

The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

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Shoftim

2 Elul, 5780

Stock-Taking

In businesses large and small, at least once each year, time must be set aside for inventory checking and stock-taking. Only by examining the successes and failures of the year gone by and by getting a clear picture of the current state of affairs, can the management make the adjustments necessary to prosper in the future.

In our lives as Jews we also must take stock. The month of Elul, the 30 days before the awesome and inspiring High Holy days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, is the time for taking stock in the business of being Jewish. By tradition, Elul is the time when we review our actions over the past year and make positive resolutions to improve in the year to come.

In Judaism as in business, it is essential to know the true value of our assets. A few key phrases from our Torah can help us understand the true value of our lives and our role in G-d's "business plan" for humanity:

"A person was created in G-d's image." (Genesis 9:6)

"The whole world was created for me and I was created only to serve my Maker." (Talmud Kiddushin 82a)

"Even one who transgresses is as full of good deeds as a pomegranate is full of seeds" (Talmud Eruvin 19a)

"Do not see yourself as wicked in your own eyes." Avot (2:19)

These teachings place immeasurable value on each of our lives, our existence in this world, and the great potential we have to fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

Thus, the questions for Elul's stock-taking are not "How well did this item sell?" or "How much do I have left of that product?" Rather, our queries should be questions such as, "Did I use my talents - my gifts from G-d - to bring goodness into the world, to foster peace, to build an atmosphere where G-dliness can be revealed," and "Have I grown as a Jew this year?"

It is sometimes even helpful to enlist the aid of a close friend or mentor in this stock-taking endeavor. Just as one might hire outside help to take stock in a business, to prevent our being overwhelmed by the size of the endeavor, it might similarly be beneficial to retain help in the spiritual stock-taking that we do during the month of Elul, especially since our "self-love" tends to cover a multitude of faults.

And, talking of self love, we must be wary not to take stock of other people's standings. "Don't judge your friend until you have stood in his place" our Sages advise us. And who can ever truly say that he has stood in his friend's place? Do you live in your friend's house, have his job, his spouse, his children, his bank account, his health, his intellect, his personality?

The month of Elul has begun. As we come to the end of the spiritual business year, let us use this time to fill in any holes or gaps in our spiritual product line and plan for a profitable year full of additional mitzvot.

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

Action Impact

Parshas Shoftim discusses the laws of judges, witnesses, and the procedures of the court to punish sinners. The passuk tells us "The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death" (Devarim 17:7) Why does the Torah require the witnesses to carry out the death penalty?

The story of Yosef Mendelevich, the famous "refusenik" imprisoned in the Soviet Union, shook the Jewish world in the late 1970s and early 1980s. After his release from jail in 1981, he visited America to greet some of the people who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to secure his release. Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, was among those whom he met.

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After speaking with him a little, Rabbi Sherer noticed that Yosef seemed weak and tense, and asked him why. He told Rabbi Sherer that he realized the seemingly relaxed attitude which American Jews have towards the state of Soviet Jewry, and he is going on a hunger strike to inspire and raise awareness as to the fate of his brethren. He hoped his brave actions will counteract the indifference of American Jews, while serving as a reminder of what is going on behind the Iron Curtain. Rabbi Sherer noted the nobility of his actions, but told him that a hunger strike is no simple matter, and he is taking him to Rav Moshe Feinstein to ask if he is allowed to do so.

Upon arriving at Rav Moshe's home, Rav Moshe immediately invited them into the kitchen. He instructed Yosef that a hunger strike has no basis in the Torah, and he should not continue, lest he endanger his health, and maybe even his life. To assure him that his ruling was correct, Rav Moshe poured Yosef a cup of juice and instructed his wife to prepare him some eggs. Rav Moshe then bestowed his blessings on Yosef, and assured him that he can have a positive influence on the entire Jewish population – and eat healthy as well!

My grandfather Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l explains. The Rambam tells us that a person is drawn towards the behavior of his peers and neighbors. "Therefore," the Rambam instructs, "A person should make sure to live amongst tzaddikim and spend time with them, to learn from their ways."

On the contrary, someone who witnessed the colossal sin of idolatry was tainted by that experience. He saw a grave transgression, and now that sin becomes more "doable" in his eyes. To combat that, says the Torah, he must act. By being the ones to eradicate the sinners, the witnesses will eliminate the immoral impression which the sin had on them at the time that they saw and experienced it.

For as much as a sight can have an impact, an action can combat it.

As we approach Rosh Hashana, let us all take necessary action to come closer to Hashem, and we will too, eliminate some of our transgressions and missteps.

(by Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)



We happily wish Mazel Tov to **Yehudah and Bracha Buchwalter** on the **birth of a grandson Moshe** to their children **Avi and Nechama Miriam Bernstein**.
Mazel Tov also to the entire Buchwalter and Bernstein Families.

Yahrzeits This Week:

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

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday — Rosh Chodesh Elul, 8/21 — 1 Elul

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
 Candles — 7:34 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8/22 — 2 Elul

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:45 a.m.
 Beitzah Gemora Shiur — 6:20 p.m.
 Minchah — 7:20 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:35 p.m.

Sunday, 8/23 — 3 Elul

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

Monday, 8/24 — 4 Elul

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, 8/25 — 5 Elul

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

Wednesday, 8/26 — 6 Elul

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

Thursday, 8/27 — 7 Elul

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

Friday, 8/28 — 7 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Candles — 7:23 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.