



August 19, 2023

Shoftim

2 Elul, 5783

Annual Check-Up

Going in for a yearly physical has become a common routine for most adults. The check-up can detect potential problems before they become major, guide us in changing or altering our lifestyle, give us clues to what adjustments we should make in our diet and exercise regimen. Consulting with our doctors, we get a snapshot, so to speak, of our physical health - where we've been in the past year, where we're headed and what we need to do.

Spiritually, too, we should have an annual check-up. Instead of consulting with a doctor, though, we consult with a mashpia, a spiritual mentor (friend, rabbi, teacher) we turn to for advice, someone we trust to have our best interests at heart but who can also give us a realistic assessment.

And just as the physical exam tests several parts of our bodies, so too the "spiritual exam" should test several parts of our souls. In fact, we might even be able to find some parallels:

Reflexes: We've all been at the doctor and been banged on the knee with the reflex hammer. Without thinking about it or controlling it the leg would swing outward. A proper set of reflexes means our autonomic nervous system is in good working order: our instincts work.

There are situations where we simply have to react, where thinking takes too long - jumping out of the way, for instance, or pulling someone back.

We also have spiritual reflexes and these too need to be in good working order. There are times when our first response, our impulse, must reveal the essential nature of our Jewish soul. When we see someone in need or when our paycheck comes and we sit down to pay the bills, does the charity-impulse, a natural Jewish instinct, "kick in" automatically, or do we try to resist it?

Blood tests: The nurse draws a sample of blood and sends it off to the lab for testing. Is our cholesterol too high? Triglycerides? What about blood sugar?

Spiritually, blood represents the life, the enthusiasm, the purpose and vibrancy of a person. We can have spiritual high cholesterol - too much "fat" clogging the channels mitzva-observance, of attachment to G-dliness and Judaism. We can have spiritual blood sugar problems, being unable to properly digest the sweetness of life, to recognize the goodness within others and G-d's creation.

Internal organs: Open your mouth and say, "ahhh." The light in the ear and the eye. Cough. Pressing on the abdomen to feel the liver, etc. Jewish mysticism explains that the physical structure corresponds to a spiritual anatomy. Each organ parallels a Divine emanation, a human characteristic. For example, the right arm corresponds to chesed, the attribute of kindness, and the left arm to gevura, the attribute of discipline. Are our spiritual organs in balance? Do they function properly?

Blood pressure: A big one. What's our spiritual pulse?

Which brings us to the timing of the exam. While getting a check-up, physically or spiritually, is appropriate any time, the month of Elul, the month of preparation before Rosh Hashana, is particularly auspicious to take a spiritual accounting. This month, Elul, why not make an appointment with your self, and your mashpia, to give your soul its annual check-up?

(by Dr. David YB Kaufmann a"h from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

Personal Police

All societies require some means of government to maintain law and order. So the Torah's directive, in the opening of this week's Torah portion, to establish judges and police to enforce the law is not surprising. As the Mishna writes (Pirkei Avos 3:2), "Pray for the peace of the government, for if not for fear of it, man would swallow his friend alive."

There is, however, something confusing in the Torah's instruction: it writes (Deut 16:18) "Judges and Police you should appoint 'Lecha' — for yourself." As this instruction is given to the entire Jewish people, as a nation, we would expect it to use the plural form 'Lachem' — referring to all of you. Why would the Torah give this commandment to the individual? What authority and power can each individual have to appoint judges and police, servants of the public?

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While the stability of society is highly dependent upon law enforcement, this does not guarantee its success. The Talmud states that while a judge may do his best to practice and enforce the law, "the judge only has what his eyes see (Sanhedrin 6b)." He only knows what the evidence presented tells him. Crimes may be committed with impunity, if there is no evidence of those crimes presented to law enforcement. If so, what prevents members of society from committing crimes in private, hidden from the eyes of the law?

For this reason the law was and is addressed to all the individuals of the Jewish nation. If people violate the laws even in secret, society erodes from within, and this eventually takes its toll on public law and order. Each person must employ their own methods of judging and policing, to insure their personal success, and the success of society. That may be a daily or weekly personal accounting, or studying and meditating over ethical works to fortify core values, but it is an obligation for each person to police his or her own behavior.

I recently tried to pay for parking at a parking meter, and the machine's system froze and I wasn't sure it took my payment. When I later got home, I realized I was never charged for the parking, so I innocently called up the number on the parking meter to try to pay over the phone. The administrator on the other end couldn't understand why I wanted to pay. "You don't have to pay. You're just lucky!" was her response.

This popular sentiment that whatever you can get away with is allowed, and even celebrated, puts the health of our society into jeopardy. As Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgement, approaches, it's time to contemplate how we're policing ourselves, and what we're doing to recharge our values of honesty, and commitment. In less than a month's time, we'll all be judged, and it's important for us to preempt the judgement with our own personal accounting. This is crucial for our own spiritual health, and ultimately the health of our community, society, and all humanity. (Based on HaRav Yeruchem Levovits zt"l, Sefer Daas Torah)

(by Rabbi Mordechai Dixler from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Please complete and send to the Shul your: (1) High Holiday Seat Reservation Form, (2) Membership Information Form and (3) Yizkor Form for 5784.
All are available on the Shul Website at www.chabadshul.org



Sponsorships are available for two flower displays on the Bima during each of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Succot. Please consider sponsoring the flowers in honor or in memory of someone. Please email Allan Genut at agenut@gmail.com to make arrangements.

Zeisha Zalman co-sponsored Kiddush last Shabbat
in honor of his grandson, **Dovid Yitzchok's** Bar Mitzvah Parsha.
The second co-sponsor wished to remain anonymous.



Yahrzeits This Week:

Yehudah Buchwalter 6 Elul - Tuesday night / Wednesday for mother Faiga Leba bas Chaim HaCohen

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday— Rosh Chodesh Elul, 8/18 — 1 Elul

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8/19 — 2 Elul

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:44 a.m.
Minchah — 7:30 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Ma'ariv — 8:40 p.m.

Sunday, 8/20 — 3 Elul

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:35 p.m.

Monday, 8/21 — 4 Elul

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:35 p.m.

Tuesday, 8/22 — 5 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:35 p.m.

Wednesday, 8/23 — 6 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:35 p.m.

Thursday, 8/24 — 7 Elul

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:35 p.m.

Friday, 8/25 — 8 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 7:30 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.