

JOURNAL JOTS FOR ELUL



“Every person has both a body and a soul,” said the Rebbe. “It is like a bird and its wings. Imagine if a bird were unaware that its wings enabled it to fly, they would only add an extra burden of weight. But once it flaps its wings, it lifts itself skyward. We all have wings - our souls - all we have to do is learn to use them.”¹

חי בנפש

LIVE SOULFULLY

¹ Rebbe Menachem Schneerson

Once the soul awakens, the search begins and you can never go back. From then on, you are inflamed with a special longing that will never again let you linger in the lowlands of complacency and partial fulfillment. The eternal makes you urgent.²

Elul (the season of *teshuvah*) is the perfect time to take a *souffie*.³

This is a sacred time to awaken our souls. A holy-holy-holy space; to find our way back to who G-d created us to be, and then to move forward into the next stage of His perfect plan. May these Journal Jots be both a balm and an encouraging provocation to your soul.

ELUL - 1

Your soul senses the world that awaits you!

John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*, 14

ELUL - 2

A beloved rabbi, when he was yet a young child, was playing with a group of other children who were climbing a ladder. All his friends were afraid to climb to the top, but he had no fear. Later, his grandfather asked him, "Why were you not afraid to climb and the others were?"

"Because as they climbed, they kept looking down," he replied. "They saw how high they were, and they were frightened. As I climbed, I kept looking upward. I saw how low I was, and it motivated me to climb higher."

Rabbi Simon Jacobson, *Toward a Meaningful Life*, 7

ELUL - 3

Life is here and now, forever new. To be alive, this moment now must touch the essence of your soul. To be alive is to be forever newly born.

And so our sages said, "The Torah must be new to you every day."

Because if it is not new, then it is not giving you life. And if it is not giving you life, then what is?

Tzvi Freeman

ELUL - 4

The seeker is caught in a paradox. He is dismayed to learn that the resolution of the search for the self is not to be found by going into the self, that the center of the soul is to be found not in the soul but outside of it; that the center of gravity of existence is outside of existence.

He may, to be sure, experience a glimmer of hope when he discovers that the focal point of individual existence can be found in existence as a whole. This discovery will bring him to what is stated in Psalm 73: "My flesh and my heart may fail, but G-d is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." He becomes aware, in other words, that the center of being is in G-d and not in man.

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz

² John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara*, 7

³ Naomi Levy in her book *Einstein and the Rabbi* defines 'souffie' as a daily attempt to meet our soul...to cut through the surface distractions to get to know our own true essence.

ELUL - 5

When G-d was creating the world, G-d shared a secret with the angels: human beings will be created in the image of G-d.

The angels were jealous and outraged. Why should humans be entrusted with such a precious gift when they are flawed mortals? Surely if humans find out their true power they will abuse it. If humans discover they are created in G-d's very image, they will learn to surpass us!

So the angels decided to steal G-d's image.

Now that the divine image was in the angels' hands, they needed to pick a place to hide it so that man would never find it.

They held a meeting and brainstormed. The angle Gabriel suggested that they hide G-d's image at the top of the highest mountain peak. The other angels objected, "One day humans will learn to climb and they will find it there."

The angel Michael said, "Let's hide it at the bottom of the sea."

"No," the other angels chimed in, "humans will find a way to dive to the bottom of the sea and they'll find it there."

One by one the angels suggested hiding places, but they were all rejected.

And then Uriel, the wisest angel of all, stepped forward and said, "I know a place where man will never look for it."

So the angles hid the precious holy image of G-d deep within the human soul. And to this day G-d's image lies hidden in the very place we are least likely to search for it. Lying there it is farther away from you than you can ever imagine. Lying there it is closer to you than you will ever know.

Rabbi Harold Schulweis, as shared by Naomi Levy in *Einstein and the Rabbi*

ELUL - 6

The soul is like an uninhabited world that comes to life only when G-d lays His head against us.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

ELUL - 7

We can feed our egos and nourish our desires but our souls will remain parched. Without proper sustenance, the soul inevitably loses its vitality. Starved and thirsty, the soul becomes sick, weakened... We can all recognize some of the symptoms of soul sickness: materialism, a sense of emptiness, excessive ambitiousness, jealousy, addiction, fear, anxiety, melancholy. Ignoring the soul can lead to a life of confusion and unwise decisions.

