

Essential Elul Torah

תשפ"ג - 5783

Rabbi Moshe Isserles, Shulchan Arukh: Orach Chayim (581:4)

And there are places where there is a custom to go to the graves and to pray very much there and to give charity to poor people there.

ויש מקומות נוהגין לילך על הקברות ולהרבות שם בתחינות (מהרי"ל) ונותנים שם צדקה לעניים.

Questions:

- Why is visiting a cemetery in Elul a customary practice?
- Do you think the lack of specificity about which graves to visit is significant? Should one visit the graves of ancestors, known righteous people, or totally random graves?
- What is the connection between prayer, tzedakah and the dead?
- The Mishna Berurah (559:10:41) explains that we go to a cemetery so that the deceased should request mercy for us, how do you understand that?

Psalm 27

[A Psalm] of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh, Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise up against me, Even then will I be confident. One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the graciousness of the LORD, and to visit early in His temple. For He concealeth me in His pavilion in the day of evil; He hideth me in the covert of His tent; He lifteth me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me;

לְדוֹד ה' אֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי מִמִּי אִירָא ה' מְעוֹז־חַיִּי מִמִּי אֶפְחָד:
 בְּקִרְבִּי עָלַי מְרַעִים לֹאֲכַל אֶת־בְּשָׁרִי צָרִי וְאֹיְבֵי לִי הִמָּה
 כְּשָׁלוּ וְנָפְלוּ: אִם־תִּחְנֶנָּה עָלַי מִחְנֶה לֹא־יִירָא לִבִּי
 אִם־תִּקְוֹם עָלַי מִלִּחְמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בּוֹטֵחַ: אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי
 מֵאֵת־ה' אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית־ה' כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי
 לַחְזוֹת בְּנֹעַם־ה' וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכְלוֹ: כִּי יִצְפְּנִי בַסֶּכֶה בַּיּוֹם
 רָעָה יִסְתַּרְנִי בַסֶּתֶר אֶהְיֶה בְּצוּר יְרוּמָמִי: וְעַתָּה יְרוּם
 רֹאשִׁי עַל אֹיְבֵי סִבִּיבוֹתַי וְאֶזְבְּחָה בְּאַהֲלוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה
 אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמָרָה לֵה': שִׁמְעָה־ה' קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחָנְנִי וְעֲנֵנִי:
 לֵךְ אָמַר לִבִּי בִקְשׁוּ פָנַי אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ ה' אֲבַקֵּשׁ: אֶל־תִּסְתַּר
 פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי אֶל־תִּטְּבֵאֲךָ עַבְדְּךָ עֲזַרְתִּי הִיִּית אֶל־תִּטְשֵׁנִי
 וְאֶל־תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹקִי יִשְׁעִי: כִּי־אֲבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וְה'
 יֹאסְפֵנִי: הוֹרֵנִי ה' דֶּרֶכְךָ וְנִחַנִּי בְּאַרְחַ מִישׁוֹר לִמְעַן
 שׁוֹרְרִי: אֶל־תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנֶפֶשׁ צָרִי כִּי קָמוּ־בִי עֲדֵי־שָׁקֶר וַיִּפְח
 חֲמִס: לוֹלֵא הָאֱמָנָתִי לְרֹאוֹת בְּטוֹב־ה' בְּאַרְץ חַיִּים: קוּה
 אֱלֹהֵה' חֲזַק וַיֹּאמֶץ לִבְךָ וְקוּה אֱלֹהֵה':



And I will offer in His tabernacle sacrifices with trumpet-sound; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I call with my voice, And be gracious unto me, and answer me. In Thy behalf my heart hath said: 'Seek ye My face'; Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not Thy face far from me; Put not Thy servant away in anger; Thou hast been my help; Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. For though my father and my mother have forsaken me, The LORD will take me up. Teach me Thy way, O LORD; And lead me in an even path, Because of them that lie in wait for me. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries; For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out violence. If I had not believed to look upon the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living!— Wait on the LORD; Be strong, and let thy heart take courage; Yea, wait thou for the LORD.

