

# The Weekly Farbrengens

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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 דברי 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 *mashal* 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"ד 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 *farbrengens* 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 *farbrengens*, 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 *neschama*.

(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 specialty of this time?

At one *farbrengens* 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."

(התוודעויות 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

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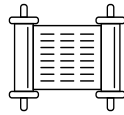


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## MIXED CLASSES

### What separation between genders is required by a speech or event?

The Gemara describes how *amoraim* ensured a complete separation between men and women when they gathered for a lecture,<sup>1</sup> and we find by Matan Torah that the men and women were separate.<sup>2</sup> *Poskim* emphasize how imperative this is to preserve the sanctity of Am Yisroel,<sup>3</sup> and that one is not allowed to speak in front of a mixed crowd.<sup>4</sup>

While mingling is never appropriate, there is a special prohibition when people are gathered for a common program (lecture, *chuppa*, *levaya*) and there is more connection between them.

Is it necessary to have a full *mehitza*?

Some *rishonim* explain that the separation by the lecture is primarily to prevent intermingling, for which a low barrier would suffice, while others write that seeing each other is also a concern,<sup>5</sup> according to which a full *mehitza* would be necessary. Some *poskim* write that although a *mehitza* is generally required, in a situation where there is no other way to be *mekarev* them to Torah and *mitzvos*, one may rely on the first opinion.<sup>6</sup>

Under difficult circumstances in Communist Russia, the Rebbe — as an exception for that unique situation — gave a rare allowance for men and women to participate in the same class, on condition that the seating be separate.<sup>7</sup> The Rebbe emphasized that the *heter* is only appropriate when there is no other way to be *mekarev* them, and the goal is to connect them to Yiddishkeit and prevent intermarriage.

(Although we cannot compromise on *halacha* for the sake of being *mekarev* people, since there is room for leniency in *halacha*, it is permissible when there is no other choice.)

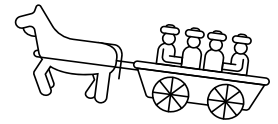
In another response from the Rebbe regarding a *shiur* taking place in a *kibutz*, the Rebbe was adamant that the class should have a *mehitza* between the genders.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, regular *shiurim* should ideally be separate classes for men and for women. By a lecture that is open to men and women, one is to be very careful to have a *mehitza*. For *mekuravim* who won't come in such a manner, one may hold a class with completely separate sitting.

1. ראה קידושין פ"א ע"א.
2. רש"י ותוס' על קידושין שם ד"ה סקבא דשתא.
3. פרקי דרבי אלעזר פ"מ, וראה תו"מ ח"ד ע"ד.
4. ראה אג"מ ח"ה סי' י"א.
5. ראה תורת משה סוף פ' קדושים בשם הרב שאול מאמסטרדם, וראה תו"מ שם.
6. ראה שו"ת צ"ח ח"ז סי' ח' ושו"ת משנה"ה ח"ד סי' פ"א.
7. ראה אג"מ ח"ה סי' י"א (מ"ג"ת ירושלים ח"ה סי' י"א ע"ג).
8. ראה אג"מ ח"ה סי' י"א ע"ג.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

# Our Heroes



## REB BORUCH MORDECHAI BABROISKER

Reb Boruch Mordechai Itinga, known as Reb Boruch Mordechai Babroisker, was of the great chassidim of the Alter Rebbe, the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. He was an exceptional *gaon* and *chossid*, renowned for his sharpness and wit. Reb Boruch Mordechai served as *rov* in Babroisk for about 50 years. He later traveled to *Eretz Yisroel*, and passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Elul, 5616 (1856). He is buried on *Har Hazeisim*.

Two business partners once came to the Alter Rebbe to help resolve an argument. The Alter Rebbe looked into their contract, where he found their exact issue addressed, and the two left pleased with the ruling. Soon, however, they returned with a different argument, and again the Alter Rebbe looked into their contract and again found a clause that resolved the exact problem. After a few more repetitions of this occurrence, the Alter Rebbe inquired about the author of their contract. It was Reb Boruch Mordechai.

When Reb Boruch Mordechai next visited the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe reprimanded him, "Your head is too engrossed in business if you are able to think of every possibility..."

Two women, who worked as vendors in the market, once approached Reb Boruch Mordechai for a *Din Torah*. When the *Rov* *parkened* in favor of one of the women the other woman began shouting derogatory statements against the *Rov*. Reb Boruch Mordechai's *rebbetzin* could not contain herself, and asked her husband why he does not chase this wicked woman out of the house. "Don't worry," the *Rov* soothed her, "She does not mean what she is saying." Hearing this, the rants and curses escalated further!

Turning to the woman, the *Rov* asked, "Would you want your children to grow up like me?" The woman jumped up, "Oy, *halevai!* If only that were to become true..." Reb Boruch Mordechai commented to his wife, "You see, she does not mean it."

## A Moment with The Rebbe



### THE HEAVIER LOAD

Reb Nosson (known as Bobby) Vogel was one of the founders and leading supporters of Lubavitch Boys' School of London. As the strain of funding the school became more demanding, he said to the Rebbe that he felt that it was too difficult for him to continue.

The Rebbe smiled a beautiful smile, and said, "Since you are a businessman, I'll speak to you in business language.

"Imagine that you are straining

yourself to carry a heavy sack, filled with gemstones.

"Now what if someone would approach you with an offer to add more gems into the bag. Would you agree? Of course, you would! The bag is indeed already heavy, but these are gemstones..."

Reb Nosson left the Rebbe's room with a 'heavy load,' but a lighter heart.

(*Parshios Im HaRebbe*, Vol. 1, Page 64)

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