HOLIDAY

Elul - a Month for Reconnecting

March 9, 2026

Elul, the last month of the year before Rosh HaShanah, is a time for introspection and self-improvement.

As recounted in the Torah, the first of Elul marks Moses' third and final ascent to Heaven, with each visit lasting forty days, as follows:

1) Ascends on 6 Sivan (the Holiday of Shavuot), following the Revelation at Sinai; returns on 17 Tammuz, sees the Golden Calf, and smashes the Tablets of the Law.
2) Ascends on 18 Tammuz; returns on 29 Av, with the news that G-d has agreed to forgive the Jews for the Golden Calf and give them a second chance.
3) Ascends on 1 Elul; returns on 10 Tishrei (Yom Kippur) with new Tablets of the Law and the joyous news of complete forgiveness and reconciliation.

Elul continues to be a time for serious thought and reflection on the past year. If we have deviated from the proper path, what steps can we take to correct our course?

In the Ashkenazic tradition, starting from the first of Elul a Shofar is blown each day after morning services (this practice is a Minhag, or custom - not to be confused with the Biblical mitzvah of blowing Shofar on Rosh HaShanah itself.) In the Sephardic tradition, special

additional prayers called Selichot are added to the morning service (the Ashkenazic tradition begins these prayers only towards the end of the month.)

The mood of Eluel is a combination of somber preparation for the upcoming Judgment on Rosh HaShanah, coupled with joy and hope in the knowledge that G-d himself reaches out to us at this time, urging us to take a small step towards Him - and He will reciprocate many times over. The letters of Elul can be read as an acronym for the Hebrew phrase, "I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me" - a quote from Song of Songs that captures the spirit of this season.