

SPECIAL DAYS OF EIS RATZON: ELUL

There is no time like Elul. To those with their ears attuned to the spiritual chords emanating from Heaven, the sound of Elul penetrates deeply and stirs the soul to repentance. The Almighty awaits each soul's return, His presence so near as to be almost felt. For those who observe the Torah Elul has always been a time in which not one moment can be wasted, for there is no better time to refine and repair the relationship between man and his Creator.

Throughout the year the Almighty accepts the *teshuvah* of those who repent with a full heart, these days are special, giving us a full month to prepare for the life-and death prayers of the High Holy Days.

To use these days to their full potential, a person's main task is to reaffirm his acceptance of the Almighty as the King. To the extent that he does this, his repentance and prayers, will possess special power to effectively restore his closeness to the Almighty.

There once was a king who occasionally set out among the general populace to stay in touch with the realities of his subject's lives. Prior to his arrival, he would send out letters to a random selection of families, announcing his visit. On one such occasion, a poor couple living on the edge of town received a letter announcing that the king would be visiting them.

The couple, who lived in abject poverty, began to discuss what to do. "we have to repair the front stairs and weed the lawn and paint the walls and borrow at least one good chair for him to sit on," the husband insisted.

"Who are you trying to fool?" the wife contested. "We don't have money for all that. And besides, the king knows he's visiting papers. We should just be ourselves."

"No," the husband countered. "we have to put in our best effort. We have to show him that we've prepared for his visit in the best way we can. He has to see that we're his loyal subjects and that we are proud that he is our king."

POINTS TO PONDER

During Elul, the Almighty is closer to us than at other times of the year.

One's prayers and teshuvah have a special effect at this time, because the Almighty is so near at hand.

The major task of Elul is to raise one's awareness of the Almighty's Kingship. One does this by making special efforts in tefillah (prayer), and Torah, and all that it requires of us during this time.

Leviticus 23:4 These are the set times of the LORD, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time. (TNK)