



## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 19 | Chai Elul

### **The Quotes:**

Chai Elul, the 18th of Elul, marks the birthday of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, and the Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad. In Judaism, the number 18 is significant in that it is the numerical equivalent of the word “life.”

The Previous Rebbe shared two versions of a quote attributed to Chassidim:

“Chai Elul is the day that imbued, and continues to imbue, life, into the work of Elul.”

“Chai Elul imbues life into the work of *“ani lidodi,”* “I am to me beloved.”

### **The Preface to the Explanation:**

In order to understand the distinction between these two versions, we will preface with a statement of our Sages concerning the giving of the Torah: “All the new, novel insights that a student is destined to produce, were already given to Moshe at Sinai.”

How can an insight be “new” if it was already “given to Moshe?”

The explanation is that Moshe received the general principles of the Torah and the exegetical rules that govern how law is to be derived from the text. All future applications are, therefore, encoded in potential within these rules. The student, by exerting himself in Torah study, reveals laws and ideas that were never explicitly said before. These thoughts are described as “new” not because they never existed before — they did, in potential form —

but rather, because a student had to toil and devote himself to uncovering them. For him, the idea is unprecedented and “new,” for he had to extract it from its concealment.

### **The Explanation:**

The Previous Rebbe once said that the Baal Shem Tov showed us that we **must** serve G-d, and the Alter Rebbe showed us **how we can** serve G-d.

This does not mean that the Baal Shem Tov did not issue practical guidance. It means that the Baal Shem Tov introduced a method of Divine service which motivates a person by external inspiration. The Baal Shem Tov taught how we can live passionate Jewish lives with the power of faith. Faith is not internalized within the person’s mind and heart; it is an overwhelming force that inspires a person to live differently. Thus, the Baal Shem Tov showed us how “we must” serve G-d, because the inspiration was top-down.

The Alter Rebbe introduced Chabad Chassidus, which enables a person to digest and internalize mystical truths that, until then, were accepted with faith. He showed us “how we can” serve G-d, meaning, he enabled each person to use his own abilities to serve G-d.

This is similar to the difference between the Torah that was given to Moshe and the novel insights produced by the students of the future: The Baal Shem Tov’s Torah gave general principles and inspiration for life, but it did not activate the individual’s unique self-expression and abilities. The Alter Rebbe’s Torah taught the individual how to create new inspiration with their own abilities.

### **The Explanation:**

This is the meaning of the two versions of the chassidim’s quote:

“Chai Elul is the day that imbued, and continues to imbue, life, into the work of Elul.”

Elul encompasses all the facets of one's service of G-d. The Baal Shem Tov, born on Chai Elul, imbued life into the general service of G-d.

“Chai Elul imbues life into the work of “*ani lidodi*,” “I am to me beloved.”

“*Ani lidodi*,” “I am to me beloved,” alludes to a human being initiating a relationship with G-d on his own terms and according to his own abilities. The Alter Rebbe imbued life into *ani lidodi*, for he taught us how to cultivate our own unique appreciation of G-d, and how to serve G-d with our entire being and personality.