Questions:

- Why do we start reciting this specific Psalm during Elul?
- When are you most afraid? What gives you strength during those times?
- Does the idea of God being a protector resonate with you?

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, 46

Rabbi Joshua, son of Korchah, said: Forty days was Moses on the mountain, reading the Written Law by day, and studying the Oral Law by night. After the forty days he took the tables (of the Law) and descended into the camp on the 17th of Tammuz, and he broke in pieces the tables, and slew the sinners in Israel. He then

ר' יהושע בן קרחא אומר ארבעים יום עשה משה בהר קורא בדת מקרא ביום ושונה בדת מקרא בלילה, ולאחר ארבעים יום לקח את הלוחות וירד אל המחנה ובשבעה עשר בתמוז שבר את הלוחות והרג את לייטי ישראל ועשה ארבעים יום במחנה עד ששרף את העגל וכתתו כעפר הארץ והרג את כל אשר נשק לעגל והכרית ע"ז מישראל והתקין כל שבט במקומו, ובראש חדש אלול אמר לו הקב"ה (שמות כד, יב): "עֲלֵה אֵלַי



spent forty days in the camp, until he had burnt the calf, and powdered it like the dust of the earth, and he had destroyed the idol worship from Israel, and he instituted every tribe in its place. And on the New Moon of Elul the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Come up | | to me on the mount" (Ex. 24:12), and let them sound the Shofar throughout the camp, for, behold, Moses has ascended the mount, so that they do not go astray again after the worship of idols. The Holy One, blessed be He, was exalted with that Shofar, as it is said, "God is exalted with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet" (Ps. 47:5). Therefore the sages instituted that the Shofar should be sounded on the New Moon of Elul every year.

הַהֲרָה" והעבירו שופר במחנה, שהרי משה עלה להר שלא יטעו עוד אחר עכומ"ז והקב"ה נתעלה אותו היום באותו שופר, שנאמר (תהלים מז, ו): "עֲלֵה אֱלֹהִים בְּתִרְעָה", ועל כן התקינו חכמים שיהיו תוקעים בשופר בראש חדש אלול בכל שנה ושנה.

Questions:

- By connecting it to the time when Moses ascended Mount Sinai again to receive a new set of tablets, what significance does the month of Elul take on?
- According to this Midrash, blowing the Shofar in Elul serves as a form of reenactment. What other meaning could be associated with it?

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Likkutei Torah: Re'eh (10:1)

Before a king enters a city, its inhabitants go out to greet him and receive him in the field. At that time, anyone who so desires may go out and greet him. He receives them all pleasantly and shows a smiling countenance to all. As he proceeds to his city, they follow him. Afterwards, when he reaches his royal palace, one may only enter [his throne room] with permission — and this is granted only to the nation's elite, to a select few.

אך הנה יובן ע"פ משל למלך שקודם בואו לעיר יוצאין אנשי העיר לקראתו ומקבלין פניו בשדה ואז רשאים כל מי שרוצה לצאת להקביל פניו הוא מקבל את כולם בסבר פנים יפות ומראה פנים שוחקות לכולם.



Questions:

- Why is this parable cited in connection to Elul?
- What symbolism can be discovered in the field?
- Does this parable contradict the relationship between God and the Jewish People suggested by the phrase "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," which is also linked with Elul?
- What does the contrast between the initial open accessibility and the later exclusivity within the royal palace represent in terms of our relationship with God?

Rabbi Alan Lew, This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared

You are walking through the world half asleep. It isn't just that you don't know who you are and that you don't know how or why you got here. It's worse than that; these questions never even arise. It is as if you are in a dream. Then the walls of the great house that surrounds you crumble and fall. You tumble out onto a strange street, suddenly conscious of your estrangement and your homelessness. A great horn sounds, calling you to remembrance, but all you can remember is how much you have forgotten. Every day for a month [Elul], you sit and try to remember who you are and where you are going. By the last week of this month, your need to know these things weighs upon you. Your prayers become urgent.

Questions:

- When do you feel most "awake"?
- What do you want to remember about yourself this year?
- Where do you want to go this year?

