

# Elul and Teshuvah

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The following is based on article by R' A. Y. Kletzky which first appeared in Hebrew in the Breslov weekly, Aleh LeTerufah.

It's brought in the Zohar that Yaakov and Esav split the twelve months of the year between themselves. Yaakov took Tishrei, Chesvan Kislev, Esav took Teves, Shevat and Adar. Yaakov took Nissan, Iyar and Sivan, while Esav took Tamuz, Av and Elul. Afterwards Yaakov took away from Esav the months of Adar, which became a time of rejoicing, and Elul, which became the month of divine mercy. Concerning this, Esav complained that Yaakov has tricked him twice, that he had taken away from him those two months.

Every year during the month of Elul, this struggle between Yaakov and Esav is renewed. Esav wishes to retrieve the month for himself. This would mean that we would be prevented from knowing of the sweetness of Teshuvah, repentance. He attempts to paint for us a picture of a troublesome month, one that we can't wait to get over with. Let us, the descendants of Yaakov, stand up and protect the month of Elul for ourselves, that we should understand that this month is a month of divine mercy.

The main thing, though, is that we study and be involved with the Rebbe's teachings about the month of Elul. Through studying the works of the Tzaddikim, we obtain an entirely different view of the month of Elul and the concept of Teshuvah. "Teshuvah" does not only mean to remember all the sins and failings and feel sad about them; "TeSHUVah" means to SHOV/ return to our proper place, to be one with Hashem. For in essence, our souls are truly attached and one with G-d, just the materialism of this world we have fallen to places

and situations that have caused us to forget that feeling of belonging to Hashem, and therefore we must do Teshuvah, which means to renew ourselves, to start remembering our relationship with G-d.

With this is included the necessity to request forgiveness on sins which are standing in our way of really feeling Hashem, but the main idea is not to be busy with the sins, but to come back to recognizing the glory of Hashem's Kingship, Malchus, and to return to the knowledge that we are His children, and nothing in the universe can separate between us and Him.

During the month of Elul, the gates of divine mercy are opened up. Hashem reveals into the world that He truly opens His hand for everybody, whoever it may be, that he will always be able to return and go back into that place from which he came, to renew that relationship.

Elul is a month of encouragement that even if the whole year we may have felt knocked down, broken, far, without any relationship with Hashem, these days we merit a heavenly flow of encouragement, of a new level of closeness, that we should be able to internalize the words of encouragement which the Rebbe Nachman has taught us, that we should know that Hashem is literally with us, and wants us, very much desires us, even if we had a year like we've had, because deep inside we are attached and one with Him.

This is what Teshuvah is all about, to know that we are His children and that He is full of mercy upon us. Through this knowledge we can come to a real resolve to throw away our bad habits which prevent us from remembering the attachment that we have with Hashem. But this resolve will be one full of life, of sweetness, because we are returning to our roots, to know of the pride which Hashem takes in us, which this is the main idea of Elul.

We are renewing our relationship with Hashem, through our knowledge that from His side, He will always be connected to

us.

Adapted to English by Ephraim Portnoy