Naomi Levy, *Einstein and the Rabbi*, 46-47

ELUL - 8

A piece of the world has been waiting for your soul to repair it.

Tzvi Freeman

ELUL - 9

We must look at our children and tell ourselves again and again: Here is a fertile soul, an open heart and mind, that I have been given by G-d to nurture and teach.

Rabbi Simon Jacobson, *Toward a Meaningful Life*, 38

ELUL- 10

Every soul is a sanctuary for G-d. But if we are agitated and closed down, how can G-d alight? G-d holds the keys to so many gates, G-d can unlock any doors. But there's one door G-d can't open and that's the door to the human heart. That's our job, to make a home for G-d within us.

Naomi Levy, *Hope Will Find You*, 105

ELUL - 11

The shofar is the satellite navigation system of the soul, reminding us of our ultimate destination, telling us how far we've yet to go.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

ELUL - 12

He whose soul is charged with awareness of G-d earns his inner livelihood by a passionate desire to pour his life into the eternal wells of love. ... We do not live for our own sake.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Holy Dimension*, 333

ELUL - 13

The soul wants us to feel the brevity of it all, the beauty. It wants us to behold each day, each minute, as a precious gift that we should not waste.

Naomi Levy, *Einstein and the Rabbi*, 116

ELUL - 14

If words are the pen of the heart," taught Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, "then song is the pen of the soul." The soul's pen, however, writes in the opposite direction from the heart's. While words carry meaning downwards from G-d's... into the minds of sages and the lips of prophets to inscribe them upon human hearts, song carries the soul upwards.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, as shared by Tzvi Freeman,
Music, Spirituality and Transformation

ELUL - 15

Every human being is due honor and respect just by virtue of being human, which means embodying a divine soul, made in the image and likeness of G-d. Because we are only human we are scarred and marred, but those are superficial blemishes. Look deeper, and you will perceive the glowing radiance of a holy soul. Develop eyes to see the soul.

Alan Morinis, *Every Day, Holy Day*, Week 8 - Day 1

ELUL - 16

A pious man is not one who worries about his neighbor's soul and his stomach; a pious man worries about his own soul and his neighbor's stomach.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (1810 - 1883)

ELUL - 17

The riches of the soul are stored up in its memory. This is the test of character, not whether a man follows the daily fashion, but whether the past is alive in his present.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Holy Dimension*, 333

ELUL- 18

Instead of showing off your ego, reveal your soul!

Naomi Levy, *Einstein and the Rabbi*, 167

ELUL - 19

Faith...is an event, something that happens rather than something that is stored away; it is a moment in which the soul of man communes with the glory of G-d.

Rabbi Joshua Abraham Heschel, as shared by Shai Held in *The Call of Transcendence*, 70

ELUL - 20

When I recite a blessing before I eat and acknowledge food as a gift from G-d...The food then feeds not only my body but also my soul.

David Aaron, *Inviting G-d In*, 163

ELUL - 21

Learning Torah...will stretch your soul.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

ELUL - 22

Remind me, G-d, that grace, the deepest beauty of all, emanates from the soul.

Naomi Levy, *Talking to G-d*, 235

ELUL - 23

[You] are a radiant soul...deserving of honor.

Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, 40

ELUL - 24

The natural tendency is to treat matters of the spirit as luxury items - sort of an appendage to life. Eating, sleeping, making money - these things are given priority...But prayer, meditation and study fit in only when you feel like it, and are pushed aside on the slightest whim...You've got to ask yourself if this is what your life is all about. Set a schedule for exercising your soul as an athlete does for his body. Treat those things as though they were your proprietary business. Because they are.

Tzvi Freeman

ELUL - 25

It is gratefulness that makes the soul great.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

ELUL - 26

Joy means opening your soul to the radiance of life, refusing to let age or time dull your sense of wonder.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

ELUL - 27

The soul longs for connection...it longs for G-d, for eternal things like beauty in nature and music...to connect with other souls.

Naomi Levy, *Einstein and the Rabbi*, 36

ELUL - 28

You have filled me with enormous potential, G-d; teach me how to realize all the gifts of my soul.

Naomi Levy, *Talking to G-d*, 227

ELUL - 29

Within us lies a soul that is eternal and immortal. A soul full of wisdom and love that emanates from the Creator. A soul that links us together in life and can never be extinguished.

Naomi Levy, *Einstein and the Rabbi*, 320-321