

Fat, and Kicked — Honey from the Rock, Blood Still in the Meat

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Ha'azinu 3rd · prosperity is the Elul test · for Shabbat Shuva season

Fat, and Kicked — Honey from the Rock, Blood Still in the Meat

Daily Learning Portions for 26 Elul 5786 — Elul Expansion

Tuesday, 8 September 2026 · כ"ו אלול תשפ"ו · Haazinu, 3rd

Day 26 of Elul · ninth of the twelve monthly-cheshbon days (today = Sivan of the year now closing)

3 days to Erev Rosh Hashanah 5787 (Friday, 11 September 2026) · 4 days to Rosh Hashanah (Shabbat, 12 September 2026)

Ashkenaz Selichot: weekday mornings in force · daily shofar · extra Tehillim

On this date: second day of Creation — the expanse that separates waters from waters (Bereishit 1:6–8)

Today's Daily Learning Portions

- Cycle — Portion
- Chumash — Parshat Haazinu, 3rd aliyah — Devarim 32:13–32:18
- Tehillim — Chapter 119, verses 97–176 (Elul extra chapters: 76–78 per Hayom Yom / Baal Shem Tov custom)
- Tanya — Iggeret HaKodesh, end of Epistle 17
- Rambam (3 ch.) — Hilchot She'ar Avot HaTum'ah 3–5
- Sefer HaMitzvot — Daily cycle Day 218 — P96 (impurity of an animal carcass, tum'at neveilah)
- Hayom Yom — Elul 26 — kashering meat: soaking, salting, rinsing; in avodah: immersing in the Rebbe's words, yechidus, niggun
- Seasonal overlay — Weekday Selichot; daily shofar; tefillin and mezuzot; extra Tehillim; increased tzedakah and Ahavat Yisrael; three days to Erev Rosh Hashanah

Seasonal frame. Yesterday the song commanded memory, named Jacob as portion, and set the eagle hovering over the nest. Today the same song turns from covering to the table. He set them on the high places. He gave honey from a rock and oil from flint. Then Yeshurun grew fat and kicked. The Rock that bore them was forgotten. The God who gave them birth was ignored.

Elul does not treat prosperity as a side note to teshuvah. Prosperity is the test. The Field is still open. The blood is still in the meat until it is soaked, salted, and rinsed. Three days remain before Erev Rosh Hashanah.

I. The Third Aliyah: High Places, Fat, and the Forgotten Birth

“He made him ride upon the high places of the earth, that he would eat the produce of the field. He let him suck honey from a rock, and oil from the flinty crag.” (Devarim 32:13)

Rashi, following Sifrei and Targum: the verse is the Land. Israel is higher than the other countries. Its fruit buds and ripens sooner. Honey from a rock is not a metaphor invented for poetry. In Sichni a man sent his son for pressed figs and the boy found honey flowing over the brim of the barrel; the figs were still there, hard as stone, under the sweetness. Oil from flint is Giscala’s olives. The Land does not only feed. It surprises. What looks like rock yields.

Elul hears the same grammar in the year now ending. Some of what felt like flint produced oil. Some of what looked like a closed barrel was already honey. Cheshbon that only inventories failure has already misread 32:13. The song will accuse in two verses. It first insists that the table was set.

“Cream of cattle and milk of sheep, with the fat of lambs and rams of Bashan and he-goats, with the kidneys of wheat; and he would drink the blood of grapes, foaming wine.” (32:14)

Rashi maps the verse onto history: Solomon’s table; the Northern Kingdom’s lambs and wine-casks (Amos). Kidneys of wheat — grain as fat and as large as kidneys. Chamer — not merely wine, but wine at full strength. The song is not embarrassed by abundance. It names it in the register of banquet and harvest. A covenant that cannot bless bread will not know how to confess when bread becomes a kick.

“And Yeshurun grew fat and kicked. You grew fat, thick, and covered with folds. He forsook the God Who made him, and spurned the Rock of his salvation.” (32:15)

Rashi: you became wealthy and you rebelled. Avita is thickness. Kasita is covering — folds of fat that hide the frame, as in Iyov, “he has covered his face with his fat.” There is no greater disgrace, Sifrei says, than turning the back on the Sanctuary of the One Who made you.

Yeshurun is not a slur. It is the upright name. The accusation is sharper because of it. The upright one is the one who can grow fat. The kick is not the poverty of the wilderness. The kick is what a settled people do with a full table when memory thins.

