B"H

LOWER ALABAMA L'CHAIM

HIGH HOLIDAYS EDITION
See Inside for the
HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

CANDLELIGHTING
SHABBAT TIMES
MOBILE ALABAMA

SEPT 5 6:52 PM
SEPT 12 6:44 PM
SEPT 19 6:35 PM
SEPT 26 6:26 PM

Volume 2, Issue 6

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Dear Friends, This newsletter is a community effort sharing information, thoughts and inspiration of interest to Jews living in or passing through lower Alabama. It is my hope that you will find this newsletter educational and inspirational, and that it will help you experience your Judaism with renewed excitement. The Lower Alabama L'Chaim is a publication of Chabad of Mobile. For questions & comments, contact rabbi@chabadofmobile.com–*Rabbi Yosef Goldwasser*

To dedicate an edition in honor or in memory of someone, or to donate, visit **chabadofmobile.com/donate**

THE HIGH HOLIDAY LADDER by Rabbi Yosef Goldwasser

Wow—what a year it's been! As we enter the final month of the Jewish year, *Elul*, we begin preparing for one of the most spiritually charged seasons on the calendar: the High Holidays. It's a beautiful and meaningful time, packed with significant moments - from Elul and Selichos to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, and Simchas Torah.

But have you ever wondered, is it just a coincidence that all these holidays fall so close together? Or is there a deeper connection? Jewish mysticism teaches that these days aren't just linked, they form a spiritual ladder. Each holiday is another rung, lifting us higher and higher, drawing us closer to Hashem.

It all begins with *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, the day Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Mount Sinai for the second time, eventually returning on *Yom Kippur* with the second set of *Luchos* (tablets). These 40 days are infused with the energy of teshuvah—sincere return and reconnection.

We begin our climb during Elul by increasing in mitzvos and saying *Selichos*, reflecting on our relationship with Hashem. Then comes *Rosh Hashanah*, when we coronate Hashem as our King and recommit to living according to His will. Next is *Yom Kippur*, when we wipe the slate clean and renew our bond with Hashem *on the deepest level.* But the journey doesn't stop there.

Then comes *Sukkos*, a continuation of the climb. Now that we've cleansed ourselves and reaffirmed our commitment, Sukkos is about **rejoicing in our renewed, elevated relationship with Hashem**. Sitting in the sukkah represents being embraced by His presence. And finally, we reach the pinnacle: *Simchas Torah*, when we dance with the Torah and celebrate the greatest gift Hashem has given us—His infinite wisdom and guidance. As we begin this spiritual journey, let's ask ourselves: ***What can I take on this year to deepen my connection with Hashem?***

Challenge yourself to adopt a mitzvah you haven't yet incorporated into your life. It could be putting on Tefillin more regularly, lighting Shabbos candles, giving more tzedakah, or committing to a weekly Torah class. May Hashem see our sincere efforts to draw closer to Him, and in that merit, may He bless us with the most amazing year yet, both physically and spiritually. And most of all, may we finally merit the ultimate good: the coming of Moshiach, speedily and immediately! (*See also the Chassidic Story regarding the High Holiday ladder.)*

SOUTH ALABAMA KOSHER

Kosher Store

Mobile Kosher Market
451 Azalea Rd
mobilekoshermarket.com

Kosher sections - Mobile

Publix (dry goods and freezer)
4628 Airport Blvd
Mobile, AL 36608

Facebook group

Kosher Finds in Mobile and Baldwin, AL

THE SURGEON AND THE SOUL by Rivkah Hyatt

A Reflection on the Unisane Tokef

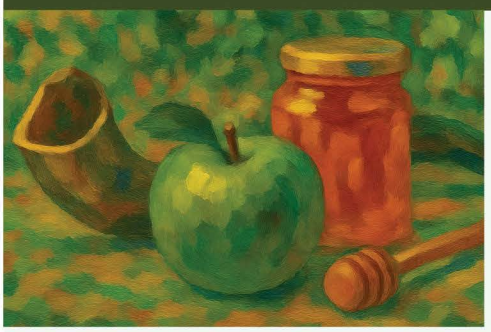
When I was in nursing school, I was an excellent student, always confident in earning the highest marks for my studies. The very first time I witnessed a surgery, I entered the operating room filled with this youthful bravado.

