

Chodesh Elul

GLOBAL WOMEN'S LEARNING CAMPAIGN

לע"נ הרב מנחם מענדל ע"ה בן יבלח"ט הרב ישראל שיחי

THE MASHAL

The Alter Rebbe gives a mashal to describe the month of Elul. Before the king enters the city, he is in the field. He shows a happy, smiling face and is available to all people to give them what they ask. The nimshal is that **Hashem is more accessible during Chodesh Elul** and pours down on us the Yud Gimmel Middos Harachamim.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE "FIELD": IT'S WHAT THE KING WANTS

The field represents our mundane routine, our gashmius life. We go to work, we come home, do housework and take care of those dependent on us. Yes, we hopefully have a few moments a day to daven and maybe even to learn, but the vast majority of our time is usually focused on "field work". From the seven days of the week, the majority, 6 out of 7, are weekdays and are mostly full of physical pursuits.

The reason why the majority of our week is focused on "field work" is because **this work is critical**. This is Hashem's desire: that we work with the physical and the mundane and while doing so we use it to serve Hashem. While going about our mundane, daily routine **we are fulfilling Hashem's desire** by infusing all we do with kedusha.

Throughout the 11 months of the year, we are all people of the field and that is where our focus lies. We are serving Hashem during this time as we work to do His will and to elevate the world around us. However, it is not so apparent that Hashem is the center and focus of my daily life. If I go to the store to buy eggs to cook my family breakfast, it's the physical work of buying and eating food, but I'm serving Hashem in that I'm feeding my family and keeping them healthy. **Yet this is not an open and purely kedusha act like learning Torah** is.

This can be compared to the field workers who are busy planting and growing food. The king wants to have a prosperous nation with well fed people, and of course he also wants to eat. This can only happen when there are workers working the field. The workers don't feel the king's presence during their day, but because they are fulfilling the desire of the king, the king is, in a way, present in the field. Yet his presence is not felt or seen in a revealed way that everyone could notice.

THE YUD GIMMEL MIDDOS HARACHAMIM

In the nimshal, the Alter Rebbe tells us that Hashem is revealed in this month and gives us the key to the yud gimmel middos harachamim. These are thirteen words and ways that Hashem can forgive the Yidden and pour down kindness and brachos on us. According to Chassidus, the yud gimmel middos harachamim are represented in the yud gimmel (13) rules with which the Torah can be explained and extrapolated. Therefore, **Torah learning is the direct way to channel the yud gimmel middos harachamim** into our lives and how we get the connection, teshuva and brachos that we are hoping for.

THE FIELD IS DIFFERENT WHEN THE KING CAN BE SEEN IN IT

The month of Elul is unique in that it serves the **double role of concluding a full year's worth of field work and also serves the role of preparing ourselves for the coming year**. In this month, the Alter Rebbe tells us, the King actually shows up to the field in his full splendor and interacts with the laborers and grants them their wishes. This reminds the laborers that all along they were doing the king's work, although his presence could not be felt.

Throughout the year while going about our daily lives we are all hopefully serving Hashem, albeit not necessarily in an open, recognizable way. During the month of Elul, even the simple field worker like ourselves should be connecting to the king in a fully obvious way in our lives. There is no stronger and more obvious way to do this than by learning the Torah of Hashem and bringing Hashem's wisdom down into the world.

Therefore, **we each should make set times for learning Torah during this month which is how Hashem is truly revealed clearly in the field of our lives**. After a whole year of serving Hashem we conclude the year by demonstrating in an open way what our year's work has been all about. This is how we prepare for the coming year, by demonstrating before we start, that all our work is truly for Hashem.

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STAY IN THE FIELD

We must remember that it’s Hashem who comes to the not the field workers who come to the palace. This means that during Chodesh Elul, the appropriate conclusion of the year and preparations for the next year, is **not by quitting our jobs and going into the palace of Torah and tefilla for a full month. Rather during our lunch break we spend five minutes learning something.** Our lunch break already has Hashem’s presence in it when we eat kosher food and make brachos, but during this month Hashem is openly in our field by us doing an obviously holy act like learning Torah. The same applies with our drive to work or while folding laundry; we can incorporate time to listen to Torah.

By having Hashem the King be revealed in our field, we channel the yud gimmel middos harachamim that Hashem is shining on us and **the coming year can be infused with excellent field work that is successfully “feeding” the desire of the King to make this world a dira betachtonim.**

ADVANTAGE OF TORAH OVER TEFILLA

When we daven, we start off as regular humans and as we climb the ladder of tefilla we are able to become more and more spiritual, and less self centered and self conscious. In an extreme case, with very lofty, holy people, one can even experience klois hanefesh, when the soul becomes so intense in its yearning for holiness and connection to Hashem that it actually leaves the body.

Torah is the exact opposite experience. Torah is the holiest and most exalted of all. The wisdom of Torah is the wisdom of Hashem and has no limit. When one learns Torah, one takes the holiest, highest thing possible and brings it down into our physical brains, and as we understand, the Torah actually becomes part of our brain. This creates a unique kind of unity between holiness and physicality. It’s **this unity that has the power to open up the channels to bring down the brachos to help us with our work “out in the field” bringing Hashem down into this world as He desires.**

SYNOPSIS

Mashal	Nimshal
Output of field is food which is desired by king	Our daily tasks elevate the world which is a desire of Hashem
King shows up openly in the field	Hashem is obvious in our daily grind during Elul through adding in Torah learning
The past year’s work of making food for the king comes full circle when he shows up and demonstrates that all along it was for him	When we learn Hashem’s Torah in Elul we come full circle; after a full year of Avoda we remember that it’s all about serving Hashem.
King grants the people their requests when he’s out in the open so they can more happily and easily do their field work in the coming year.	When Hashem is out in the open through our Torah learning, he infuses us with strength for the coming year of Avoda.

King = Hashem
Workers = Yidden
Field = Daily tasks

THE STORY

The Problem

By Tuvia Bolton

One day a rich and learned Jew came to one of the great European centers of Torah learning to search for a fitting match for his wise, pious and beautiful daughter. He invited all of the eligible young scholars in the town to the main synagogue that evening, and posed to them a difficult Talmudic problem. Whoever could solve the problem to his satisfaction, he announced, would win his daughter's hand in marriage, and his own pledge to provide financial support for the couple and their future children for twenty years while the worthy scholar pursued his studies.

The town's scholars struggled to understand the problem, and then labored through the night to solve it. Dozens of answers were submitted to the visitor, but he refuted them all. He remained in town for three days, without any further success. Disappointed, he ordered his bags packed for his early departure the next day.

The next morning he climbed into his carriage, settled into his seat, and gave the signal to his driver to crack his whip. As the horses trotted off, a young student could be seen running toward the carriage, shouting for him to wait. The man ordered his driver to stop, and the young man looked in the window.

"Just a minute! Wait!" cried the young man, panting to catch his breath. "You can't go yet! You must tell me the answer!"

"Pardon me?" asked the visitor.

"Ever since you posed the question," said the student, "I haven't been able to sleep. I've been grappling with it day and night, but try as I might, the solution eludes me. I must know the answer! You cannot go without telling me!"

"Ah!" cried the scholar, satisfied at last. "You are the one whom I want for a son-in-law!"

Taking our Torah learning seriously, especially in the month of Elul, is the way we can feel the King's presence in the field and continue to feel His presence all year long.