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# Elul: Completing the Year with Strength

Here we are—Shabbat Mevarchim Elul, the final month of the Jewish year, a time saturated with holiness and possibility. Elul is often described as an exciting opportunity to reignite growth, to refocus, and perhaps even to cram in the spiritual accomplishments to be worthy of a blessed, sweet and prosperous New Year. It's an opportune time to stop and visualize where I want to go, who I want to be and analyze what stumbling blocks have been impeding my growth in the past.

Rav Kook offers a profound insight about Elul. He explains that this month is not just about preparing for Rosh Hashanah—it is about finishing strong. In Orot HaTorah, he teaches this explaining שלימות אמיתית בצאת שנה —true completion at the year's end. Elul gives us the chance to fulfill the promises, dreams, and commitments we set for ourselves last Rosh Hashanah, when we stood trembling and pleading for life. Even if the year was filled with ups and downs, even if our inspiration waxed and waned, Elul empowers us to pick up the pieces and complete what we started. Sometimes, we may even surpass what we originally imagined for ourselves. This too will prepare us

for Rosh Hashana.

We can each recall exactly where we were when we first heard about the legendary Operation Grim Beeper. Its precision, creativity, and sheer brilliance shocked the world. Beepers and walkie-talkies—turned into weapons that maimed thousands of



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Hezbollah terrorists in seconds. And from that turning point came wave after wave of victory: the targeted elimination of Nasrallah, the blitz in Lebanon, Operation Iron Wall in Jenin, the fall of Sinwar, Gideon's Chariots, Operation Rising Lion. These are the headline successes. There were also hundreds, probably

even thousands, of "smaller" miracles that were no less extraordinary.

When did this shift begin? It was in the aftermath of October 7th's devastation, after unbearable losses, that Israel's strength began to shine in new ways. And remarkably, the turning point—the Beeper operation—took place exactly in mid-Elul 5784, י"ד אלול תשפ"ד.

It is as if Rav Kook's words applied not only to us but to Hashem Himself. שלימות אמיתית, כביכול, Hashem, —בצאת שנה —"completed the year" by bringing about miraculous strength and precision for His people in the

closing stretch of the year.

Shabbat itself carries special clarity and blessing, making this Shabbat Mevarchim the perfect moment to begin the work of Elul. Ask yourself:

- What kind of person do I want to become? What are my spiritual aspirations?
- What are my unique strengths and abilities that I can further develop?
- Which stumbling blocks consistently trip me up, and how can I move past them?
- Who are my role models, my friends, my teachers—the people who can lift me higher?
- Which Torah books should I already take off the shelf to prepare to learn ?

And perhaps most importantly: What did I set out to do last year? What commitments did I make on Rosh Hashanah 5784—whether written down or whispered in prayer? Did I strive for character development, deeper Torah learning, more meaningful tefillah, acts of chesed? What was on your תשפח to-do list? Elul asks us to return to that list, to pick up where we left off, and to finish with strength.

### THE VISION OF THE HAFTARAH

If the task feels daunting and overwhelming, the Haftarah offers us encouragement, reminding us what all this work is for. This week we read the third of the Haftarot of Consolation, in which Yeshayahu prophesies about the ultimate redemption. He speaks of Zion rising to glory—its cities rebuilt, its children flourishing, its Torah shining forth.

In that time, even the nations of the world will recognize Torah as the ultimate truth, nourishing them like bread and water. The Yalkut Shimoni (Yeshayahu 479) explains that in the Messianic era, Torah study will come

directly from Hashem Himself. Unlike our current system—filtered through the limitations of human teachers and students—Torah will be transmitted without distortion, with perfect clarity. The result will be unity and harmony, as all of Am Yisrael walks a single, luminous path of Torah.

Yeshayahu concludes with a breathtaking vision: “Behold, nations that never knew you will run to serve you, because the glory of Hashem will shine upon you” (55:5). Zion will be exalted not only as the center of Torah for the Jewish people, but as the spiritual heart of the world. The nations will stream toward her light, and her long history of pain and loneliness will be transformed into everlasting glory.

Our role is to prepare ourselves—to be vessels worthy of that future light Yeshayahu speaks of. This week as well as all the other Haftarot of his we read during these seven weeks of consolation.

Elul is our time to do exactly that. To close the year not with despair at what we failed to achieve, but with determination to fulfill what we can. To seize the chance for שלימות אמיתית.

May this Elul be our chance to connect, to prepare, to learn, to accomplish, to grow and to successfully step into the Yamim Nora'im as vessels—ready to receive the bounty of blessings of the new year and b'ezrat Hashem, the ultimate fulfillment of Yeshayahu's visions of the glorious time of Mashiach. ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit [Beitbinyamin.org](http://Beitbinyamin.org)