

CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

AN INTIMATE SPACE...GROW AT YOUR PACE



September 6-7, 2019 / 7 Elul, 5779 / Shabbos Parshas Shoftim
Mincha: 7:00p / Candlelighting: 7:27p / Shabbos Ends 8:34p

KIDDUSH this Shabbos is sponsored by the members of the Guarantee Kiddush Club: Pinchas & Tricia Sutkin, Yaakov & Susan Rich, Ben & Lauren Nise, Eli Goldberg, Yerachmiel & Shira Martin, Josh & Lisa Rothstein, Jeff & Suzanne Luftig.

SHALOSH SEUDOS this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul.

Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, September 6th

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-7:00p
- » Shabbos Candle Lighting-7:27p

Shabbos Day, September 7th

- » Shacharis-8:30a
- » Chumash Shiur for Men & Women-5:45p
- » Beis Medrash Learning for Men-6:45p
- » Mincha for men-7:15p
- » **Maariv/Shabbos Ends-8:34p**

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Sunday Shacharis-8:00a
- » Weekday Mincha/Maariv-7:20p
- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40a

■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

Men

- » Shimon Yehuda ben Rivka Yittel (Grandson Phyllis Lavietes)
- » Yitzchok ben Sorah (Yitzchok Ellis)
- » Yisrael Ezra ben Rachel (Father of Lisa Rothstein)
- » Daniel ben Chaya Bluma (Father of Tami Ellis)
- » Refalal Tevya ben Sara (Uncle of Rebekkah Bodoff)
- » Yechezkel Yehuda ben Asnah Shaynah (Howard Denmark)
- » Matan Rafael Nasanel ben Esther (Matan Elfenbein)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)

Women

- » Rivka Rochel bas Bluma Hinda (Tami Ellis)
- » Sorah bas Chana Rivkah (Step mother of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Raizel Bina bas Sorah (Raizel Palmer)
- » Tikva bas Salima (Tikva Zbolon)
- » Necha bas Leah (see Irwin Harris)
- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

■ WHAT'S NU

- » **CTC Mission:** The mission of Congregation Toras Chaim is to support individual, family, and community growth by providing access to meaningful prayer and a high level of Torah learning in an environment that is warm and accepting.

■ PERSUADED BY OURSELVES: RABBI LABEL LAM

You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show favoritism, and you shall not take a bribe, for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts just words. (Devarim 16:20)

Bribery is a very powerful force. Even wise people can fall under its spell and even just words can become twisted. The Torah understands that we are not strictly logical creatures but rather we are psychological beings. The Torah describes it as a subtle blinding agent to be weary of.

I heard a story about a man who wanted to visit his friend who was sick on Shabbos. He wondered to himself if visiting him would be more of a disturbance and a burden or a relief. He discussed it with his wife but she had no clear way of knowing whether a Shabbos visit would cross the line of showing concern and enter the realm of being intrusive. Shabbos afternoon this man disappeared for many hours into the frigid and snowy day.

When he returned home covered in snow his wife asked about his friend's welfare assuming that he had gone to visit his ailing

friend. Surprisingly he told her that he had no idea how his friend was feeling. Puzzled, she asked him where he had disappeared to for so many hours. He told her that he had in fact taken a long trek to his friend's house. Again she asked him about the man's welfare and he told her that he did not enter to visit him. Then he explained his seemingly bizarre behavior. He said that since he was doubtful about whether or not it would be helpful to visit he was concerned that if he decided not to go from the comfort of his warm home where his shielded from the harsh wintry elements, perhaps his decision would not be based upon what is best for his friend but rather on his desire to stay warm and dry.

So he decided that it would be best, more honest of him, if he walked all the way to his friend's home and from there he would decide what's best. When he stood outside of the house he thought it more objectively and decided it was better not to disturb his sick friend on Shabbos! Now that shows a profound understanding of what bribery can do to the mind of a man.

The Mesilas Yesharim states, "...the material and physicality of this world – it is darkness of night to the eye of the intellect, and causes him to err on two fronts: Thus the simpletons walk confidently, and fall and are lost without having felt any prior fear...For they feel as secure as an edifice and they fall before having any knowledge whatsoever of the stumbling block. Now, the second error, and this is even worse than the first, is that [the darkness] distorts their sight until they literally see evil as if it were good and good as if it were evil. Thus they strengthen in clenching to their evil ways. For not only do they lack the [proper] vision to see the truth, to perceive the evil right in front of their eyes, but they also see fit to conjure up great proofs and convincing evidences to support their evil logic and false ideas."

