



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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Shoftim V'Shotrim Titein Lecha B'Chol Shaarecha- Judges and officers shall you place at all your gateways.

The **Netivot Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe zy'a** offers a novel interpretation of our *pasuk*. Each *Rosh Chodesh* represents a new gateway, a new path to experience growth in our *Avodat HaShem*. So one might come to ask, what are the specific concepts and ideals we must work on during this month of *Elul*, during these days leading up to *Rosh HaShana*?

In *Likutei Torah, Rebbe Shneur Zalman M'Liadi, zy'a*, describes these days of *Elul* with the following parable. Throughout the year, a King sits in his royal palace and his many loyal subjects wait with trepidation for opportunities when the palace might be open for special occasions and celebrations, where the kingdom's constituents might catch a glimpse of or receive a brief word of encouragement from their beloved King. But during this month of *Elul*, the king departs from the palace and visits the fields. There in the fields, the King is accessible, clearly present, and approachable as he interacts and mingles among all those who are in the field.

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe zy'a**, elaborates further on this well known parable. Yes it may be true, that during these days of *Elul*, the *melech* is more clearly present among us, and may seem more accessible to us. However, the Rebbe asks the question, if the King shows up in the fields, do his constituents continue to plow and work the land, do they continue uninterrupted with their regular conduct, or do they pause, and recognize and acknowledge that indeed the King has graced us with his presence right here among us in the fields? During these days of *Elul*, do we simply carry on with the status quo, with business as usual, or do we see these days as an opportunity to greet and show honor to our King, even as he meets us on our proverbial home turf?

Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, the Bnai Yissascher zy'a, suggests that the words *b'chol shaarecha*- all your gateways. is alluding to the seven openings in a person's face- two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and our mouths. It is through these openings that most of our senses are manifest and activated. Our verse, explains the *Bnai Yissascher*, is teaching us the importance of safeguarding and protecting how we use each of our senses-what images we might look at, what type of speech we might choose to listen to, what foods we might smell and taste, how we use our capacity to speak-each of these senses can be used for great good, or can be misused for harm.

The **Chidushei HaRim, the first Gerrer Rebbe zy'a**, adds that the *pasuk* continues *Shoftim V'Shotrim Titein Lecha B'Chol Shaarecha-asher Hashem Elokecha Notein Lecha* - if

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one would only realize that all our capabilities and strength, all *bracha* that comes into our lives, is indeed a gift from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, then of course we will use those gifts to elevate ourselves, and to elevate our surroundings.

As we enter into this incredible month of *Elul*, may each of us be blessed to embody these beautiful ideas, and reach great heights in our *Avodat Hashem*.

Chodesh Tov! ■



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