

The King Still in the Field, the Face That Hides, and the Work That Makes Spirituality Out of Matter

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 9 September 2026

27 Elul 5786 · 9 September 2026

Daily Learning Portions of 27 Elul 5786 / Wednesday, 9 September 2026 — An Elul Expansion

Hebrew date: 27 Elul 5786 (כ"ז באלול תשפ"ו)

Secular date: Wednesday, 9 September 2026

Seasonal place: Late Elul. Two days before Erev Rosh Hashanah (29 Elul / Friday, 11 September). Rosh Hashanah 5787 begins at sundown Friday, 11 September, and is observed 12–13 September. Ashkenazi Selichot have been recited since Motzaei Shabbat, 5 September (23 Elul). Daily shofar, extra Tehillim, and the King-in-the-Field accessibility of the month remain in force, even as the field begins to tilt toward the palace.

Today's Exact Daily Learning Portions

Chumash (Chitas, with Rashi): Parashat Ha'azinu, fourth aliyah — Devarim 32:19–28.

Tehillim: Chapters 120–134 (the monthly cycle for the 27th of the month: the fifteen Shirei HaMaalot). In the original Hayom Yom listing for this date: also the Baal Shem Tov's Elul addition, chapters 79–81.

Tanya: Iggeret HaKodesh, beginning of Epistle 18 — the two species of ahavah: ahavah betaanugim (love that tastes delight, a gift from Above) and the yearning love that must be revealed by labor.

Hayom Yom — 27 Elul: From the holy teachings of the Alter Rebbe on the phrase “Israel, one nation on the earth” (I Divrei HaYamim 17:21): the nation of Israel, even in the earthly world, is bound up with the One G-d. G-d transforms the spiritual into something material; Israel transforms the material into something spiritual.

Rambam (Chabad daily tracks for this date):

One chapter: Hilchot Ishut, chapter 13 — the husband's covenantal obligations of clothing, dwelling, household goods, and ornaments.

Three chapters: She'ar Avot HaTumah, chapters 6–8 — remaining primary sources of ritual defilement.

Seasonal customs still binding today: Selichot before dawn; daily shofar; L'David Hashem Ori (Tehillim 27); extra Tehillim of Elul; inspection of tefillin and mezuzot; increased tzedakah and ahavat Yisrael; honest cheshbon hanefesh before the Days of Awe.

Today in Jewish history (Chabad calendar): Yahrzeit of Rabbi Shalom Rokeach of Belz (1779–1855); third day of Creation — dry land appears and vegetation is commanded to yield seed and fruit according to its kind (Bereishit 1:9–13); expulsion of the Jews of Frankfurt, 1614 (later reversed).

I. The Place of This Day

Twenty-seven Elul is not yet the threshold of the palace. It is the last working stretch of the field.

The Alter Rebbe's mashal remains the governing image of the month: when the king is in the palace, access is by protocol, rank, and appointed time; when the king is in the field, "everyone who so desires is permitted to meet him, and he receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all." That smiling face has not yet withdrawn. Selichot have already begun. The shofar has already been sounding for nearly four weeks. The books are about to open. And still the King is reachable without appointment.

This is the precise tension of 27 Elul. The Torah portion of the day is not a gentle pastoral. It is Moshe's song at the edge of death, the stanza in which Hashem sees, is angered, and announces hester panim — "I will hide My face from them; I will see what their end will be." The Tanya of the day distinguishes a love that can only be received as gift from a love that must be uncovered by toil. The Hayom Yom of the day places Israel in partnership with the Creator at the lowest rung of the world: He makes matter out of spirit; we are charged to make spirit out of matter. The Rambam of the one-chapter cycle speaks of a husband's non-negotiable duties of provision. The three-chapter cycle speaks of remaining sources of tumah. The Psalms of ascent begin in distress and climb toward Jerusalem, work, children, and blessing.

Elul does not cancel any of this. Elul reads all of it as avodah that can still be done in the field.