The mind of people is constantly being bribed and blinded. It helps for a person to be aware of this fact. If a person is truly blind, and he realizes it, he can seek help and find someone to advise him to navigate the darkness. The second type of blindness is far more dangerous. He's worse than Mr. Magoo behind the wheel. Not only is he legally blind but he thinks he can see, and he's drunk too with his false and self-serving idealism

The Dubno Maggid told a Moshol of a man tramping through the woods and noticing all around him on trees high and low, there were bulls eyes, and in the center of the center of each bulls eye was an arrow shot with force. He became curious to discover who it is that can hit the center of the target every time. Then he met a chap with a quiver and a bow. He asked him, "Are you perhaps the author of all these center shots?" Proudly he nodded yes. Then he asked the marksman, "How do you manage to hit the center every time?" The man answered, "It's really quite easy! First I shoot the arrow, and then I paint the bulls eye!"

He's quite dangerous, but he sure knows how to make himself look and feel right. First one acts, however unjustly, and brilliantly justifies himself. Then he defies all standards of rationality and with genius rationalizes. It may be wise to not be so persuaded by ourselves.

■ OF ELUL, L'DOVID & GOLEMS: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

There is near universal Ashkenazic custom during the month of Elul to recite the Chapter of Tehillim (27) "L'Dovid Hashem Ori" during davening, both every morning and evening, and all the way up to Shmini Atzeres, as preparation for the Yomim Noraim. This custom is based on the

Midrash Shochar Tov that elucidates that various phrases of this chapter contain allusions to the holidays of the repentance period - Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos, as well as to the month of Elul itself.

The Malbim, in his commentary on Tehillim, offers an alternate explanation. In this chapter, Dovid HaMelech, the author of Tehillim, asked to cleave to Hashem and that all obstacles that block coming close to Him should be removed. The Malbim explains that when we strive to do so, Hashem will attach Himself to us with a higher level of personalized supervision. It is thus quite apropos to recite "L'Dovid" during the month of Elul, whose name hints to the acronym "Ani Ldodi V'dodi Li - I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me" (Shir HaShirim Ch. 6, verse 3). Elul is a month which symbolizes our relationship to Hashem, and one in which proper repentance is more readily accepted.

Where's the source? But, the obvious question is where and when did this minhag start? It is not mentioned in the Gemara, nor in the Rishonim, and not even referenced in the Shulchan Aruch or its main commentaries. It seems a bit odd that such a common custom would not stem from a primary source! Much research has been done and many works have been written to try to find the earliest source for this meaningful minhag.

Although many erroneously concluded that the original source of reciting "L'Dovid" throughout the entire month of Elul was the controversial 'Chemdas Yamim', first printed in 1731, history has since proven that an earlier source has been found. Many now attribute this minhag to the noted Kabbalist and famed author of "Amtachas Binyomin", Rav Binyomin Beinisch Cohen, in his sefer "Shem Tov Kattan", first printed in 1706. There he writes that one should be scrupulous with reciting "L'Dovid" daily from Rosh Chodesh Elul until after Simchas Torah, averring that this has the potential to avert and even nullify Heavenly decrees.

Who's Who? Yet, there is possibly an earlier source. In the sefer "Nezer Hakodesh - Minhagei Beis Ropschitz" a story is told about the Baal Shem Tov, where he mentioned a Tzaddik, known as Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem, who had saved the Jews of a certain town from eviction by successfully promising the childless non-Jewish mayor a son within a year. The Baal Shem Tov mentioned that this Tzaddik, who lived in the late 1600s, was the one who established the custom of reciting "L'Dovid" during Elul. However, it is unclear whom exactly he was referring to.

Although much detailed information has been obscured with the passage of time, still history has shown that there were two Tzaddikim known by this name. The better known of the two was Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem of Chelm, a talmid of the great Maharshal, Rav Shlomo Luria, and an ancestor of the luminaries commonly known as the Chacham Tzvi (Rav Tzvi Ashkenazi) and his son, the Ya'avetz (Rav Yaakov Emden).

A Golem as a Tzenter? Here is where it gets interesting. Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem of Chelm was best known for being of such stature that he created a Golem. In fact, both of his aforementioned illustrious descendants have written responsa on the topic of the Golem that their grandfather created. The Chid"ra, in his encyclopedia of Gedolim throughout Jewish history, 'Shem Gedolim' also attested to its existence.