I took my place against the wall to observe the surgeon at work. Upon my first look at the patient's open abdomen, I just about fainted. I had to pay attention as a test would be given on my ability to remember the surgeon's actions.

This time of year reminds me vividly of this. When we experience the Unisane Tokef, I am reduced to being that student nurse again. Hashem, the greatest surgeon, can see our innards and wields control of life healing and our future.

The Unisane Tokef reduces me to my naked self. I have nothing. Only the great will of Hashem is between me and my future.
May all our names be inscribed in the book of life for a new a year filled with sweetness.

ELUL & THE HIGH HOLIDAYS



ELUL

A lot can happen in a year. Work, school, family. health-some days we flourish, others we flounder. Life moves along and promises are forgotten; that connection to G-d we committed to last year shows signs of stress. Well, thank G-d for a New Year: the "Days of Awe"—*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*—are our time to recommit to our Creator.

But renewing a relationship is more than changing a status. To be better partners we've got to be better people and self-improvement takes hard work, commitment and consistency. New habits need time to take root. The Jewish month of *Elul* is that time before the New Year to review our deeds and spiritual progress of the past year. It is the open season for teshuvah (return to G-d), prayer, charity and increased love for our fellow man.

Chassidic master Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi likened the month of Elul to when "the king is in the field".
In contrast to when G-d is in His royal palace, during this month, "everyone who desires is permitted to meet Him, and He receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all."

ROSH HASHANAH MONDAY NIGHT - WEDNESDAY NIGHT SEPT 22–24 2025

Rosh Hashanah, (Hebrew for "Head of the Year"), is the beginning of the Jewish year. Specifically, it is the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, which highlights the special relationship between G-d and humanity: G-d not only wants a world with people in it, He wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated with candle lighting in the evenings, festive meals with sweet delicacies during the night and day, prayer services that include the sounding of the ram's horn (shofar) on both mornings, and desisting from creative work.

YOM KIPPUR WEDNESDAY NIGHT - THURSDAY NIGHT OCT 1–2

Perhaps some people see apologies as an admission of weakness or defeat, but they're actually the opposite. An apology is a sign of strength and love. A sincere apology will repair an enduring relationship that has been temporarily sidetracked or derailed by superficialities. On *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, we come together as a community to each say "Sorry!" to G-d and to make amends—but happily, wholeheartedly confident in His loving response *Yom Kippur* is a 25-hour fast from sundown on Friday till Saturday night. We spend the day in the synagogue, we abstain from eating, drinking, washing and anointing the body, wearing leather shoes, and marital relations.

THE HOLIDAY OF SUKKOT MONDAY NIGHT - WEDNESDAY NIGHT OCT 6–11

It's easy to feel spiritual after spending all day fasting and praying in a synagogue. Sukkot is about incorporating that energy into your ordinary life. *Sukkot* is a seven-day holiday, soon after Yom Kippur, that commemorates G-d's protection of our ancestors after our exodus from Egypt.

Sukkot means "huts", the Torah-mandated outdoor shelters we live in during the holiday. The *sukkah* (singular) surrounds us on all sides, symbolizing faith in G-d's all-around protection and care-not only in the spiritual life of the synagogue, but in our real life in the real world. Eating all our meals in the *sukkah* is representative of real life-with nothing but G-d Himself covering our every ordinary move.

About Sukkot

Sukkot is observed by doing in your *sukkah* pretty much everything you do in your house: eating, learning Torah, and just hanging out. A kosher *sukkah* is simple: some wind-blocking walls and a natural-vegetation roof that leaves more shade than sun, and you're set. Not sure how to build one? Just surf the Web. There's no shortage of affordable, easy-to-build *sukkahs* available in all sizes—even tiny portable ones for travel.

For seven days and nights, we eat all our meals in the *sukkah*. Each time you begin a meal in the *sukkah*, we say a special blessing. (See blessing on the right). During the holiday of Sukkot, we also do the special mitzvah of *Lulav* and *Etrog* each day of *Sukkot*, except for Shabbat. (See facing page for instructions.)