II. Ha'azinu, Fourth Aliyah: Hester Panim, Free Will, and the Limit Even Wrath Must Keep

"And the Lord saw and spurned, because of the anger of His sons and His daughters. And He said: I will hide My face from them; I will see what their end will be. For they are a generation of reversals; children in whom there is no faithfulness." (Devarim 32:19–20)

The song has already established the justice of the covenant: Hashem found Israel in a waste, encircled him, instructed him, guarded him as the pupil of the eye, and made him ride upon the high places of the earth. The fourth aliyah is the turn. Seeing is not abandoned. Seeing becomes a seeing that withdraws visibility. Haster astir panai is not absence of hashgachah. It is hashgachah that no longer consents to be read off the surface of events.

Rashi, following the Sifrei, hears dor tahapuchot as a generation that reverses Hashem's goodwill into anger, and banim lo emun bam in two registers: children in whom the rearing is

no longer recognizable, and children who have no faithfulness — they said naaseh venishma at Sinai and broke the word with the calf. Both readings matter for Elul. Cheshbon hanefesh asks two questions at once: Is the formation still visible in me? And is my word still a word?

The punishments that follow are terrible: fire to the lowest Sheol, consumption of land and produce, foundations of mountains kindled, evils linked to evils, arrows spent, famine, demons, the sword outside and terror inside, young and old together. Then the Torah does something that late Elul must not miss.

“I said I would make an end of them, I would cause their memory to cease from man — were it not that I dreaded the enemy’s provocation, lest their adversaries misconstrue, lest they say: Our hand is exalted, and it is not the Lord who has done all this. For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them.” (32:26–28)

Rashi and the Sifrei already mark the concealed blessing inside the curse of the arrows: “I will finish My arrows on them” — the arrows finish, Israel does not. Sotah 9b learns the same. The deeper structural point is verse 27. Even at the height of announced wrath, the Divine Name will not allow the enemy to write the story. Power that would let a “non-people” and a “foolish nation” claim authorship of Israel’s wound is power Hashem refuses to exercise. There is a limit inside judgment itself.

This is Torah-primary, and only then covenantal-political. Limited authority under higher law is not first an American or republican slogan. It is already the grammar of Ha’azinu. The Judge of all the earth binds even His own concealment to the honor of His Name. Israel’s enemies are denied the last word. Israel is not denied the first responsibility. The generation of reversals remains accountable. Bechirah is not cancelled by hester panim; it is exposed by it. When the Face is hidden, the human being discovers whether his faithfulness was a response to visible reward or a covenant that can stand in the dark.

Sforno and later meforshim read “I will see what their end will be” as the opening of a space in which the end is not yet fixed — a judicial pause in which return is still possible. That pause is the month we are in. Elul is the season in which hester is not yet the last concealment of Tishrei’s inner chambers, but the field-concealment that still permits approach. The King has not stopped seeing. He has changed the mode of seeing so that we must change the mode of standing.

Practical avodah from the aliyah:

Do not confuse hiddenness with abandonment. The verse that announces hiddenness immediately announces seeing.

Do not treat the year’s failures as proof that the rearing never took. Ask instead whether the rearing is still recognizable, and if not, what must be restored before the books close.

Receive the “finished arrows” as the Sifrei receives them: severity that contains a promise. The blows are not licensed to complete themselves against the existence of Israel.

Refuse the enemy's narrative, national and personal. The yetzer also says "my hand is exalted." Teshuvah begins when a man stops letting the accuser write his ending.

III. Two Loves at the End of the Year: Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh 18

The daily Tanya opens Epistle 18 with the verse, "How beautiful and how pleasant are you, ahavah betaanugim" (Shir HaShirim 7:7). The Alter Rebbe distinguishes two general kinds of love.

The first is ahavah betaanugim: a wondrous delight in Hashem, great joy, the soul tasting that "the Lord is good," a sweetness that is not the product of comprehension but a wonder at what transcends comprehension. It is me'ein Olam HaBa mamash — truly a foretaste of the World to Come, where the righteous delight in the radiance of the Shechinah. Of this love it is written, "Rejoice, righteous ones, in the Lord." Not every person merits it. The Zohar calls its inner register kahana bire'uta deliba — the Kohen serving with the desire of the heart, silent, inward, not the outward song of the Levi. Scripture calls the priestly service a gift: avodat matanah. "The stranger who approaches" that service dies. There is no path to this love by yegiat basar, the toil of flesh, as there is with yirah. Of fear it is asked in the next world, "Did you labor in awe?" Of this love it is said that it falls upon a person from Above, of itself, without his aiming at it — but only after he has exerted himself in yirat haromemut to the limit of what his particular neshamah can reach. Then the delightful love comes to dwell and to unite with the awe.

