time, so we stopped.

"One day, the upstairs window suddenly opened,

and balls came raining down on us. Standing there were the Rebbetzin, the Frierdiker Rebbe's Rebbetzin, and others, all laughing.

"Forty years later, Yankel Smith, a boy who was in our class, told me the other half of the story. Not coming from a Lubavitch family, he had decided after the ban on playing ball to leave the Lubavitch yeshiva.

"In the hallway, he met the Rebbe, who asked him why he was leaving. Yankel explained that he enjoyed playing ball and was not willing to give it up. The next day, the balls came raining down from the window, and Yankel remained in the yeshiva."

(As heard from R' Leibel Posner)

לעילוי נשמת מרת מוסיא בת ר' אברהם ישיעי ע"ה שטראקס לכבוד יום הולדתה כ"ו מנחם אב

3. ראה טור וש"ע או"ח סי' ר"ח ס"ו. מ"א שם סק"י. סדר ברה"נ שם. 4. ראה שו"ע סי' ר"ח ס"ח. סדר ברה"ז פ"ז הכ"ד. 5. סדר ברה"ז פ"א ה"א. ע"פ מ"א סי' ר"ח סק"ט בשם הב"ח והשל"ה שם. 6. ראה שו"ע סי' קע"ז ס"א ובקור"א שם סק"ב. קצות השלחן סי' מ בבדי השלחן סק"ב. אמנם אם כל כוונתו באכילת הלחם הוא לפטור י"א שנעשה טפל לאורז ושבו חל עליו ברכת האורז. 7. סדר ברה"ז פ"א ה"א. ע"פ מ"א סי' ר"ח סק"ט בשם הב"ח והשל"ה שם. 8. סידור בית יעקב (בית הפרס) ערך היר"ז וערך ר"י. קז ע"א וקח ע"ב. ובטעם לברך גם שהכל — ראה התקשרות גל תחנון ופסק"ת סי' ר"ח הע' 86. 9. הר"י ברוין באתר AskTheRav מענה 23330 וראה שם בארוכה.