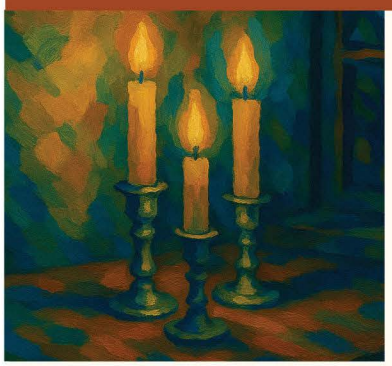
SHEMINI ATZERET - SIMCHAT TORAH MONDAY NIGHT - WEDNESDAY NIGHT OCT 13–15

On *Simchat Torah* (the holiday of rejoicing with the Torah), we don't only study the Torah—we celebrate it. We hold it, hug it, dance and sing with it. After all, G-d's manual for life is the greatest thing a Jew could possibly celebrate.

We read the last portion of the Torah. Since Torah study never ends, we also begin reading from the scroll's very beginning. This is to show that the Torah is beloved to us, and we are eager for a new cycle to commence.

The celebration is marked on *Simchat Torah* night and the following day with exuberant, boisterous dancing in the synagogue while holding the Torah scrolls. The dancing circles the synagogue's bimah (Torah-reading platform) seven times, while spirited Jewish songs are sung.

HOLIDAY CALENDAR



* Light from a pre-existing flame

ROSH HASHANAH
EVE MONDAY SEPT 22
Light candles at 6:31 pm
Say blessings 1 and 5

ROSH HASHANAH
DAY 1 TUESDAY SEPT 23
Light candles after 7:23 pm *
Say blessings 1 and 5

ROSH HASHANAH
DAY 2 WEDNESDAY SEPT 24
Shofar - Tashlich
Holiday ends 7:22 pm

SHABBAT SHUVA
FRIDAY SEPT 26
Light candles at 6:26 pm
Say blessing 2

SHABBAT SHUVA
SHABBAT SEPT 27
Shabbat ends at 7:18 pm

YOM KIPPUR
WEDNESDAY OCT 1
Light candles at 6:19 pm
Say blessing 3 and 5
Fast begins at 6:19 pm

YOM KIPPUR
THURSDAY OCT 2
Yizkor
Holiday/fast ends at 7:12 pm

SHABBOS HA'AZINU
FRIDAY OCT 3
Light candles at 6:17pm
Say blessing 2

SHABBOS HA'AZINU
SHABBAT OCT 4
Shabbat ends at 7:09 pm

SUKKOT
EVE MONDAY OCT 6
Light candles at 6:13 pm
Say blessings 4 and 5
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 7 & 5*

SUKKOT
DAY 1 TUESDAY OCT 7
■ **Lulav** *Say blessing 6 & 5*
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 7*
Light candles after 7:06 pm *
Say blessings 4 and 5

SUKKOT
DAY 2 WEDNESDAY OCT 8
■ **Lulav** *Say blessing 6*
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 7*
Holiday ends at 7:05 pm

SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED
FRIDAY OCT 10
■ **Lulav** *Say blessing 6*
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 7*
Light candles at 6:09 pm
Say blessing 2

SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED
SHABBAT OCT 11
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 7*
Shabbat ends at 7:01 pm

SHEMINI ATZERET
MONDAY OCT 13
Light candles at 6:05 pm
Say blessings 4 and 5

SIMCHAT TORAH
TUESDAY OCT 14
Yizkor
Light candles after 6:58 pm*
Say blessings 4 and 5

SIMCHAT TORAH
WEDNESDAY OCT 15
Holiday ends 6:57 pm

BLESSING #1

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם הַזִּכָּרוֹן.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Yom Ha-zi-ka-ron.

BLESSING #2

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Shabbat Kodesh.

BLESSING #3

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Yom Ha-ki-pu-rim.

BLESSING #4

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Yom Tov.

BLESSING #5

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam She-heh-chi-yah-nu Ve-ki-ye-mahnu Ve-hi-gi-ahnu Liz-man Ha-zeh.

■ **BLESSING #6** The Lulav blessing is said before we shake the Lulav

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לוּלָב

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Al Ne-ti-lat Lulav

■ **BLESSING #7** The Sukkah blessing is said when we eat a meal containing bread or mezonot (cookies, crackers, or cake)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu lay-shayv bah-soo-kah

CHASSIDIC STORY: THE YOM KIPPUR DRUNK

Those who arrived early at the village synagogue on Yom Kippur eve could not but notice the man sleeping in a corner. His soiled clothes, and the strong scent of alcohol that hovered about him, attested to the cause of his slumber at this early hour. A Jew drunk on the eve of the Holy Day? Several of the congregants even suggested that the man be expelled from the synagogue.