The second love, which the epistle proceeds to unfold, is not this gift. It is the soul's desire to cleave, to be bound in the bundle of life, to draw near. That yearning is latent in every Jew, even in the wicked; it is the love that remorse uncovers. It can be covered by kelipah and by the "spirit of folly" that makes sin possible. The work is to expel that covering from thought, speech, and deed, and then to reveal the love by constant contemplation: Hashem as the Fountainhead of life in general and of this soul's life in particular, until the yearning becomes like a child's for his father, like fire that by nature rises to its source. That revealed love is then drawn into mouth and limbs through Torah and mitzvot, because "the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are entirely one."

Elul is the calendar of the second love. The King in the field does not drop ahavah betaanugim into an unprepared vessel as a substitute for labor. He makes Himself approachable so that the labor of yirah and the uncovering of latent love can actually be done. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur may bring gifts that no one can seize. Twenty-seven Elul still asks whether a man has sought fear like silver and hidden treasure (Mishlei 2:4), whether he has contemplated enough to let the buried love stand up, whether he has given that love hands and feet in mitzvot.

The relationship between the two loves is itself an Elul theology of free will. Gift does not abolish work. Work does not purchase gift. Work in yirah and in the revelation of latent ahavah prepares a dwelling. The gift, when it comes, unites with the awe that was earned. Bechirah is real on the side of preparation. Mercy is real on the side of bestowal. A generation of reversals is a generation that stopped preparing and then blamed the hiddenness. Teshuvah is the decision to prepare again while the field is still open.

IV. Hayom Yom, 27 Elul: The Partnership That Judgment Assumes

“Israel, one nation on the earth.” The nation of Israel, even in the earthly world, is bound up with the One G-d. G-d transforms the spiritual into something material; Israel transforms the material into something spiritual.

The Rebbe placed this teaching, and the two that follow on the 28th and 29th, in the last days before Rosh Hashanah. The annotated Hayom Yom notes the placement: when a Jew is most anxious to be inscribed for life, blessing, peace, and livelihood, these teachings validate the concern. Material life is not a distraction from judgment. It is the arena of the partnership.

Hashem desired a dwelling in the lower realms. Two movements are required. First, spirit must become matter — Creation, including the third day remembered on this date, when dry land appeared and vegetation was commanded to fruit according to its kind. Second, matter must become spirit — the work entrusted to Israel. The partnership is not metaphor. Creation is yesh me’ayin. The Jew’s refinement of the yesh is the answering movement that makes the lower world habitable for the One who hid Himself inside it.

On 27 Elul this is not philosophy. It is the day’s assignment. The Ha’azinu stanza describes a world in which land and produce are consumed and mountain foundations burn — matter refusing to become spirit, or spirit withdrawing from matter. The Hayom Yom answers: the assignment has not been revoked. Even now, especially now, the Jew makes spirituality out of the material of his year: money into tzedakah, speech into Selichot and honest apology, household routine into chinuch, the body into a bearer of tallit, tefillin, and the last shofar-blasts of Elul.

Covenantal-republican resonance belongs here only as the text itself generates it. A people bound to the One G-d “on the earth” is not a people of arbitrary domination, nor a people that treats material power as self-authoring. Verse 27 of the day’s Chumash already forbids the enemy that story. The Hayom Yom forbids it to us as well. If Israel’s work is to spiritualize matter, then matter — wealth, office, family authority, national strength — is held in trust under higher law. Limited power is not weakness. It is faithfulness to the partnership.

V. Tehillim 120–134: Ascent from the Field

The monthly Tehillim of the 27th are the fifteen Songs of Ascent. They are the right liturgy for a day two steps from Erev Rosh Hashanah.

