

what the sforim say.

So when we say *Chodesh Elul is Yemei Rachamim v'Ratzon*, this is what it means. Elul is the opportunity when we can bring rachamim *inside* ourselves more easily than at any other time — and that is how we reconnect to the Ribbono shel Olam, and reach *mah Hu rachum, af atah rachum*.

Hashem is only rachum now. Right now He is making everything easier. He is giving all the *hashpaos*, everything we need — so that we can come closer to Him and fix whatever was not done properly.

The magnet is here, and it is pulling.

So take one thing this month. Just one. Decide it completely, and believe with everything you have that you will get there. And when you catch yourself judging the person standing in front of you, stop and say it: *Ribbono shel Olam, I am begging You for rachamim — so let me be the one who is rachum first.*

May Hashem help us that we should have the heart to serve Him, and may these *Yemei Rachamim v'Ratzon* bring us the *geulah sheleimah* — **Yerushalaim Yir Hakoidesh bekorov beyomenu!**

קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart

נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of
R' Dovid Steiman shlita

What Can We Gain From Elul?

Elul · Rachamim From Within

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THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN
SHLIT"א

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — The Ways of My Heart is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

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rachamim. But then where is all this negative coming from?

That was the chiddush Yaakov Avinu told them. **This negative comes from us.** We are the ones who create it. And we are the ones who can bring the positive down on ourselves as well.

So he gave them a brachah: *V'Kel Shakai yitein lachem rachamim.*²

Look at the word. He did not say *aleichem* — **upon** you — which is how a brachah usually goes. He said **lachem**. *In* you.

What does it mean, *in* you? A person who did something wrong, something negative, brings all of that negativity and all of that judgment onto himself. And what he has to do now

is bring the rachamim down onto himself. How? By *being* rachum.

In plain English, what people call taking it easy. Which is probably the hardest thing in the world to do. *What do you mean, take it easy? There are so many problems, so many headaches, I have to take care of this and take care of that.* And that is exactly the point where Hashem comes in. Exactly there. When we are calm, when we are relying on Him. It is not being irresponsible — we first need to understand our responsibility completely. And then rely on Hashem.

It is easier for me to say it than to do it. I am only telling you

Every part is fine. And surely he is in danger.

If a man stands and declares that Hashem is the King of all kings, and his whole body is screaming those words — except one part of the body, the heart — then the main thing is missing.

..... The brachah that goes inside

So let us understand what being *rachum* even means, because we call these days *Yemei Rachamim*.

Look at Yaakov Avinu. Shimon is under arrest. Yosef has disappeared. Now they are demanding Binyamin. There is no food. Everything around him is *dinim* — judgment, and in plain

The Ribbono shel Olam wants the heart. We come up with all kinds of ideas, maybe it is this, maybe it is that. It is none of the reasons we invent. He wants the heart. A Yiddishe heart, given over completely to Him.

English, negative. The whole situation is negative.

So what is missing? The positive side. And where is the positive side supposed to come from?

We always assume that the Ribbono shel Olam gives us the positive. Hashem should give us the rachamim. And of course we want Hashem to give us

What Can We Gain From Elul?

The fixing belongs to Elul, not to Rosh Hashana — and the rachamim we are begging Hashem to pour down on us have first to be built inside us

What is Elul actually asking from us?

It is the most beautiful time of the whole year. These are the days when Hashem is looking to reconnect with us — to build a better connection than the one

we had until now. These are the days when Hashem is looking to rebuild the *ratzon*: our will and His will, that they should become one and the same will.

So what are we supposed to do with such a time?

..... The metal and the magnet

I read a beautiful story brought by Rabbi Gamliel Rabinovich, from a shmooze given by Rabbi Yitzchak Greenberg zt"l in Yeshivas Chevron — I guess before the yeshiva was destroyed.

In Russia they developed a special kind of metal, to be used for heavy airplanes and for ships, to protect them from bullets and from whatever else they needed protecting from. It was a serious metal. The only tricky part was

that after it was made, in great sheets, it had to be dried. And you cannot put a thing like that into a dryer. So they found a huge field somewhere in the warm part of the USSR, and they laid the sheets out on the ground to dry.

And then it began to rain.

They ran and pulled the sheets in by hand and got them under a roof. But now they had a much bigger problem than rain.

Who says this metal is still any good? Once the rain hit it, it may have started rusting *inside*. And if it rusted inside, the metal is finished. You cannot use it. It can look beautiful on the outside — perfectly beautiful — and simply not be strong

enough anymore to protect the ship.

So they brought in the specialists, and the specialists came with an enormous magnet. That was the test. Bring the magnet to the sheet. If the metal pulls to the magnet, strong, the way metal does — the metal is good inside. And if it comes over soft, if there is no real pull — then inside, it has begun to rust.

That is the *nimshal*, and Elul is the magnet.

What kind of *neshamah* do we have in Elul? If you feel a pull to the *Ribbono shel Olam* — if you feel connected to Him, if you want to do what is right, you want to learn, you want to

Do that *cheshbon*, and there is no question you will get there. No question at all. But it has to be with so much *emunah*. Strong believing.