Soon the room filled to overflowing, mercifully concealing the sleeping drunk from all but those who stood in his immediate vicinity. As the sun made to dip below the horizon, a hush descended upon the crowd. The Rebbe entered the room and made his way to his place at the eastern wall. At a signal from the Rebbe, the ark was opened, and the gabbai began taking out the Torah scrolls in preparation for the Kol Nidrei service.

This was the moment that the drunk chose to rise from his slumber, climb the steps to the raised reading platform in the center of the room, pound on the reading table, and announce: "*Ne'um attah horeita!*" (getting ready for the dancing on Simchas Torah) Apparently, the crowded room, Torah scrolls being carried out of the open ark, seen through a drunken haze, appeared to the man as the beginning of hakafot on Simchat Torah! The drunk was confusing the most solemn moment of the year with its most joyous and high-spirited occasion.

The scandalized crowd was about to eject the man from the room when the Rebbe turned from the wall and said: "Let him be. For him, it's already time for hakafot. He's there already."

On the following evening, as the Rebbe sat with his chassidim at the festive meal that follows the fast, he related to them the story of Reb Shmuel, the Kol Nidrei drunk.

On the morning of the eve of the Holy Day, Reb Shmuel had heard of a Jew who, together with his wife and six small children, had been imprisoned for failing to pay the rent on the establishment he held on lease from the local nobleman. Reb Shmuel went to the nobleman to plead for their release, but the nobleman was adamant in his refusal. "Until I see every penny that is owed to me," he swore, "the Jew and his family stay where they are. Now get out of here before I unleash my dogs on you." "I cannot allow a Jewish family to languish in a dungeon on Yom Kippur," resolved Reb Shmuel and set out to raise the required sum, determined to achieve their release before sunset.

All day, he went from door to door. People gave generously to a fellow Jew in need, but by late afternoon Reb Shmuel was still 300 rubles short of the required sum. Where would he find such a large sum of money at this late hour? Then he passed a tavern and saw a group of well-dressed young men sitting and drinking. A card-game was underway, and a sizable pile of banknotes and gold and silver coins had already accumulated on the table.

At first, he hesitated to approach them at all: what could one expect from Jews who spend the eve of the Holy Day drinking and gambling in a tavern? But realizing that they were his only hope, he approached their table and told them of the plight of the imprisoned family.

They were about to send him off empty-handed, when one of them had a jolly idea: wouldn't it be great fun to get a pious Jew drunk on Yom Kippur? Signaling to a waiter, the man ordered a large glass of vodka. "Drink this down in one gulp," he said to Reb Shmuel, "and I'll give you 100 rubles."

Reb Shmuel looked from the glass that had been set before him to the sheaf of banknotes that the man held under his nose. Other than a sip of L'chayim on Shabbat and at weddings, Reb Shmuel drank only twice a year — on Purim and Simchat Torah, when every chassid fuels the holy joy of these days with a L'chaim drink so that the body should rejoice along with the soul. And the amount of vodka in this glass — actually, it more resembled a pitcher than a glass — was more than he would consume on both those occasions combined. Reb Shmuel lifted the glass and drank down its contents.

"Bravo!" cried the man, and handed him the 100 rubles. "But this is not enough," said Reb Shmuel, his head already reeling from the strong drink. "I need another 200 rubles to get the poor family out of prison!"

"A deal's a deal!" cried the merrymakers. "One hundred rubles per glass! Waiter! Please refill this glass for our drinking buddy!" Two liters and two hundred rubles later, Reb Shmuel staggered out of the tavern. His alcohol-fogged mind was oblivious to all — the stares of his fellow villagers rushing about in their final preparations for the Holy Day, the ferocious barking of the nobleman's dogs, the joyous tears and profusions of gratitude of the ransomed family — except to the task of handing over the money to the nobleman and finding his way to the synagogue. For he knew that if he first went home for something to eat before the fast, he would never make it to shul for Kol Nidrei.

"On Rosh HaShanah," the Rebbe concluded his story, "we submitted to the sovereignty of Heaven and proclaimed G-d King of the universe. Today, we fasted, prayed and repented, laboring to translate our commitment to G-d into a refined past and an improved future. Now we are heading towards Sukkot, in which we actualize and rejoice over the attainments of the 'Days of Awe' through the special mitzvot of the festival — a joy that reaches its climax in the hakafot of Simchat Torah. But Reb Shmuel is already there. When he announced the beginning of hakafot at Kol Nidrei last night, this was no 'mistake.' For us, Yom Kippur was just beginning; for him, it was already Simchat Torah..."

