



## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* cites several *pesukim* as allusions to the *avoda* of the month of *Elul*. Indeed, the very word *Elul* is somehow an acronym composed of the *roshei teivot* - the first letters of the words in each of these verses.

One such verse is the *pasuk* from *Megilat Esther*:

*Eesh L'reayhu Umatanot L'evyonim- Each person should give food packages to their fellow and charitable gifts to the impoverished.*

Giving to others, acts of kindness, friendship and especially *tzedaka* are indeed important values for us to focus on always, and particularly during these days of *Elul*.

In our *sedra*, *Parshat Shoftim*, we are instructed:

*Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof - Righteousness, Righteousness you shall pursue....*

The first Slonimer Rebbe, the **Yesod HaAvoda zy'a** offers a beautiful insight on this apparent redundancy- *Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof*. The Rebbe explains, that is not enough to simply think kindly, but we must work to actualize that kindness through justice, charitable giving, and other acts of

loving kindness. *Parshat Shoftim* is read as we enter into *Chodesh Elul*, as a reminder to each of us of this important fundamental idea during these days of *Elul*.

The story is told of the **Alter of Novardok**, one of the great *Baalei Musar*, that every single *Erev Shabbat*, the *Alter* would return from the *mikva*, wearing his undershirt and *tzitzit* and missing his formal shirt. When his *Rebbetzin* would ask him what had happened, each week the *Alter* gave a different explanation.

*"I forgot my shirt." "I tore my shirt accidentally." "I mistakenly knocked into a house painter and paint spilled all over my shirt."*

The reality was of course, that each week the *Alter* gave his shirt to an impoverished individual. Each and every week, the *Alter* would literally give the shirt off his back to help a fellow Jew.

During these days ahead, as we begin to prepare for the *Yamim Noraim*, may we internalize this important message, and may we merit to actualize and prioritize that *tzedaka* and loving kindness are indeed among our most important pursuits - *Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof*. ■