

דיני חודש אלול ועשרת ימי תשובה וְחַג הַסּוּכּוֹת

SOME DINNIM OF THE MONTH OF ELLUL

AND THE *ASSERES YEMEI TESHUVAH* ("THE TEN DAYS OF PENITENCE")

AND THE YOM TOV OF SUKKOS

1. Already from ancient times the month of Ellul has been recognized by our Chachommim as a time when **הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** is more favourably inclined, as it were, to accept again those who have failed to live up to the standard that He in His goodness prescribes for us in His Torah. Although it is true that **הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** at no time despises he who repents sincerely, nevertheless we are told that during the month of Ellul and the **עֶשְׂרֵת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה** (the Ten Days of Penitence) **הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** will receive again, with even more mercy and lovingkindness, those who return to Him. To bring this opportunity to our attention, the Shofar, the symbolic call to Teshuvah (repentance) is sounded in some communities from the beginning of the month until the Eve of Rosh HaShonnoh. (But on Erev Rosh HaShonnoh itself it is not sounded.) During this time of the year we try to improve our standard of adherence to the Mitzvos that it should be even better than usual so that it can be said in our favour that at least now we are making an effort to be worthy of being inscribed on the imminent Day of Judgement for a good and blessed new year.

2. From the Sunday before Rosh HaShonnoh we rise up early in the mornings to say **סְלִיחוֹת** (Penitential Prayers) before **שַׁחֲרִית**. When Rosh HaShonnoh falls to be on a Monday or Tuesday, Selichos commence the Sunday of the previous week. (Sefaradim say Selichos from the beginning of the month of Ellul.) Before the Selichos it is necessary to wash the hands *Negel Wasser* and say the Brochoh **עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם** and the **בְּרָכוֹת הַתּוֹרָה**. These Brochos are not then repeated at **שַׁחֲרִית**. Those who are able to, should stand during the whole of the Selichos service, but if one finds this difficult then one stands at least during the **אֵל מִלֶּךְ יוֹשֵׁב** and the paragraph of the **שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת**. If one cannot attend a Minyan for Selichos then one may not say the **שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת** unless one reads that paragraph as one would read a portion of the Torah, that is, with the **נִיגוֹן** and **טַעֲמִים** (tune and cantillation) reserved for reading the Torah in public, nor should one say those parts of the Selichos which are in Aramaic.

3. On Erev Rosh HaShonnoh it is customary to seek annulment of any vows or promises that one may have inadvertently uttered during the year. In a Shmittah Year, a Pruzbul must be drawn up and completed, where this is needed. (Some follow the ruling that the Pruzbul must be drawn up and completed before the Rosh HaShonnoh at the *beginning* of the Shmittah Year.) Then, barbered and bathed and dressed in our best clothes in honour of the Yom Tov, we make ready to welcome this holy day. Mindful as we are of the awe of the imminent Day of Judgement, we are at the same time confident of the goodness and mercy of our Father in Heaven and that He will inscribe us all for a **שָׁנָה טוֹבָה**, a good new year. It must be borne in mind, however, that we cannot hope for forgiveness from HaShem for any wrongs that have been perpetrated by us against our fellowman. The wrong must first be corrected and pardon

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asked from the person wronged — only then dare we ask that הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא forgive us for having harmed our fellow.