Elul’s work on this verse is precise. Not every fullness is already rebellion. The verse does not forbid cream. It forbids the sequence: fat, then kick, then forsaking the Maker, then contempt for the Rock that saved. Cheshbon that hates the gift in order to look serious has invented a different Torah. Cheshbon that will not notice the kick because the table is still full has stopped reading the song.

“They provoked His zeal with strange gods; with abominations they angered Him. They sacrificed to demons that are not god, gods they had not known, new ones that came of late, whom your fathers had not dreaded.” (32:16–17)

Rashi: idols without power. New — so recent the fathers’ hair never stood on end before them; alternatively, the fathers never manufactured such things. The scandal is not only idolatry. It is novelty without ancestry. A god the fathers did not fear is a god that has not yet been tested by a generation that remembers Egypt.

Late Elul is crowded with new gods: the private metric that replaced the mitzvah; the image that replaced the face; the appetite that learned to call itself necessity; the grievance that learned to call itself justice. They came of late. They have no fathers. The song's test is simple. Would the ones who took you out of the howling waste dread this? If not, it is 32:17.

“You forgot the Rock that bore you, and you ignored the God Who gave you birth.” (32:18)

Rashi on teshi: when He wishes to benefit you, you anger Him and weaken the channel of good. Mecholelecha — the One Who brought you forth, as a mother in labor, as the One Who makes the deer calve. The close of the aliyah is not philosophy. It is kinship language. The Rock is not only a fortress. The Rock bore. God gave birth. Forgetting here is not an information failure. It is a refusal of parentage.

On the ninth of the twelve days — the day that answers for Sivan — the verse is almost too exact. Sivan is Sinai, standing, receiving. A people that forgets the Rock that bore it has already forgotten the mountain on which it was born as a nation under law. Three days from Erev Rosh Hashanah, the song does not ask for a new personality. It asks for memory of birth.

Readings that must be kept distinct.

Peshat: the Land's height and surprise; banquet abundance; fat that kicks; strange and new gods; forgetting the Rock that gave birth.

Rashi / Sifrei: Sichni's figs under honey; Solomon and the North; thickness as covering; disgrace of the turned back; demons with no power; labor-language for redemption.

Mussar: prosperity is the ordinary site of rebellion; novelty is not automatically revelation; forgetting parentage is the last move before the next collapse the song will describe.

Chassidic: the King in the Field still offers honey from flint; the kick is yeshus after gift; teshi is a constriction we impose on the flow; today's Hayom Yom is how forbidden blood is purged from the meat of a fat year.

Civic-covenantal: abundance without memory becomes domination of the gift; new gods lately come are unaccountable powers; a republic that forgets the law that bore it will treat limits as insults. Consent that cannot remember origin is already a different regime.

II. Tehillim 119:97–176 and Extra Chapters 76–78

The monthly Tehillim for the 26th is the second half of the great alphabetic psalm — nun through tav.

“How I love Your Torah; all day it is my conversation.” “Your commandment has made me wiser than my enemies.” “Your word is a lamp to my feet.” “I have done justice and righteousness; do not leave me to my oppressors.” And the psalm's last breath, which Elul should not skip:

“I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your commandments.” (119:176)

The third aliyah ends in forgetting the Rock. The psalm ends in a confession of stray that still claims not to have forgotten the commandments. Both can be true in one day. Teshuvah in these last seventy-two hours before Erev Rosh Hashanah is often exactly that sentence: I wandered; seek me; I did not throw the book away.

The extra Elul chapters today are 76–78. Asaph. God is known in Judah; His Name is great in Israel; in Shalem is His sukkah, in Zion His lair. He breaks the bow. Then 77: a cry in the night, a refusal to be comforted, a turn to the years of the right hand of the Most High — “I will remember the deeds of the Lord.” Then 78: a maskil, ear open, Torah as parable and riddle, the fathers told the children so the next generation would know — and then the long rehearsal of wilderness rebellion after gift. Haazinu and Psalm 78 are the same family of song. Abundance, then kick, then hester, then the choice whether memory will restart.

On a morning when the Chumash names new gods and forgotten birth, 78 is not extra atmosphere. It is the extra chapter doing the work the aliyah started.

III. Tanya: The End of Epistle 17 — The Wide Commandment, and an End to Yearning

The daily Tanya closes Iggeret HaKodesh 17.