TISHREI NOSTALGIA by Barbara Carlee

A practical individual, I am not often given to nostalgic reminiscence. However, the month of Elul is a reminder that we'll soon be celebrating the High Holy Days, followed by Sukkot, Simchat Torah, and Chanukah.

As a child raised between two religious worlds, I felt the mystery and allure of the Jewish holidays my grandparents observed. Throughout my childhood, they drove from New York several times a year to visit. Though the trip was surely to see their daughter and four granddaughters, I believe our grandparents were also seeking to strengthen the connection of my sisters and me to our Jewish heritage.

Each time their Buick (it was always a Buick) rolled to a stop in our driveway, we girls would run out to the car screaming. Many hugs and kisses were exchanged, followed by chants of "what did you bring me?" and "what's in that box/bag, package?" etc. There was no Amazon, so they hauled all the delicacies: jars of gefilte fish and borscht, boxes of Matzoh and egg kichel (which we called "giggles"), fresh bialys and bagels, handcrafted challah, tins of sardines and herring, and more.

Though there were two synagogues in town, many Jewish foods were not available in 1960s Pensacola, FL. After unloading the car and settling in, our grandparents took on the challenge of broadening our horizons by reciting poetry, reading Shakespeare, and, most importantly, teaching us about Judaism. We attended synagogue on Friday nights, watching in awe as Grandpa was called to the bimah to read from the Torah and singing loudly to "*Ein Kelokeinu*" We listened in fascination as our grandparents conversed in Yiddish, and stood quietly as Grandma lit her Shabbat candles, reciting her Hebrew prayers.

On several visits, our grandparents gifted us with a Pesach seder. They brought dishes and Kosher foods. We cleaned the house, and they carefully prepared the meal. Handing each person a Haggadah, our grandfather carefully poured the Mogen David wine. He led off, eventually helping the youngest child to recite the four questions (oh, how this middle child longed to be the youngest), and concealing a gift in the afikomen (a treasure for the lucky child who found it). At every step, our grandparents explained the religious rituals, clothing, language, and legacy they were passing down to us. Today not all of us are practicing the faith which our grandparents and countless generations before them were born.

However, our Hebrew names and the stories of the triumphs, tragedies, and hardships their families endured because of their faith have ensured that we are all indelibly imbued with a deep knowledge, reverence, and pride in our Jewish roots. One can never underestimate the power of a grandparents' influence and a Jewish soul.

POETRY CORNER by Bina Goldwasser

JOY IS A MIRACLE DRUG

Joy is a miracle drug
Just wish I could locate the plug
Lost in the dance
Torah in hands
Fresh out of sukkah's warm hug

Joy is the key to success
Instantly vanishing stress
With it you'll be
Weightless and free
Fierce in the strength you'll possess

Blessings are pouring today
Goodness can be here to stay
Let go and fly
Reach for the sky
Now it's not too far away

Yet earth has a strong gravity
And voices of reality
How are the kids faring
What should I be wearing
Keep us in physicality

It's so hard to dance with concerns
My mind with its twists and its turns
Please carry its weight
While I celebrate
And keep it, no need to return

For we have just called You the King
Your power and love we did sing
Built homes outside proud
We once dwelt in Your cloud
While You cared for our meals, laundering

This is why we dance and rejoice
We gather and shout with one voice
From all of creation
We're Your special nation
How lucky are we in Your choice

The outcome of unification
With You- is complete liberation
Safe in Your protection
With Torah's direction
Is that not cause for celebration?

A TIME TO HEAL by Yehudah Silverwolf

At this time of year, we are beginning to look at ourselves and identify areas where we can improve our spiritual lives, that we may grow into more thoughtful, empathetic and caring people. Every year, our faith instructs us on the importance of forgiveness.

I try to right wrongs as they occur. My guilty conscience has great difficulty carrying the weight of my mistakes, and making things right as soon as possible has proven to be the best way to keep my mind, heart and soul in good order. Indeed, forgiveness is a highlight of the bedtime Shema we say nightly. I've always asked myself, if forgiveness is something every Jew is to strive for daily, then why do we have such an elaborate system of focus on it every year.