4. Regarding the *davvening* on Rosh HaShonoh and Yom Kippur it is earnestly recommended that one acquires a reliable and clearly-printed מְחֻזָּר (Festival Prayer Book) in which to follow the *davvening* carefully. For the other days of the יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה note should be taken of the following points:
 - (a) In Kaddish, instead of לְעֵילָא מְכַל בְּרַבְתָּא, the words לְעֵילָא מִן כָּל בְּרַבְתָּא are substituted.
 - (b) In the Shemoneh Esre, instead of הָאֵל־ל הַקְדוּשׁ, the words הַמְלִיךְ הַקְדוּשׁ must be said (if one forgot, then unless one corrected oneself immediately, one must start the Shemoneh Esre again) and in the Brochah of שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ the words הַשִּׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ the words הַמְלִיךְ הַמְשַׁפֵּט are said. Also, the sentences זְכַרְנוּ, מִי כָמוֹךָ, וּבְתוֹב, and בְּסִפּוֹר are inserted in the places indicated.
 - (c) In בְּרַבַּת הַמְזוֹן (the Grace after Meals) too, a special הַרְחֵמֵן is inserted in the place indicated. (Some have the custom to say this הַרְחֵמֵן until after Sukkos.)
5. During the Yom Tov meals we have the custom to eat of those foods which are associated with or are symbolic of the good things we ask הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא to grant us in the coming year, (e.g. an apple dipped in honey symbolising a sweet year) and various dishes, vegetables and fruits whose names or tastes are reminiscent of good and pleasant things, each family according to its custom and tradition, but sharp or bitter foods should be avoided.
6. We are commanded in the Torah to hear the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh HaShonoh. Because of the necessity to fulfil this Mitzvah properly, our Chachommim, of blessed memory, instituted that we hear many different arrangements of the sounds of the Shofar. It is forbidden to talk from the time that the Brochos for the Shofar are recited until the end of all the Shofar sounds, and careful attention must be given also to the Brochos themselves. One should have the intention that the Brochos are said on one's behalf, for which reason the response בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂמוֹ וּבְרוּךְ שְׂמוֹ is not made — only אָמֵן is answered.
7. The custom prevails that on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh HaShonoh we go to the river-side for the תַּשְׁלִיךְ (*Tashlich*) Service. If the first day falls to be on a Shabbos then, because we cannot carry the *Machzor* in the street on Shabbos, תַּשְׁלִיךְ is on the second day.
8. During the יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה we add in the בְּרַבַּת הַמְזוֹן, in the appropriate place, the prayer הַרְחֵמֵן הוּא יַחֲדֵשׁ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת לְטוֹבָה וְלְבְרָכָה (as mentioned above). It is correct, too, that when writing to a friend at this time of year one includes the wish that HaShem should inscribe him to have a happy new year. Indeed, from the beginning of the month of Ellul, when writing or communicating with friends one includes the wish that HaShem should grant them a בְּתִיבָה וְחֲתִימָה טוֹבָה and this is the practice until after Sukkos.

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15. The final meal before the Fast should consist of foods which are easy to digest and again should include foods which are symbolic of blessings, but spicy foods are to be avoided. One should finish eating while it is yet day (the latest time is advertised in the better kind of Lu'ach).
16. Since we cannot eat nor drink on Yom Kippur and it is nevertheless a Yom Tov — albeit of great solemnity — therefore do we honour this great and holy day with clean clothes and much light, but jewellery should not be worn on Yom Kippur by men or women.
17. The customary blessing of the children by both their father and mother before going to Shule on Yom Kippur Eve is based on the fact that the Gates of Mercy are now open and their prayers that their children be blessed to grow up into G-d-fearing Jews are sure to be heard by הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא. The parents may add their own blessings and prayers to the usual פְּסוּקִים of יְשִׁמְךָ and יְבָרְכֶךָ, confident that הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא will hear their pious wishes for their offspring.
18. The Tallis is worn at עֶרְבֵית on Yom Kippur night, and one should take care to put it on while it is yet day, and recite the usual Brochah before doing so. Shoes made with leather are removed while it is yet day, too, for the wearing of such footwear is forbidden on Yom Kippur until the following night. On Yom Kippur it is also forbidden to wash oneself, except the *Negel Wasser* washing of the hands in the morning and for אֲשֶׁר יָצַר, when one washes one's hands only till the knuckles. (In the morning, one may pass the fingers while they are damp over the eyes, too.) Perfumes and anointing-oils may not be used on Yom Kippur, though during Yom Kippur day it is correct to smell various spices and, by making the prescribed Brochah before one does so, so increase the number of Brochos one makes on that day to compensate for those that one cannot make on food and drink. It goes without saying that it is forbidden to let any food or drink pass one's lips for the whole of Yom Kippur and even to only rinse one's mouth is forbidden. Those for whom fasting the whole of Yom Kippur would pose a real danger to life should consult a competent Rav to ascertain whether or how they should fast on Yom Kippur. Doctors (even Jewish doctors) are not authorized to decide these matters on their own.
19. After עֶרְבֵית on מוֹצָאֵי יוֹם בִּיפוּר (which should be *davvened* slowly) we go home to break the Fast, confident that הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא has heard our Tefillos and granted us atonement, and after the meal we immediately start with the next Mitzvah with which הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא has favoured us — the building of the Sukkah.
20. The minimum number of walls of a Sukkah is two sides and a bit (the bit can be the door) and the main conditions in the walls are that they will withstand a normal wind and that they are proof enough against the weather that the wind will not blow out the candles. If possible, but only *after* the סִבֵּךְ has been placed in position, there should be fitted a roof which can be lifted back on hinges so that the סִבֵּךְ can be covered as soon as it starts raining and with the roof lowered the interior of the Sukkah will be protected and not be spoiled by the dripping water. For the סִבֵּךְ any foliage is בָּשָׂר (some have for סִבֵּךְ mats of interwoven twigs or sticks) but whatever it is, it may not be taken without its owner's permission. The main conditions in the

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סִכָּךְ are that it grew from the ground and that it is not a finished article (wooden ladders, for instance) and one should not use such finished articles even to hold down the סִכָּךְ פֶּשֶׁר .

