

# Dvar Torah for Elul/Teshuvah-Time (3)

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Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #21

You know what the month of Elul is good for, besides returning to Hashem (*teshuvah*)? It's a good time for gaining *daat*. What's *daat*? There are a few answers this question.

God-awareness, God-consciousness, knowledge and unitive knowledge are some translations you may see for *daat*. It is the integration of what you've learned from books and life, into your actual attitudes and behavior. For example, you've learned, know and believe that stealing is both forbidden and wrong. Now, let's say you can get away with stealing a diamond ring. If you have to wrestle with the temptation before you decide to not steal it, you don't have *daat* (yet). If you had *daat* that stealing is wrong, you wouldn't think of stealing, period.

Another understanding of *daat*, though neither literal nor dictionary, is discrimination. Tell a young person that he discriminates and he will be insulted. He may even fear that legal action will be taken against him! Tell an older person that he is a discriminating individual and he will thank you for the compliment. Both responses can be correct. Discrimination can be done properly or improperly, so one needs to discriminate with discrimination!

Elul is a time to slow down and sift through what you've done this year, to take a good, discriminating look at how your various behaviors and attitudes worked. Be honest: Was going to the racetrack worth the occasional winner? Did it pay to stay out at bars till 2 AM? Wasn't it worth going to sleep earlier in order to be more refreshed the following day? Were

those “critical” text and cellphone messages while driving worth the few close calls and near accidents? Your *daat* will tell you which behaviors, and attitudes, to maintain (and improve), and which to eliminate (in an effective manner).

These types of *daat*-exercises improve your Jewishness. When you’re at the racetrack, you’re not guarding your money “like the eyes in one’s head” (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #281). When you stay too long at a bar, you’re probably drinking more than you should (*Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #26). When you’re not sleep deprived, not only will you be able to pay more attention to what you say as you *daven* (pray), you’ll also be less prone to anger and more people friendly (*ibid.* I, Lessons ##68–69). And in case you forgot, an automobile is a weapon. Using it with insufficient attention may result, God forbid, in grievous and/or fatal harm.

As you better internalize your “raw” Torah intelligence, new potential *daat* springs up on your horizon. Old behaviors and attitudes are discarded for new ones—*teshuvah*! The real you—your *neshamah* (soul)—has changed into something new. As a result, you are new and you’re spared all the troubles that were headed for old-you. Amen.

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