

Class on Elul – Section 1

40 Days to Yom Kippur

After the very sad early days of Av, we enter the month of Elul replete with the energy of reconciliation, forgiveness and mercy. It starts the 40 days that coincide with Moses' 40 days on top of the mountain seeking forgiveness for the golden calf debacle. Moshe (Moses) re-ascended Mt. Sinai on the first day of Elul and on the 40th day – the 10th of Tishrei, (the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur) he received the forgiveness. Recommendation: Purchase and start reading Rabbi Shimon Jacobson's book, ["60 Days"](#) – a daily reader that goes over history, traditions & celebrations of the High Holy Days starting with the last day of Av.

13 Attributes of Mercy

The month of Elul, in Virgo, is a preparation for the High Holy Days. It is during this last month of the Hebrew calendar that we take an accounting of where we've been and how close we've come to our true purpose in this past year. We are told that the energy available during Elul is the energy that Moses was shown on the mountain, "the 13 attributes of mercy". We repeat these 13 attributes many times in the Yom Kippur liturgy.

And the L-rd passed before him and proclaimed: "L-rd, L-rd, benevolent G-d, Who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin, and He cleanses. . ." (Exodus 34:6-7)

The word "Elul"

The word, Elul is related to a line from Song of Songs because it is an acronym of that line. "Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li" – "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me". The Hebrew letters that spell Elul are the first letters of this phrase from Song of Songs ("Shir HaShirim", in Hebrew – a book said to be composed by King Solomon who built the first Holy Temple, the "Beis HaMikdash" in Hebrew). To make it more clear: Alef, Lamed, Vav, Lamed are the Hebrew letters that spell out the word for the month, Elul, and they are also the first letters of the phrase above from Song of Songs. This journey is about our closeness to G-d, "my beloved", and demonstrates that we need to make the first move. It's about the move toward Hashem as my beloved during the month of Elul and then in the next month, Tishrei, on Rosh HaShanah & Yom Kippur, He responds. When we know that G-d is all-forgiving, it is easier to make that first move.

Assignment: Take this first week of Elul to focus on your Inner Critic. What are your self – judgements all about? Write these down as a list and then go back over the list and cross out one at a time. After each one, write an alternate view/perspective that allows for compassion, loving-kindness and something that could be just as true as the negative judgements.

Look at the Chabad Jewish calendar – each Saturday shows the Torah portion read on that Shabbat. Go into the Torah portion and find the Haftarah portion – the section of the prophets that is read for that week. These sections of the prophets are comforting words during the month of Elul. They are full of the promise that comes with the Geula, the coming redemption.

Listen to the Shofar every day of Elul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jR20-0sy1Y>



