



ראה - אלול / Reeh - Elul

## Understanding Elul



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### Based on Rav Miller's words in a shiur

In the olden days when they bentched Rosh Chodesh Elul in shul, there was a trembling, a tzitternish. **Elul!** The yom hadin is coming! The day of judgment is approaching. Afterward, the whole month was a month of preparation.

The Alter of Slabodka zichrono levrachah used to go to Kelm in the middle of the month of Av to prepare for Elul. Others too; that was the custom of many of the great ones. But great ones or not, by the time Rosh Chodesh Elul came along **everyone** got busy preparing. And so if we see that Elul is right around the corner then we too have to start readying ourselves for the yom hadin.

And so the question is what do we do now? Of course, you'll say, we prepare with teshuva. People will be thinking of more mitzvos now. They'll give more tzedakah than they give all year. They'll behave with better character traits. I'm sure the good people are aware of the impending day of judgment and they're all going to utilize Elul to prepare.

But there's something that we're forgetting about. Because before anything else, before we approach that day when we're going to plead with Hakodosh Boruch Hu, "כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים – Inscribe us into the book of life," the first thing is: **what about thanking Hashem for what He has given to you up until now?**

We're in this world for one purpose and that purpose is what Dovid Hamelech teaches us: טוב – Do you know what's good in this world? לְהוֹדוֹת לַהֲשֵׁם – to give thanks to Hashem. That's what's good in this world.



And it's so good, so important, that it's expected from **everybody**.

Even an Eskimo or a man in Africa, can't ignore that obligation. Shekein chovas kol hayetzurim, it's the duty of all living people, *l'hodos u'lihalel*. You hear that? It doesn't say kol **haYehudim** – all the Jews. It says **yetzurim**. Everybody! An old Eskimo should call together his wife and his children once in a while into the igloo and tell them, "We're here together now; let's spend an hour or two thanking Hashem."

Only because people are not trained — the concept of genuine *hakaras hatov* is so far away from their minds — so they don't even think about such things.

**Let me tell you a little story** that happened recently. I was walking on Kings Highway and I saw a Jew with a nice black hat – a real *frum* Jew. And he had a big grey beard and a *kapote* of course.

Now, I saw him looking around like he was lost so I asked him if I could help him. He tells me that he comes from Eretz Yisrael and he's trying to find the bus to go to Seagate so I told him that I'd walk him to the bus stop and show him the way.

He was carrying a heavy suitcase so I said, "Let me carry it for you."

He told me, "It's *seforim*." He made sure to let me know what he's carrying – "It's *seforim*." He probably wanted to brag so that I should know he's a *talmid chacham*. So I'm walking with him, carrying his *seforim* a couple of blocks.

Now, Seagate means the Coney Island bus and then he'll have to transfer to another bus – it's a

whole business – so as we're walking, when I saw a man who I know who has a car, I stopped him and told him, "This man wants to go to Seagate."

"I'll take him with my car," he said.

So the man takes the suitcase from me and leaves me; he gets into the car and – finished. He doesn't say thank you. I'm older than he was – I'm older and I was carrying his suitcase two blocks. And then I got him a car to Seagate. He didn't say thank you. Nothing!

Now this man, I'm sure, is impressed by Elul; he knows we have to prepare for the Day of Judgment. And I'm sure that in certain things he's a *talmid chacham* – he's not an *am ha'arets* – and he probably thinks he knows what *teshuva* is. And it could be he'll fulfill that; very good! All forms of *teshuva* are important!

But if he never learned the fundamental principle of saying thank you – if he can't even say thank you to an old man who carried his suitcase – he'll never be able to make genuine *teshuva*! Because the *yesod hayesodos*, the foundation of being a Jew, is to be a person who is grateful for things that are done for him!

And because Hashem is the One doing everything it means that the most important function of a Jew in this world is to recognize the *chasdei Hashem* to him. It's such an important statement that I'm going to repeat it. Of all the things that's expected of us in this world, the foremost is the obligation to thank Hashem! And now in *CHodesh Elul* is the best time to start practicing it.

**Have A Wonderful Shabbos!**

**let's Review:**

- Why is the month of Elul so important?
- What is the most important thing for us to do during Chodesh Elul?



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