21. There must be enough סִכָּךְ on the Sukkah so that there is more shaded and covered area than unshaded and uncovered area, even after any possible withering or drying of the leaves. Otherwise, the Sukkah is פְּסוּל (Possul, invalid). Care must be taken that no part to the extent of four *Tefachim* (about one square foot, or about thirty centimetres square) is left uncovered, this, even if the rest *is* covered properly, as this, too, would invalidate the whole Sukkah. On the other hand, although the more סִכָּךְ one uses the warmer will the Sukkah be, if possible the covering should not be too thick but should allow the stars to be visible at night. But in any case the Sukkah is פְּסוּל if the covering of סִכָּךְ is actually waterproof. (A thatched roof is therefore פְּסוּל .)
22. One must take care in those Sukkos which have a roof which is lifted back on its hinges not to sit under the overhang of the opened roof, for the overhang shelters the סִכָּךְ underneath it and it is as if one sat in a Sukkah with a covering over it. Care must likewise be taken that one's Sukkah is clear of the eaves of the house and of any trees.
23. The decorations used in making the Sukkah beautiful are forbidden to be put to any other use until after the Yom Tov and are therefore מוקצה (Muktzeh, that is, set aside and not to be moved) on Shabbos and Yom Tov. But one should not treat any of the materials or things used in the making of the Sukkah with any disrespect even after the taking down or dismantling of the Sukkah.
24. The Torah tells us to dwell in Sukkos for seven days, as it says: בְּסוּכוֹת תִּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים , “You shall dwell in Sukkos for seven days ...” this way to remember and commemorate how הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא protected us when we journeyed from Egypt to Eretz Yisroel through the wilderness for forty years. Since the Torah uses the word תִּשְׁבוּ , “you shall dwell”, therefore everything that we do in the house throughout the year, on the Yom Tov of Sukkos we do in the Sukkah: eating, drinking, sleeping, learning, reading, conferring, playing, relaxing — but all with the underlying knowledge that the Sukkah is a holy place and it must be treated as such. Every moment one spends in the Sukkah throughout the days of the Yom Tov and חוֹל הַמוֹעֵד (Chol HaMo'ed, the Intermediate Days of the Festival) is a Mitzvah and some truly pious people do not have even a drink of water outside the Sukkah for the whole of Sukkos. Women, small children, an ill person and those that attend him are all exempt from the Mitzvah of Sukkoh.
25. Before every meal or snack of biscuits, cake or suchlike that one takes in the Sukkah (and which it is obligatory to have in the Sukkah) one makes the Brochoh: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מְלִךְ — “Blessed are You, HaShem our G-d, Who has made us holy with Your Mitzvos and commanded us to dwell in the Sukkah.” If one forgot to make the Brochoh until one had started one's meal (it is supposed to be said *before* the meal or snack) or even if one forgot until one had indeed *finished* one's meal, one still makes the Brochoh because the very sitting in the Sukkah is a Mitzvah and seeing that one did after all eat

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a meal (or snack) in the Sukkah, one can make the Brochah. The Brochah is not repeated unless one leaves the Sukkah with the intention not to return for a long time (for instance, to go to Shule) but if one goes out of the Sukkah intending to return soon (for instance, to answer the door) then one does not make the Brochah again — even if in the event one did not return for some considerable time. This is because at the time when he went out he intended to return shortly, and all the time he was out of the Sukkah, too, he had in mind to return soon, therefore his mind was on the Mitzvah all the time and it is considered as if there was no break in the Mitzvah.