“Your commandment is very wide.” The Alter Rebbe reads the singular mitzvatecha as tzedakah — God’s own commandment, the garment of the King (“His garment is tzedakah”). It is a vessel of such volume that the radiance of the infinite Ein Sof-light can be invested in it. Even when the light is elicited by an arousal from below — a human act of kindness — the response is still chesed chinam, kindness beyond the measure of the act. “Very” means without limit.

The same verse begins, “To every tichlah I have seen an end.” Tichlah is kin to kalot hanefesh, the soul’s yearning-toward-expiry in Gan Eden. That light has an end. It is memalei kol almin, a filling light that must contract to be received. There are many such ends, many rungs, souls rising through Torah that itself has no terminus — until after the Resurrection, when there is rest: a day that is entirely Shabbat, delight in the Essence that does not require ascent because it no longer needs levels.

Yesterday’s middle of the epistle would not let Creation morning become an exit from the body. Today’s close will not let Elul yearning become an exit from the table. The highest intends this world. The wide commandment is a deed done with bread and coin and time, not a mood of expiration. Three days from Erev Rosh Hashanah, the practical implication is almost blunt. If the vessel wide enough for Ein Sof is tzedakah, then the last days of the Field are not only Selichot. They are an open hand.

The fat that kicks in the aliyah and the wide commandment in Tanya are inverse movements of the same substance. Fat that stays in the self becomes a fold that covers the face. Fat that is given becomes a garment for light that has no measure.

IV. Rambam and Sefer HaMitzvot: What Enters the Gullet

Three chapters: She’ar Avot HaTum’ah 3–5. Sefer HaMitzvot P96: the impurity of an animal carcass.

Chapter 3 is the strange, severe case of nevelat of ha-of ha-tahor — the carcass of a kosher bird. It does not defile by touch or by carrying in the ordinary way. It defiles when an olive’s bulk is swallowed, in the beit ha-beli’ah, the house of the gullet. Scripture’s language is “any soul that eats.” The impurity is not on the skin. It is in the act of taking the thing inside.

Chapters 4–5 turn to the eight sheratzim and the graded laws of contact, vessels, and measures. The register is technical. The Elul overlay is not forced. Hayom Yom this morning is about purging forbidden blood from meat so that it may be eaten. Rambam this morning is about what kind of eating, and what kind of carcass, transmits a father of impurity from the inside.

A year can be treif in the gullet while still looking kosher in the hand. Elul cheshbon that only audits visible acts will miss the bird in the throat. The question is not only what I touched. The question is what I swallowed and called food.

P96 keeps the commandment in view: there is a law for the impurity of the carcass. It is not disgust as a personality trait. It is a statute. A people under law names what defiles and what the defiled must do. That is already a republican fact. Unnamed contamination becomes atmosphere. Named contamination can be washed.

V. Hayom Yom Elul 26: Soak, Salt, Rinse

The procedure for making meat fit to eat — to draw out the forbidden blood — is: soaking, salting, rinsing.

Their counterparts in avodah:

Soaking — immersing oneself in the Rebbe's words.

Salting — yechidus.

Rinsing — a niggun.

This is not a charming analogy placed next to Haazinu by accident. The third aliyah is a song about a people who ate well and then kicked. The blood that remains in meat is the life that was not given over. Kashering is how gift becomes permitted table instead of forbidden residue.

Soak: do not skim a sichah or a maamar or a verse. Put the words in water. Let them enter the tissue.

Salt: sit before the One Who is still in the Field, or before a living teacher, or — when the hour is honest — before oneself without costume. Salt draws. Yechidus is not a report. It is extraction.

Rinse: a niggun is not dessert after the work. It is the water that carries off what the salt lifted. Without it the meat remains coated with what was drawn but not removed.

On the day that answers for Sivan, the three steps are also the grammar of receiving Torah. Immerse. Let the words bind and draw. Sing so that what was drawn does not sit on the surface and return.

VI. Second Day of Creation: An Expanse in the Midst of the Water

Today is the second day. “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, and let it separate water from water.” God called the expanse Heaven. The second day is the only day of the first week that is not called “good” in its own right in the plain reading — the separation is unfinished until the dry land of the third day. Separation without a place to stand is not yet a world.

Elul 26, three days from Erev Rosh Hashanah, is a second-day morning. Distinctions are being drawn: gift from kick, Rock from new god, permitted table from blood still in the meat, tichlah that has an end from the commandment that is very wide. The distinctions are not yet the finished land. They are the firmament without which the land will not appear.

