



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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This week we commemorated Rosh Chodesh Elul. Chodesh Elul, in the annals of Jewish life, is a time of reflection, introspection, and personal growth.

Our Sedra this week, begins with these familiar words:

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

Parshat Shoftim opens with an apparent clear directive to establish a system of law and order, both officers to ensure the security of our community, and judges to oversee that justice is indeed enforced. However, the Chasidic Masters see great symbolism in this opening verse.

Rabbi 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 *Netivot Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe zy'a*, points out that Parshat

Shoftim is always read during the month of Elul. Elul is the time of year when we make every effort to elevate our spiritual awareness and conduct, and therefore our pasuk is reminding us that we must utilize all our senses and capabilities to accomplish this goal of growth and self improvement.

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