26. On the first two nights of Sukkos it is obligatory upon every man to eat the meal — or at least a *כַּזַּיִת* (*k'Zayis*) of bread, that is, bread the size of an olive, without delay — in the Sukkah. This is even if the weather is *not* permitting (for instance, it's raining heavily) but in such a case one should wait as long as one can to start the meal so as to avoid eating it while it is raining. During the rest of Sukkos, if one is greatly and genuinely disturbed by the rain or cold (to the extent that if these conditions had existed in a room in one's house one would have moved to another room) one may, if one feels like it, eat indoors.
27. We are commanded in the Torah that on the Yom Tov of Sukkos we are to take the Esrog and Lulav together with the branches of the myrtle and willow trees. The many Dinnim of what constitutes a *כֶּשֶׁר* set of *אַרְבַּע מִינים* (*Arba Minnim*, the Four Kinds) are complicated and therefore it is earnestly recommended that they be acquired through a *יֵרֵא שָׁמַיִם*, a G-d-fearing person who is an expert in all the conditions that govern this Mitzvah.
28. During *חול המועד* (*Chol HaMo'ed*, the Intermediate Days of the Yom Tov) most kinds of hard, manual work are forbidden. It is likewise generally forbidden to do that work, even if it is not particularly hard work, by means of which one ordinarily earns one's livelihood, unless it be a case where **(a)** one stands to lose a great amount of money if the work is not done, or **(b)** one otherwise will not have enough to buy oneself and one's family food for the remaining days of the Yom Tov. For clarification as to whether or not these conditions apply to one, it is recommended that a Rav who is acquainted with one and knows one's particular circumstances should be consulted beforehand.
29. Besides hard work, other things are not allowed on *Chol HaMo'ed*. They include: having one's hair cut; shaving; washing clothes (except nappies and items needed for the Yom Tov); most buying and selling (except where conditions **(a)** or **(b)** above, applies); moving house; etc.. Marriages do not take place on *Chol HaMo'ed* (because of *שְׂמֵחָה בְּשִׂמְחָה*) but a *סְעוּדַת תְּנָאִים* is allowed, as is a *סְעוּדַת בְּרִית מִלָּה* or a *סְעוּדַת פְּדִיּוֹן הַבֵּן*. Travelling and outings are allowed on *Chol HaMo'ed*, as is ordinary writing (but not scribework, calligraphy or other specialist writing or drawing).
30. *Chol HaMo'ed* is really a kind of extension of Yom Tov proper, and even if, as we have seen above, certain kinds of work are allowed in special circumstances and which are not allowed on Yom Tov itself even given those circumstances, nevertheless we should not make the mistake of thinking, as unfortunately so very many people do, that it has not the sanctity nor the holiness

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of Yom Tov. On the contrary, our Chachommim, of blessed memory, expressed themselves very forcefully about this point and even went so far as to liken the person who desecrates *Chol HaMo'ed* to one who is **עוֹבֵר עֲבוּרָה זָרָה**. They stated further that even if a person has to his credit much Torah-learning and many Mitzvos and other good deeds but he desecrates *Chol HaMo'ed* — **אֵין לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא**. For a person who treats the Yommim Tovim as if they are simply optional holidays for his own physical relaxation thereby denies their G-d-given origin and will tend to treat all the other Mitzvos of the Torah too as if they are merely for his own convenience and he will come to regard all the Laws of the Torah as if they are not of HaShem Who has commanded them.

31. Therefore, every G-d-fearing person will honour these Intermediate Days of the Festivals by wearing his best clothes, by enjoying food and drink and taking the air, and by engaging in Torah-learning and Mitzvos. In this way he will utilize these blessed days for bodily relaxation *and* spiritual uplift.
32. Concerning the Yom Tov of Sukkos and the Yom Tov that immediately follows it, **עֵשֶׂרֶת יְמֵי שְׂמִינִי** (*Shemini Atzeres*) the Torah tells us to be happy, as it says: **"וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּחַגֶּיךָ"** "You shall rejoice on your Yommim Tovim". Our Chachommim, of blessed memory, tell us that these Yommim Tovim are the true climax to the **יָמִים נוֹרָאִים** (*Yommim Noro'im*, the Days of Awe) that precede them. For whereas the Yommim Tovim of Rosh HaShonoh and Yom Kippur bring us to revere **הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** through the fear of Him, for the atmosphere of those days is such that we feel His Supreme Majesty and Almighty Kingship, the Yommim Tovim of Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres (with Simchas Torah) are Festivals when we are expressly bidden to rejoice in His Divine Presence and we are invited to serve Him out of joy and gladness. The Yommim Tovim of Rosh HaShonoh and Yom Kippur are therefore said to impel a **תְּשׁוּבָה מִיִּרְאָה** (*Teshuvah MiYir'oh*, a return to HaShem through our fear of Him) whereas the Yommim Tovim of Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah move us to resolve to comply with His wishes and commandments through true joy and our love for Him: **תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה**, (*Teshuvah Mei'Ahavah*, a return to HaShem through our love for Him) — a much higher spiritual plane. It is at this time of year, perhaps more than any other, that we are favoured through this lofty and sublime combination of awe and spiritual yearning and love for HaShem, to come closer to Him, that we can experience the true happiness of being the People of the Torah, a People near to **הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא**, He Who sanctifies His People Yisroel through the Festivals.