

Kinder Torah



*For parents to share with the children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Re'eh - Rosh Chodesh Elul*

The King is Coming!

The King is coming, the King is coming! Have you heard the news? He is coming to visit our town. What a momentous event! Kinderlach, we have to prepare for His arrival. Imma, how do we prepare for the King's visit? Well, kinderlach, to answer that question, let us think for a minute. What does the King want more than anything else? He wants us, His subjects, to be loyal to Him and to love Him. In order to prepare for His visit, we have to show Him how dedicated we are to Him, and how much we love Him. We have to clean and fix up our homes and the town, so that everything looks beautiful for Him. More importantly, we have to fix up ourselves, so that we are pleasing to Him, both inside and out. You know, kinderlach, the King loves us and worries about us very much. He has made decrees, which will really help us if we follow them. Let us show the King how much we appreciate His love for us by following His decrees to the best of our abilities.

Imma, when is the King coming? Not for another month, kinderlach. Imma, we have plenty of time to prepare. We can relax for a few weeks. Let me tell you a story, kinderlach, about another King who came to visit. There was once a King who sent out word that He was going to visit one of the outlying cities in His kingdom. The subjects were all very excited. Those who most loved the King wanted to greet Him at the earliest possible moment. They went outside of the town to the road in order to catch a glimpse of the King when He first began to approach the city. Others went out to the gates of the city to greet the King when He arrived in the city. And finally, there were those who were not as fond of the King, but they still wanted to pay their respects, so they went to the streets outside of their homes to see the King when He passed by. That is the parable. The King is Hashem, and He is coming to visit us on Rosh Hashanah. However, He is close to us the entire month of Elul. The subjects who really love Him, will go out to meet Him at the earliest possible moment by beginning to do *tshuva* (correcting their errors) on Rosh Chodesh Elul. Others will wait for Rosh Hashanah. Finally, there are those who will wait for the last minute - Yom Kippur.

There are stories about our great Rebbeim, Rav Yisrael Salanter, the Chofetz Chaim, and the

Moonkatcher Rebbe, who would begin crying the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Elul. The congregation would reach the point in the prayer service of *mevarchim hachodesh* (blessing the new month). The cantor would utter the words "Rosh Chodesh Elul," and they would break down and cry. They knew what Rosh Chodesh Elul meant. The King is coming.

Kinderlach . . .

How should we begin doing tshuva in Elul? Rav Volbe quoted the Medrash on Shiur HaShirim (5:2) when he spoke in the Mir Yeshiva last Elul. Hashem says to the Jewish people, "My sons, open for Me one tiny opening of tshuva the size of the eye of a needle, and I will open for you gaping holes that loaded wagons can pass through." Kinderlach, do you know how small the eye of a needle is? Did you ever try threading a needle? It is very, very small. Yet that is all we need to do. Hashem will do the rest. Rav Volbe said that if you try to do too much, you will fail. Make small changes.

We see this also in Devarim 15:5, "If you will only listen to the voice of Hashem. . ." The Torah writes the word "listen" twice. Rashi explains that if we only listen a little bit, Hashem will enable us to listen much more.

Rav Zev Leff said that a good technique to always be aware that we are in the month of Elul is to make small changes in our schedules. Kinderlach, what are you going to work on this Elul? What are you going to change? Pick one bracha and try to say it with kavannah (intense concentration). Make your learning session five or ten minutes longer. Straighten up your room every day. Help Imma wash the dishes. Go to bed earlier. Get up earlier. Everyone should pick one thing or two small things. Next week we will report to each other how we are progressing with our tshuva.

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