Because as long as there is a *safek* sitting inside your heart — will I even succeed? Who said I can think this way? Maybe it

doesn't mean me — you will never overpower the *chomer*. Never. You put yourself, from the very start, in a place of not being sure.

So for one month, all the *I can't*, and the *please*, and the *where do I even begin* — leave it on the side.

..... What Hashem is actually asking for

And now the *Nesivos Shalom* says the thing that has to be said.

A person can be *medakdek* in *mitzvos*. He can be careful with every *halachah*. He can be *mamash makpid* on every *chumrah* there is. He can be learning Torah day and night.

And if his *emunah* is not whole, if his *ahavah* and his *yirah* for

the *Ribbono shel Olam* are not what they should be, if his *mid-dos* are not *tahor* — if he is *eino rachum v'eino chanun*, if he has no pity on another person — then he is missing the *ikar* completely.

He is like a man with every limb of his body working, and something wrong with his heart.

themselves — and they finished the entire Tehillim.

It was not a major thing at all. Five chapters. The whole obstacle was here, in the head. And that is exactly the top of the mountain. There we look at lit-

tle things and turn them into walls; here we look at the real things and say, *this is so far from me*. If you go steady, if you do not give in and you do not give up, if you keep going — you will get there.

..... **The two conditions**

So how does a person actually hold on to such a madreigah? Everybody wants it. How do you do it?

Says the Nesivos Shalom, two conditions.

The first is a decision — a *hachlatah* *nechutzah*.

Whatever will be, will be. It does not matter. *I am going to get there*. And the decision has to be so strong that you are

ready to give away your very body for it.

The second is *emunah* in yourself. You have to be sure.

You have to believe in yourself so completely that if you push and strengthen yourself, surely the victory in the end will be yours. If you have to sit and learn a masechta, make the cheshbon: how long will it take, how many lines a day, what does the schedule have to look like.

daven, you want to do what you are supposed to do — then inside you it is not rusted. It is good, like that metal. There is a magnet, and it pulls you straight to the Ribbono shel Olam.

..... **The mistake we make about Elul**

Let us learn a piece of Nesivos Shalom together.

He brings from the sefer *Toras Avos* that the *ikar avodah* of Rosh Hashana is *l'hamlich HaKadosh Baruch Hu* — to make Hashem our King, to speak His praise, to crown Him over every single limb of our body.

And then comes the line. All the *tikkunim*, all the teshuvah, all the *cheshbon hanefesh* — whatever needs fixing in us,

And if that pull is simply not there, that also is telling you something, and it is telling you about the inside.

wherever there is still rust inside — the *zman* of all of it is **chodesh Elul**.

Not Rosh Hashana. Not Yom Kippur.

Some people make exactly that mistake. They think: once Rosh Hashana comes, once Yom Kippur comes, *then* I will do the real avodah, then I will fix myself. No. The real avodah, the real job, begins now. Elul is the preparation, and Rosh Hashana is the day itself — the day of

crowning Him as King of all kings. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are not the preparation

for something else. Elul is the preparation for them.

..... **Who can climb such a mountain?**

But right there the Nesivos Shalom asks the question we are all asking.

Mi ya'aleh b'har Hashem — who will go up on the mountain of Hashem? ¹ Who are we? A person is full of *chomer*, tied to the physical world, his mind sitting in the physical world. How is a man like that supposed to climb up and reach a place where he stands and crowns the Ribbono shel Olam over every limb?

And he answers with a mashal that I want you to hear properly.

Look at the highest mountains in the world, and look at how many people try to climb them. And because of the winds, and the snow, and the cold, almost nobody has the strength to reach the top. Only *yechidim*, only single people, *giborei koach*, who were ready to give themselves away for it — only they got there.

So why do people keep climbing? What was waiting at the top? Nothing was waiting at the top.

They climb to prove that it can be done. That is the whole rea-

son. And it is not only about the mountain. In life it is exactly the same.

Let me tell you a small story from this Shabbos.

I have a group of neighborhood boys who come to me. Instead of saying the fifteen chapters of Shir HaMaalos that are printed in the siddur for Shabbos, one of the boys had an idea this year: let us finish the whole Tehillim, from after Pesach until the end of the year. I thought it was a wonderful idea, so why not? I did not make any real calculation, because every week a different number of boys comes — ten, six, fifteen, sometimes twenty. I just relied on it. Let us try, let us see what comes out.

And last Shabbos, Parshas Re'eh, we came down to the last fifteen chapters. Somehow we had arrived almost exactly at the end. And only ten boys came.

So they said whatever they said, each one took a chapter — and there were still five chapters sitting there. And I see some of them just closing the Tehillim, like that. *Good Shabbos*.

I said: what *good Shabbos*? Let us finish it. Let us make a siyum, let us do something big.

And they said: *how are we going to finish? Everybody already said one chapter*.

In their heads, that was an obstacle. A wall. I said, stop this, please. Let us continue, let us finish it. And they pushed