A family that will not separate waters will eat everything and call it abundance. A soul that only separates, and never arrives at dry land, will live in critique until the gate closes. The song wants both: an expanse, then a table that can be blessed.

VII. The Twelve Days: Today Answers for Sivan

From 18 Elul the camp has been walking twelve days that answer for the twelve months. Today is the ninth. Today answers for Sivan of the year now ending.

Sivan is standing at Sinai, na'aseh ve-nishma, the month the nation was born under speech. The third aliyah's last line — you forgot the Rock that bore you — is Sivan's wound when the year went wrong. The repair is not a new philosophy of law. The repair is remembering birth: Who brought you forth, on what mountain, under what words, with which fathers standing.

Ask, in one sitting, what Sivan of this closing year actually held. What was received. What was kicked. What new god arrived after the giving and pretended to be the giving. Write one sentence. That sentence is the day's cheshbon.

VIII. Practical Avodah and Chinuch

One avodah for 26 Elul.

Soak one teaching from today's portions — 32:15, or 119:176, or the Hayom Yom — for longer than a glance. Ten minutes without a device is enough water.

Salt: one honest yechidus of three sentences. What grew fat. Where the kick was. What blood is still in the meat.

Rinse: one niggun before or after Selichot, with the children if they are awake, alone if they are not. Do not skip the rinse because the salt felt serious.

Give one wide thing. Tanya will not let the last days of Elul be only interior. Coin, time, a meal, a call that costs. The vessel is wide because the act leaves the self.

Name one new god that came of late — and set it down until after Yom Kippur. Fathers did not dread it. That is data.

For the table and the children.

Honey can sit under what looks like a rock. Ask them: what hard thing this year turned out to be sweet, and what sweet thing turned out to be a kick.

The eagle yesterday hovered. Today the danger is a full plate. Fullness is not the enemy. Forgetting who set the plate is.

Kashering has three steps a child can learn: water, salt, water again. A year is meat. It is not ready only because it was hunted well.

“Seek Your servant” is a sentence a child may say without shame. Stray is not the last word if the commandments were not thrown away.

Civic-covenantal note, kept close to the text. A people that grows fat and treats limits as insults has already left the grammar of non-domination. Law that bore you is not an accessory to prosperity. New powers that have no fathers — markets of attention, machines of appetite, factions that cannot be asked — are 32:17 in modern clothes. Limited authority under a higher law begins with remembering birth. The Field is where that memory is still cheap to recover. In four days the throne room is less informal.

IX. Synthesis

The portions of 26 Elul do not quarrel.

Haazinu sets a table, then names the kick, then traces the kick to forgotten birth and to gods with no ancestry. Tehillim 119 walks the second half of the alphabet under yoke and ends as a lost sheep who still holds the commandments. Psalms 76–78 remember Zion, cry at night, and retell the wilderness after gift. Tanya closes the wide commandment: tzedakah as a vessel for light that Gan Eden’s yearning cannot hold. Rambam names an impurity that begins in the gullet. Hayom Yom gives the kitchen procedure that is the day’s avodah. The second day of Creation draws an expanse through water. The ninth of the twelve days answers for Sivan — the month of being born under words.

The King is in the Field. The meat is not yet permitted. Soak. Salt. Rinse. Do not kick the table that was set on high places. Do not confuse a new god with a father. Seek the servant who strayed. The commandment is very wide. Three days.

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Calendar, Creation, Selichot

Chabad calendar, 26 Elul 5786

Bereishit 1:6–8 — second day, the expanse. Sefaria

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High Holiday and Elul frameworks

Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah.

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R. Yosef Yozel Hurwitz (Alter of Novardok) on yeshus and the dangers of a full table.

Maharal, Gevurot Hashem and Tiferet Yisrael, on Sinai as national birth.

Covenantal-republican resonance (kept secondary)

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* — freedom as non-domination, not mere non-interference.

Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic* — Hebraic sources of limited political authority under higher law.

Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* — covenant as a politics of remembered origin.

Continuity in this series

24 Elul 5786 — Haazinu 1st: the song as court record; heaven and earth as witnesses.

25 Elul 5786 — Haazinu 2nd: remember the days of old; eagle over the nest; first day of Creation; God Himself blesses Tishrei.

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