My experience is that some negative interactions cause so much inner turmoil that it becomes easier to ignore rather than face these challenging dynamics. G-d, in His wisdom and love, has set aside a time every year that compels Jewish hearts to work towards correcting difficult instances where forgiveness, compassion and understanding are not easily attained.

I may not be able to forgive or make amends and seek forgiveness at certain times, but when the Days of Awe are approaching, when I hear the shofar daily, I feel that little push that lets me know the time has come to do the hard work of correction. We wish each other an easy, meaningful fast for Yom Kippur. This year, I wish everyone to have the strength and courage to mend hearts.
This is surely the direct path to the Days of Moshiach.

FALLING, RISING AND WALKING WITH HASHEM by Stephen Gottlieb

A Lesson from King David

Living a Torah life in today's world is not always easy — and it never really was. As human beings, we stumble. Sometimes we stand tall; other times we move forward step by step, unsure.

King David's life shows us all of this. Called the "sweet singer of Israel" (*2 Samuel 23:1*), he was devoted to Hashem, yet Scripture records his human frailties. He knew what it meant to fall. He knew what it meant to rise again. And through it all, he continued to walk with Hashem.

David's psalms, many of which we recite daily, are filled with praise and longing. Yet the Book of Samuel also records his trials, including the episode with Bathsheba. The Talmud (*Shabbat 56a*) teaches: "Whoever says David sinned is mistaken." Rashi explains that David's soldiers gave their wives a conditional bill of divorce before going to war. Since Uriah died, Bathsheba was considered divorced retroactively. Legally, David did not commit adultery. But Radak points out that David should still have acted with greater caution. As king and tzaddik, he was expected to rise above even the appearance of wrongdoing. This was his failing — not halachic violation, but a lapse in judgment. His greatness lay in taking responsibility anyway. When confronted, David confessed without excuse: "I have sinned against Hashem" (*II Samuel 12:13*). In Psalm 51 he cries: "Create in me a pure heart, O G-d." This is our model for teshuvah.

This teaches us that holiness is not the absence of mistakes, but the courage to repent and grow. As Pirkei Avot says, "Who is strong? One who overpowers his inclination" (*Avot 4:1*). Strength isn't just resisting — it's rising again after we fall.

King David shows that even when we falter, we can return to Hashem stronger and more humble. That's why his psalms continue to guide us. In my own practice, I recite my personal psalm (my age plus one), this year Psalm 68, along with Psalm 124 (the Rebbe's psalm) and *Psalm 120*, a prayer for help in times of trouble. Reading them, I think of David, who fought battles on the field and in his heart, and who always turned to Hashem for strength.

In today's world, facing challenges and rising antisemitism, his lesson is clear: Hashem doesn't demand perfection — He wants our hearts. Every moment is an opportunity to return to Him. As *Psalm 34* reminds us: "Hashem is close to the brokenhearted."

FEELING HASHEM'S PRESENCE by Rachel Leah Fry

It is the month of Elul—the last month of the year. We are nearing the High Holy days and there is a hum of excitement in the air as we prepare our souls and our homes for the Divine presence of G-d.

During Elul, it is said, "*The King is in the field.*" During this time, Hashem comes closer to His people, making Himself more available and connecting more closely to each Jewish soul. We, in turn, can approach Him with our prayers for forgiveness, with gratitude for the health and well-being of our families, for our very lives sustained through another year.

As we prepare for Rosh Hashanah, praying to return to Hashem in significant ways, Elul is a month of opportunity for repentance and for practicing extra kindness in a world that may seem lacking in Ahavas Yisroel. Because Hashem makes Himself particularly accessible to us during Elul, we can open our hearts and minds to Him, preparing to be written in the book of life for another year. We can pour out our needs in prayer, study more Torah, light our Sabbath candles with extra joy because we can see our G-d in the light of those flames.

Every mitzvah during Elul is so meaningful because Hashem is so close, so present in our daily lives. Our joy in giving tzedakah, doing good deeds, and cleaving closely to the commandments is also Hashem's joy. Rosh Hashanah is coming—a whole new year to bring more Yiddishkeit (Judaism) into our lives and share it with our fellow Jews. Elul gives us the opportunity to start that process. The King is indeed in the field, and we can work to make this world worthy of His immediacy. And as we do, we can also bring Moshiach sooner. *May this be the year that He is sent to take us home.*