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ELUL 5786 – 2026 NEWSLETTER

Dear Members & Friends:

We hope that everyone had a healthy & restful summer vacation!

A few reminders:

- Selihot begin on Sunday, August 16, 2026. Each Minyan is followed by Shaharit
- The High Holidays are approaching and it is our intention to accommodate everyone in the best way possible. Please contact the office to reserve your seats.
- It is a great Misvah to fulfill one's monetary obligations to the Synagogue before the Holidays. Please make your best effort according to your ability. Tizku Le'Mitzvot.
- Rosh Hashana begins Shabbat night, Friday night, September 11, 2026.

Selihot and Shaharit Schedule are as follows:

Selihot (Braka Main Sanctuary)	5:20 am
Shaharit Netz (Braka Main Sanctuary)	6:15 am with Korbanot
Selihot (2 nd floor Guindi Midrash)	7:00 am
Shaharit (2 nd floor Guindi Midrash)	8:00 am
Shaharit (Braka Main Sanctuary)	8:20 am

Tizku Le'Shaneem Rabbot, Shana Toba U'Metuka!

**COMPLETE SCHEDULE FOR THE SPECIAL ELUL LECTURES,
SOFER CHECKING & SHA'ATNEZ TESTING
WILL BE FORTHCOMING**

"I am to my beloved, as my beloved is to me." Ani Ledodee...Vedodee Lee (Shir Hashireem)

This is at the heart of the month of Elul.

GRACIOUSLY SPONSORED BY:

Mr. and Mrs. Ezra - Zury Attie
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For Beracha and Hatzlacha
of Ezra and Fortune Attie
and their children,
Abud, Nancy Ribka,
Jonathan David,
and Alexander & Valeria

Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Arippol
Milan - Italy

In Memory of
Yvonne Arippol bat Aliza
Maurice Arippol ben Fortunée
Leone Arippol ben Fortunée
Robert Arippol ben Fortunée
Emile Arippol ben Fortunée

WHAT IS ELUL?



Elul is a time of preparation, preparation for Rosh Hashana, the day on which the whole world will be judged. The month of Elul is also a time of return, a time when we work to sensitize ourselves to our past mistakes and rectify them. A person cannot return to the path from which he has strayed unless he is prepared to search. That search has to begin with an examination of one's actions. This "soul searching" is reflected in the name of the month itself, for Elul is an Aramaic term connoting "soul searching". The sign of the month of Elul is the Maiden, symbolizing modesty and purity, both essential traits for a true return. The faculties of understanding and insight, which are astrologically connected to Elul, are feminine attributes. A person born under the influence of the sign Betulah (the Maiden) has a

natural inclination to analyze in detail and a propensity for perfectionism. When used positively, these qualities are essential tools in returning to the spiritual path, for we must thoroughly analyze where we have gone wrong if we are to have any chance of perfecting ourselves. With that desire to perfect ourselves, we will find the motivation to change and grow.

THE KING IS IN THE FIELD

When the king is enthroned in his palace, he is not easily accessible; an audience is granted only to those who have merited his attention. However, when the king is in public, anyone may approach him. Our Rabbis compare the month of Elul to a time when a king, returning to his palace, passes through the surrounding fields and greets his subjects with a shining countenance. During the Month of Elul, G-d, The King of the Universe, is available to anyone who turns to Him, and He graciously accepts our petitions and grants our requests.



A MONTH OF MERCY

According to tradition, Moses ascended the Mount Sinai three times. The first ascent was to receive the Torah. The second was to plead with G-d for His forgiveness after the Jewish people had sinned in worshipping the Golden Calf. Then, on the first day of Elul, Moses ascended the mountain a third time to invoke G-d's abundant mercy for our complete atonement. He remained there for forty days until Yom Kippur, when G-d fully forgave us and cleansed us completely. These forty days, from Rosh Hodesh Elul until Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are marked as a special period of Divine Grace during which our prayers find favor in G-d's eyes, and have thus been established as days of repentance and forgiveness.

Forty days is very significant in Judaism. According to our Hachamim, it takes forty days for a fetus to form, the flood lasted forty days, and Moshe got the Torah after being on Mount Sinai for forty days. Thus, we find that it takes forty days for a person to transform him/herself into a new being.

In these forty days from Rosh Hodesh Elul to Yom Kippur, take one small deed and try to improve. It can be saying a Beracha (blessing) with added Kavannah (concentration), saying a kinder good morning to a spouse, or not speaking Lashon Ha'ra (negative comments about an individual, family or institution) even for as little as fifteen minutes a day. Whatever it is, that small step can make the difference.

DAYS OF RECONCILIATION

The month of Elul is the last of the months in the Jewish calendar year, and precedes the Days of Awe, commencing with the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. Thus, the month is characterized by a somber mood reflecting what the Rabbis have called the Days of Reconciliation.

ELUL OBSERVANCES



Every weekday morning, including the day of Ereb Rosh Hashanah, Selihot (special prayers of repentance) are recited.



It is proper to check one's Mezuzot and Tefilin.



Although many communities recite Chapter 27 of the book of Tehilim throughout the entire year after Shaharit, from Rosh Hodesh Elul until Hosh'a'ana Rabba, many people add this chapter of Tehilim to the daily morning prayers.



It is customary to give additional charity each weekday.



Elul is an appropriate time to reflect on our actions and attitudes of the previous year and resolve to correct our shortcomings.