They begin in distress: “In my distress I called to the Lord, and He answered me” (120). They pass through help from the Maker of heaven and earth (121), the joy of going up to the House of the Lord (122), eyes lifted to the Master until He is gracious (123), escape from the snare (124), the surrounding of Jerusalem and the surrounding of His people (125), the restoration of Zion like dreamers, sowing in tears and reaping in joy (126). They speak of the house Hashem must build if the builders are not to labor in vain, of children as an inheritance and as arrows in the hand of a mighty man (127), of the blessing of one who fears the Lord and walks in His ways — eating the labor of one’s hands, wife as a fruitful vine, children as olive shoots around the table (128). They remember the plowers who plowed upon Israel’s back and the Lord who is

righteous, who cut the cords of the wicked (129). They stand in the depths: “Out of the depths I have called You, O Lord” (130) — the psalm of teshuvah and waiting for the morning. They end in humility of heart (131), the oath of David and the choice of Zion (132), the good and pleasant dwelling of brothers (133), and the night-blessing of the servants of the Lord who stand in the House (134).

For Elul and for chinuch this sequence is almost too clear to adorn. A family preparing for the Days of Awe does not need a new program. It needs this climb:

Name the distress without theater (120).

Refuse to let help be sought from “the hills” as if the hills were source (121).

Practice going up — to shul for Selichot, to the table for a harder conversation, to the sofer for tefillin and mezuzot (122).

Wait with eyes lifted, not with eyes averted in shame that has ceased to work (123).

Teach children that Israel’s story includes both the snare and the escape (124), both the furrow on the back and the cutting of cords (129).

Speak of children as arrows and as olive shoots in the same week: direction and rootedness together (127–128).

Pray 130 out loud with them, at least once before Rosh Hashanah: depths, waiting, chesed, abundant redemption.

The additional Elul chapters noted in the original Hayom Yom for this date — 79, 80, 81 — belong to the same movement. Seventy-nine is a psalm of defilement of the Temple and of the nations who have no knowledge. Eighty is a psalm of the vine brought out of Egypt, burned and cut, and of the plea that the face shine so that we may be saved. Eighty-one is a psalm of the shofar on the new moon, of the voice Israel would not hear, and of the honey from the rock that would have followed obedience. Late Elul could hardly be given three more exact chapters.

VI. Rambam of the Day: Covenant in the House, Purity in the Approach

Hilchot Ishut 13 is not a distraction from Elul. It is Elul in the household.

The chapter details the husband’s duties: clothing measured to season and place, household goods, a dwelling with minimum dimensions and a courtyard, ornaments so that a wife not be made unattractive in her own eyes and his, provision adjusted to poverty and to wealth, court enforcement when he is absent, limits on vows that would lock her away from adornment or from her father’s house, and the privileged pull of Eretz Yisrael in questions of residence. This is Torah’s refusal of private tyranny. Marriage is a covenant with enforceable obligations. Authority in the house is real and is limited. A man who uses Elul language about the King while

neglecting the law of clothing, dwelling, and honor has not understood either the King or the field.

For chinuch the point is sharper still. Children read the household more accurately than they read a derashah. If the Days of Awe arrive in a home where provision is resentful, speech is dominating, and honor is one-directional, the Shirei HaMaalot around the table will ring false. If they arrive in a home where duties are kept, apology is possible, and the face of a parent can still be a smiling face in the field, the children will have a mashal for the King they are about to address.

The three-chapter cycle, She'ar Avot HaTumah 6–8, is drier and no less timely. Late Elul is a season of approach. Approach in Torah is never only emotional. It is also a matter of what clings. The remaining avot hatumah remind a Yeshiva reader that kedushah has a legal body. One does not stand before the King with slogans about inner teshuvah while treating the laws of purity, speech, money, and family as optional atmosphere. The field is accessible. It is not lawless.

VII. Creation's Third Day and the Fruit That Must Appear

The calendar remembers today as the third day of Creation: waters gathered, dry land seen, earth sprouting seed-yielding herbs and fruit trees making fruit according to their kind, in which their seed is found. Twice the day is called good.

