**ELUL AGENDA**

The month of Elul in the Jewish calendar leads into Rosh Hashanah, the New Year. The whole month is a time of focus on *teshuvah.* Literally “returning”, *teshuvah* means looking back, returning to a truer path, redirecting and recalibrating. The name Elul, contains in Hebrew the first letters of the words “I am my beloved and my beloved is mine” -- *Ani L’dodi V’dodi Li.* This is a month of turning back to your beloved -- to any person who is beloved to you, and to your own soul.

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| **RETURNING INWARD = TURNING FORWARD**  **Rabbi Moses Maimonides taught: What is complete *teshuvah?* It is when you confront the exact same situation that in the past you acted badly in, and you have the power to so do again -- but you take a different path because of *teshuvah* and not because of fear or because of lack of power.**  What is one pattern or situation you succeeded in changing during the past year? How did you do it? Make sure to celebrate it!  What is one specific situation or kind of situation that you handled badly in the past year that you have the power and will to handle better this year? |
| **ASKING FORGIVENESS**  **Rabbi Moses Maimonides taught:** **You must verbalize specifically the wrongs you resolve not to do anymore… If you harmed a person concretely, you must make good the harm… and if you upset someone through your words, you should go to the effort of finding the person... The person may not immediately forgive you, and then you figure out how to try again.**  Who is someone particular whom you wronged in the past year?  What specifically could you say that would communicate that you understand and that you are sincere? |

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| **SEEKING FEEDBACK AND CRITICISM**  **Rav Yosef Yoizel of Novardok used to ask his students to do unusual things in public, such as going into a bakery and asking to buy a watermelon. From this, he hoped they would learn the habit and courage to accept criticm and even to welcome it.**  What is the last criticism you heard about yourself?  What is one thing you can do to become better at seeking the criticism you need? It might be asking one person you trust to tell you honestly one criticism, or resolving to hold back your reaction for a moment the next time anyone gives you unexpected critical feedback. |
| **TURNING OUTWARD**  **The Yehudi of Peshischa taught that every Jew should find two specific *mitzvot* (acts of goodness and responsibility) to work on that are unique for your soul.**  Who is one person you should be focusing on right now? (That person could be yourself, or anyone else in your life whom you know.)  What is one way you can make a difference beyond people you know, in the community or a wider sphere? |

*Rabbi Moses Maimonides taught: Every person should see oneself the entire year as though perfectly balanced between merit and guilt, and also the entire world as though perfectly balanced between merit and guilt.... If a person does one mitzvah, that person tilts the balance personally and tilts the balance for the whole world, all of it, to the side of merit, and saves and rescues both oneself and the whole world.*