But before our readers decry the supernatural turn this article has taken, they should realize that Golems actually do have a place in the halachic realm as well. The issue that these Gedolim were debating was whether a Golem can count for a minyan! Although the Chacham Tzvi (Shu"t Chacham Tzvi 93) at first remained undecided, his son, Rav Yaakov Emden (Shu"t Sheilas Ya'avetz vol. 2, 82) ruled unequivocally that a Golem cannot count for a minyan! Apparently not just a theoretical topic, it is even cited and debated by such contemporary authorities as the Mishna Berura (55, 4) and the Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 116, 1)!

The Mishna Berura does not actually rule, but rather addresses the issue and concludes that it is a safeik; which is actually the main thrust of the Chacham Tzvi's teshuvah - that he personally was undecided as to the proper halacha. Although the majority consensus is that a Golem

would not count for a minyan, there were several other authorities who defended the Chacham Tzvi's logical allowing a Golem to count for a minyan.

The Chazon Ish, conversely, concluded, akin to the Ya'avetz's position, that a Golem would undeniably not be able to count for a minyan, as it not only would be excluded from the rights and privileges of a Jew, but even from those of a human being. One of Rav Yaakov Emden's main proofs to this is that we find that in order to be considered having a neshama, a creation needs to have the potential for speech [see, for example the Ramban's commentary to Parshas Bereishis (Ch. 2, verse 7; based on Targum Onkelus ad loc.)], an ability a Golem sorely lacks.

What is lesser known (and actually seemingly unknown to many later authorities, including the Mishna Berura) is that, posthumously, another son of the Chacham Tzvi, Rav Meshulem Ashkenazi, in his responsa, appended and printed a later teshuva from his father (Shu"t Divrei HaRav Meshulem vol. 1, 10 s.v. shayach); in it the Chacham Tzvi actually retracted his original position and ruled strictly as well. Either way, and regardless of what one might want to assume about his fellow mispalleim, the vast majority of poskim rule conclusively that a Golem cannot be counted for a minyan.

The Second Rav Eliyahu Back to figuring out who originated the recital of "L'Dovid" in Elul. The other Rav Eliyahu Baal Shem was Rav Eliyahu Luentz, known as a master Kabbalist in the 17th century. He authored a seminal volume on the Zohar titled "Aderes Eliyahu", and was a disciple of my ancestor and namesake, the renowned Maharal M'Prague, (who, as an interesting side point, and incredible Torah works aside, is regrettably nowadays best 'known' for having also created a Golem).

In conclusion, although we are left uncertain as to whom the originator of this powerful minhag was, we can rest assured that it has a reliable source. We can thus appreciate the significance of saying this chapter of Tehillim throughout Elul, as it underscores the major goals of the season of repentance.

Postscript: There are a few communities, including many of Germanic origin, and the Chassidic communities of Sanz, Bobov, and Kamarna, however, who do not recite "L'Dovid" during Elul. The Kamarna Rebbe of Yerushalayim recently told this author that although in his shul "L'Dovid" is recited, as most of his congregants are not Kamarna Chassidim and nearly everyone's custom is to recite it, nevertheless, he personally does not. It is also known that the Vilna Gaon and the Maharsha did not approve of this addition to davening as it possibly constitutes 'tircha d'tzibura'. The general Sefardi minhag as well is not necessarily to recite "L'Dovid" specifically during Elul, but many nonetheless recite it all year long as an addition after Shacharis, with many Moroccans reciting it instead daily before Ma'ariv. There are other variations of reciting "L'Dovid" during 'Yemei HaRachamin V'HaSelichos' as well, with some communities doing so only after Shacharis (including Telz and KAJ), while most communities additionally recite it either at the end of Mincha (generally Nusach Sefard) or Maariv (generally Nusach Ashkenaz).

Good Shabbos

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■ CLASSES

- » Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)
- » Professional's Kollel-9:00A-11:00A
- » 30 Mins Makkos Shiur-30 mins before Mincha Sun-Wed
- » Gemara Nazir for men (Sunday-Wednesday 8:30P)
- » Menuchah Principle for Men: Thursday nights in shul
- » Gates of Prayer for Women: Sunday nights at home of Ariella Bush
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos: Check Schedule)
- » Beis Medrash Learning for men including "Shabbos Malkusa" Chaburah-(Shabbos: Check Schedule)