THE FOUR STEPS OF REPENTANCE

TESHUBA (Return or Repentance) is a generous gift from G-d which allows us to erase our improper actions. The Torah tells us that no matter how far we stray or how many times we sin, G-d will wait for us to return to Him through Teshuba. There are four basic parts to Teshuba:

1. CONFESSION BEFORE G-D

Acceptance for the future consists of resolving in one's heart to never commit the sin again.

2. REGRET

Regret consists in sincerely regretting one's wrong action. One must be sorry and distressed over one's sins.

3. LEAVING THE SIN

Leaving the sin consists of stopping the commission of the sinful act. One cannot do Teshuba if one continues to do the sin, even if one perfectly performs the next three steps.

4. ACCEPTANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Confession before G-d consists of an oral confession, spoken aloud, in which one formulates in words the commitments one has reached in his or her heart. One should say, "I have sinned. I have done this specific sin. I deeply regret my actions, and I declare before G-d, Who knows my innermost thoughts, that I will never do this sin again."

The above steps are effective for sins committed against G-d; for sins committed against one's fellow man, one must additionally ask for forgiveness from that person before G-d will accept the Teshuba. This is the source of the custom to contact family, friends and co-workers during this period to ask for forgiveness for anything we had done to upset them during the past year(s).

The four steps of Teshuba are only valid if we do Teshuba AFTER THE FACT. One cannot say in advance, "I can do this sin, then do Teshuba, and He will forgive me..." It simply does not work!

On the other hand, one should keep in mind that Teshuba is an ongoing process that cannot be accomplished overnight. No matter how many times a person may stumble in the Teshuba process, that person has to simply pick himself or herself up and work to return to the true path. G-d looks to the sincerity of the effort that a person has made in their Teshuba.

Repentance, Prayer and Charity can remove any negative decree! It's up to us!
Moreover, remember: A Journey of a mile begins with one small step.

I AM TO MY BELOVED AS MY BELOVED IS TO ME

During the month of Elul, it is customary to make a special effort to improve relationships with one's family, friends and acquaintances as a sign of unbounded love. This is symbolized by the letters of the word ELUL. These letters form the Hebrew acronym for the verse from Song of Songs (6:3), "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me".

PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS

With the approaching Days of Awe, not only is an effort made to improve human relationships, but also to further our relationship with G-d. To set the mood for self-reflection and to prepare for these days of prayer and supplication, this period is marked by the recitation of numerous Selihot (penitential prayers), with some rising in the middle of the night throughout the month of Elul or, at least, the few days preceding Rosh Hashanah, to pour out their hearts to H-shem in Heaven.

A SPECIAL PSALM

Psalm 27 is recited after prayers in the Synagogue. The Psalmist acclaims, "A Psalm of David: The L-rd is my Light and my Salvation... for He will hide me in His tent..." The Midrash explains the appropriateness of this recitation during this period:

**H-shem is my light, on Rosh Hashanah,
And my salvation, on Yom Kippur,
For He will hide me in His tent, on Sukkot.**



THE BEN ISH HAI - RABBENU YOSEF HAIM ZT"l

5592 - 5669 // 1832 - 1909

The 13th of Elul is the 117th anniversary of the passing of The Ben Ish Hai

Hacham Yosef Haim was born in 1832, in the city of Baghdad, where his father was the Rabbi. When his father passed away, Hacham Yosef Haim was only twenty-five years old. Nevertheless, the Jews of Baghdad accepted him to fill his father's place and Rabbi Yosef Haim became the Rabbi of Baghdad.

The title Hacham - "wise one" - the traditional Sephardic title bestowed upon rabbis - was appended to his name. Despite his young age, he was highly respected, and one of his disciples, Rabbi David Hai Ha'Cohen, testified that if Rabbi Yosef Haim had lived during the time of the Temple, it would not have been destroyed. For unlike then, when the Jews disregarded the admonitions of the prophets, the entire Baghdad community lovingly obeyed every word uttered by Rabbi Yosef Haim. During his lifetime, per his influence, all the Jews of Baghdad observed Shabbat and Torah Law.

Hacham Yosef Haim refused a salary for his public service. Instead, he supported his family by collaborating with his brother's business. He personally funded the publishing of his books, refusing

sponsorship or charity, and any income from these books was distributed to the poor. He was also known to donate his books to Torah scholars.

He attempted to bridge the gap between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities, which often followed widely differing practices, by referencing his contemporaries abroad and reflecting on their approaches in his own writings. He felt strongly that Torah scholars needed to show mutual recognition for one another, even when they disagreed, lest their names be forgotten with the passage of time. Though his legal decisions carried weight primarily amongst Sephardic populaces, his Ashkenazic counterparts recognized his genius, held him in high esteem, and often quoted his rulings.

Hacham Yosef Haim was a great leader who guided his people through a time of religious upheaval. His contribution to Jewry was not restricted to Baghdad. His opinion on Halacha (Jewish Law) was sought throughout the Sephardic world and his decisions are still followed by thousands of people from these communities. Indeed, his decisions are considered to be of Halachic significance even outside the Sephardic communities.

Hacham Yosef Haim authored many works, both of Halacha and Hagadah (sections of the Talmud that deal with esoteric, nonlegal subjects). His most famous book is Ben Ish Hai which is based upon the weekly portion of the Torah, with a discussion of the portion and the practical Halacha. This book is considered the standard reference in many religious Sephardic homes and is studied by Jews worldwide. Due to its popularity, Rabbenu Yosef Haim came to be known by its name, and today he is referred to as the Ben Ish Hai.

May his merit shield us, Zechuto Yagen A'lenu, Amen.