

The month of Elul

We are now well into the month of Elul. At the end of this month is Rosh Hashanah, followed 10 days later by Yom Kippur.

As we study that just as there were geographical cities of refuge mentioned in the Torah, there is also a city of refuge in time. This haven in time is the month of Elul, where as Jews we are to take shelter each year to rectify our spiritual ills and dwell upon what we will ask for in forgiveness during the observance of Yom Kippur.

Our rabbis also tell us the Elul is also considered a gentle month. As the last month of the year, Elul has become a time for review and personal inventory for the closing year, as well as a time of preparation for the coming year. We are to consider the three pillars upon which the world stands—Torah, service of God, and act of kindness, by increasing in study, prayer, and charity.

Especially interesting is that we read a few weeks ago, from the Torah portion, Shoftim, The famous phrase, Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof, which has been translated as Justice, Justice you shall pursue.

We learn from the Hebrew root letters that give us the word Tzedakah, a word we tend to associate with charity, especially when we see the Tzedakah boxes that have been placed in conspicuous locations. Our rabbis tell us the word doesn't mean charity so much, as it means righteousness, or in today's language, our responsibility as Jews to do the right thing.

I also studied that our sages tell us that Tzedakah is never considered a handout, for it is an obligation for every Jew to be righteous. Each of us has an inherent responsibility to be a Tzadik, one who leads a righteous life.

This concept of righteousness continues in our daily life and on a personal level. No person has the right to say, "not my problem." I recently read that if it is something that, by Divine Providence, one knows about, this means there is something we can do to help influence the end result. Again, it is our responsibility and obligation to continue this concept of Tzedakah.

This month of Elul, is a good time to think of Tzedakah, and if we are truly living a righteous life.

As we take the time for reflection, may the sense of God's presence be with us along our way, helping us to discover the peace and rest some of us may have lost or never known, while renewing our covenant of peace with all created things.

As we greet our family and friends this month, and bless them with **LESHANAH TOVAH TIKATEIV VETEICHATEIM** and may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year, let us all also pray that each and every one of us will live as a Tzedik.

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