



# Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### *Elul, the Last Month of the Year*

There is nothing in this world from which we cannot learn something. Every experience, every feeling is an echo of a higher reality. Imagine that after living somewhere for many years, you have to go away. The day before you leave, you walk around looking at your surroundings differently. You think, “this time tomorrow, I’ll be on the other side of the world. And all of this will still be going on.” Even though you’re still looking at familiar faces

and places, you have the uncanny feeling you’ve already left. Everything seems distant and remote. The here-and-now becomes “there-and-then.”

Leaving home clears our eyes. We see where we are. We see where we have come from.

In a sense, *the whole month of Elul is like a last day before a long journey.* After the twenty-nine days of Elul, on Rosh Hashanah, G-d decides what will happen in the life of everyone in the world. Who knows what the new year may bring? Some will wander, some will be at rest, some will find their lives in turmoil, some will find tranquillity, some will live, some will die.

Maybe that feeling of objectivity

that we experience when just about to leave home is a metaphor for the month of Elul. In Elul, G-d allows us to come very close to Him. He gives us the chance to see ourselves and our lives with a sense of detachment.

Like the last day before a long journey, Elul is a time to reflect on our lives. Everyone must make this journey. Time is a compulsory ticket to the future. No-one is allowed to stay where he is. But in these precious moments before G-d writes the itinerary of another year, we have the chance to influence our ultimate destination. Every morning the shofar is sounded in the houses of prayer like a ship’s siren calling to us, that the boat is about to sail: “All aboard! You cannot stay where you are. All aboard for the New Year!”

To where will this year take us?

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### *A Desirable Portion*

“My eye gives you counsel,” G-d says to us through King David in *Psalms 32:8*. Our Sages in the *Midrash* interpret this as a Divine ‘wink of the eye’ in regard to the Land of Israel.

A king once made a feast for everyone in his palace. When the serving

plate was brought before them, the king winked a hint to his favorite guest to take a particularly good portion. When he realized that the hint was not understood, the king took the portion with his own hands and presented it to his beloved.

In similar fashion, when G-d divided His world amongst the nations, each of them selected a land double the size of the Land of Israel. G-d winked to the Jewish People to choose the Land of Israel but they were reluctant to do so because it was so much smaller than all the other lands. What did G-d do? He took the Land of Israel into His

hand and presented it to His people.

This is what the Prophet Jeremiah alludes to when he says in G-d’s Name (*Jeremiah 3:19*), “I presented you with a desirable land.”

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## The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

### On His Heals

(a true story)

In shul, there is a special prayer that the *gabbai* says for the sick. He says the prayer aloud after the reading of the Torah when the Torah scroll is still lying on the *bima*. Members of the congregation generally approach him while he is standing at the *bima* and add names of sick relatives whom they wish to include in the prayer. The *gabbai* will

omit the prayer unless one of the congregants specifically requests him to say it, but after one person remembers, many others that forgot about it completely tend to wake up and bring more names.

A relatively new member of our shul, who happens to sit behind me, became seriously ill not long ago. The man, Mark Goldberg, had become the concern of many of the congregants including myself. Mark had not been seen in shul for a while, and finally one morning we found out why, when his son-in-law, who sits next to him, told us about his illness.

That day after the Torah reading I turned around, expecting to see the son-

in-law approach the *gabbai* to ask that the prayer for the sick be made on Mark's behalf, but he did not do so. Instead, the *gabbai* called someone up to lift the scroll from the *bima*, signaling the close of the opportunity to make the prayer. I couldn't believe that Mark's own son-in-law would just sit back and let the opportunity go by!

When it was almost over, all of a sudden the *gabbai* quickly stopped the congregant from lifting the Torah and made the prayer for the sick. The name he mentioned was Mark's. As it turned out, the son-in-law had arranged well before the prayers began that the prayer for Mark's speedy recovery be said. It was the overworked *gabbai* that nearly forgot. As he finally remembered the prayer, many congregants streamed down the aisle heading towards the *bima* to add more names.

## Response Line

*Hashanah to be judged having already been forgiven?*

Spiritual matters — *Mitzvot*, the world to come, repentance, etc. — are harder for us to get excited about.

Therefore, we have Rosh Hashanah first. On Rosh Hashanah all our physical blessings for the coming year are determined — will we live or will we die? Will we have money for the phone bill? Once we begin thinking about these issues, asking G-d for a year of health and wealth, *we can then hopefully go one step further*, on Yom Kippur, asking G-d to enlighten us, forgive us, and to help us improve our spiritual life as well.

Kevin from Johannesburg asked:

Dear Rabbi,  
I understand that Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment, and Yom Kippur is the day of repentance and forgiveness. Shouldn't then Yom Kippur be first? Wouldn't we be better off repenting before Rosh Hashanah, and go into Rosh

Dear Kevin,

On Yom Kippur, G-d showers the world with forgiveness: But just like a shower, if you want the cleansing effect, you have to get into the water!

'Getting into' Yom Kippur, however, is easier said than done. We generally relate more easily to things that are tangible, i.e., french fries and phone bills.

Educational Group.

They participated in one-on-one tutorials, private classes in Talmud with the dean, an inspiring Shabbat the Western Wall and a breathtaking tour of the Israeli countryside.

Groups interested in visiting Ohr Somayach and participating in the learning programs of the Executive Educational Group should contact Ohr Somayach's New York office at 212-213-3100 or 800-431-2272 or e-mail: [estern.ohrsomayach@worldnet.att.net](mailto:estern.ohrsomayach@worldnet.att.net) or the main Jerusalem campus at 972-2-581-0315 or fax: 972-2-581-2890

## Light Update

### San Diego Mission at Ohr Somayach

A mission of business executives and professionals from San Diego, led by Rabbi Jeff Wohlgeleenter spent a week at the Ohr Somayach campus in Jerusalem during August enjoying the learning program of the Executive