Elul is the year's fruiting. "According to its kind" is both comfort and judgment. Comfort: a Jew is not asked to produce a kind that is not his. The neshamah he was given, the yirah he can reach, the love that is latent in him — these are his species. Judgment: fruitless land at the end of a growing season is not a mystery. Ha'azinu's consumed produce is the inverse of the third day. Cheshbon hanefesh on 27 Elul asks a botanical question: what seeded, what fruited, what remained husk?

The Belzer Rebbe's yahrzeit on this date adds a Chassidic witness of ahavat Yisrael and of a court that made a people into a kind. Transmission is itself fruit according to kind. A father, a mother, a teacher who only inspects his own soul in Elul and does not transmit has misread the third day. Seed is "in it," in the fruit itself. The next tree is already inside this one.

VIII. Traditional Approaches and a Constructive Synthesis

Peshat and the Sifrei / Rashi line. Ha'azinu's fourth aliyah is historical and judicial: Israel's reversal, measured punishment, and the providential refusal to let the nations own the ending. Elul application: accept the charge; do not accept the accuser's authorship.

Ramban and the sod of hester. Concealment is itself a mode of relationship, not a cancellation of covenant. Elul application: seek the Face that hides by doing the work that hiddenness makes possible — unrewarded faithfulness.

The Mussar line. Dor tahapuchot and lo emun bam are diagnoses of character: instability and unreliability of word. Elul application: fewer resolutions, more kept words; a written cheshbon that names specific reversals.

The Chassidic line of the Alter Rebbe. The King is in the field; two loves; Israel turns matter into spirit. Elul application: labor in yirah and in revealed ahavah while access is easy; treat material life as the very place of partnership, not as a waiting room before spirituality begins.

The liturgical line of the Shirei HaMaalot and Tehillim 79–81. Ascent, depths, vine, shofar, shining face. Elul application: pray the climb; do not only study it.

Synthesis, without flattening difference: 27 Elul is the last spacious day on which concealment, accountability, gift-love, earned love, household covenant, and national partnership can still be held in one field of vision. Peshat supplies the charge. Hester supplies the mode. Mussar supplies the inventory. Chassidus supplies the access and the two loves. Tehillim supplies the voice. Rambam supplies the household and the legal body of approach. Hayom Yom supplies the assignment: make spirituality out of this year's matter before the palace protocol returns.

IX. Practical Avodah and Chinuch for the Next Forty-Eight Hours

Keep Selichot as meeting, not as performance. The King is still in the field. Arrive as one who desires to meet Him, not as one who is already composing his defense.

Sound the shofar today and tomorrow with verse 27 in mind. The blast is protest against every story that says “my hand is exalted.”

Write a short cheshbon under two headings from Rashi: “Is the rearing recognizable?” and “Where did my word reverse?” One page is enough. Specificity is worth more than mood.

Do one act that turns matter into spirit before Friday. A debt paid, a withheld apology spoken, extra tzedakah given without announcement, tefillin or mezuzot checked, a meal prepared as honor rather than as logistics.

At the table, learn three verses and one psalm. Devarim 32:20 and 32:27; Hayom Yom of 27 Elul; Tehillim 130 or 128. Let children hear that judgment includes a limit, that Israel's work is to spiritualize the earthly, and that the home is the first earth.

Speak to one's household as the King speaks in Elul. Cheerful countenance is not sentimentality. It is the opposite of hester panim practiced as coldness in the house. Authority remains. The face remains available.

Prepare the gifts you cannot force. The Tanya is exact: ahavah betaanugim is not seized. Prepare yirah. Reveal latent love. Keep mitzvot with hands. Then stand still enough, before Rosh Hashanah, to receive what only Heaven gives.

X. Closing

On the third day, dry land appeared so that fruit could be asked of it. On the 27th of Elul, the land of this year is still visible. The Face is partly hidden, which is not the same as turned away. The arrows of the song are finite; Israel is not. The enemy is denied authorship; we are not denied work. The King is still in the field for a little while longer. G-d continues to make matter out of spirit. The assignment given to a nation bound to the One, even on the earth, is unchanged: make spirit out of the matter in your hand.

The books are about to open. The field is not yet closed.

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Historical notes on the date

Chabad.org entries: Passing of the Belzer Rebbe, 27 Elul 1855; Frankfurt expulsion, 1614; third day of Creation.

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