



Shoftim / שפטים

Start
Small

Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

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Leizer moved carefully through the forest, trying not to make a sound. His heart raced as a giant snake slithered past him. He had to remain quiet, but he was running out of time. The terrorists were after him and he had to reach the secret spy headquarters before he got caught.

“Leizer?”

Leizer jumped, looking around the forest, but saw nothing but a monkey swinging through the trees. Who had called his name?

“Leizer? Is everything okay?”

The voice was familiar. Leizer knew it from somewhere. But where was it coming from?

“LEIZER!!! Are you with us?”

Finally, Rebbe Caplan’s voice jolted Leizer out of his daydream. He looked around at his classmates who all had their fingers on the place in their Mishnayos. Leizer sheepishly put away his Chumash and pulled out his Mishnayos as well.

Later, when the boys were filling out their parsha worksheets, Rebbe Caplan called Leizer to his desk.

“What’s going on with you, Leizer?” Rebbe Caplan asked kindly. “You don’t seem to be with us when we’re learning. During Shacharis I noticed you peeking at your “Yaari and Divshi” comic book that you were trying to hide from me. And when you came back to class after recess, you slammed the door behind you without looking to see that you were slamming it right in Yitzzy Greenbaum’s face.”

Leizer hung his head sheepishly and said nothing.



“Leizer, we’re in Chodesh Elul. Don’t you think it’s maybe a good time to start working on improving some things? I’d be happy to help you.”

Leizer looked thoughtful. “Hmmm,” he said. “I think I know what I need to do. Thanks, Rebbe!”

“Okay boys, take out your *Chumashim*,” said Rebbe Caplan the next day after *Shacharis*.

The boys all pulled out and opened their *Chumashim* and the class started reading the *pesukim* together. Thirty seconds later, the classroom door opened and in walked Leizer, looking extremely odd, wearing only one shoe, a *tzedakkah* box strapped to his belt, carrying his Shabbos shoes, a pile of *seforim*, and - oddly enough - a Chanukkah menorah.

“Leizer, is everything alright?” asked Rebbe Caplan.

“Yes, sorry I’m late Rebbe,” Leizer said, a can of shoe polish falling from his overstuffed hands.

“Everybody, continue learning,” said Rebbe Caplan. “Leizer, I’d like to speak with you for a minute.”

Leizer followed Rebbe Caplan into the hallway.

“What’s going on, Leizer?” Rebbe Caplan asked. “First of all, you’re extremely late. And why do you look like the inside of a disorganized closet? And a Chanukah Menorah? In Elul?”

“Rebbe, I’m doing what you said I should do.”

Rebbe Caplan started getting nervous. “Um... I don’t remember telling you to strap a *pushke* to your waist or bring your Shabbos shoes to cheider.”

“But you told me to start becoming a better person. So I thought of all the ways I could do that. I’m carrying around a *tzedakah* box so I can give *tzedakah* all the time, I brought a bunch of *seforim* so I can finish *Shas* during recess, and then when I’m done I can polish my shoes *l’kovod Shabbos*.”

“And the menorah?”

“Oh that’s so I always remember the war for Torah that we celebrate on Chanukah so I always think about Torah. But Rebbe, doing all this *teshuvah* is so hard that I came late to *cheider* and I forgot to bring my *Chumash* and *Mishnayos*.”

“Leizer,” Rebbe Caplan said with a smile. “Why don’t you start with something small? Like not hiding a comic book under your *siddur*? Or trying to keep your finger on the place for the first five minutes of class?”

“But that’s nothing!” protested Leizer. “I want to do **real** *teshuvah*! I want to be a *tzaddik*!”

“And how’s that working out for you? You’re an hour late to *cheider*, wearing one shoe, and without your *Chumash* and *Mishnayos*.”

Leizer looked sad. “I guess I’ll never be a *tzaddik*,” he said, a tear trickling down his cheek.

“No, no, no! Of course you’ll be a HUGE *tzaddik*!” Rebbe Caplan said warmly. “But the way to get there is through small, manageable steps. Begin with not bringing a comic book to *Shacharis*. Start with trying to pay attention for just a few minutes when we’re learning. Then after you do that for a while, you can try having *kavannah* for one *brocha* in *Shmoneh Esrei* and paying attention for ten minutes of *Chumash*. And by doing that, working slowly on tiny little things, you will become great.”

“Really, Rebbe?” asked Leizer, looking at his menorah and wondering, for the first time, whether that was actually a good idea.

“Yes, really. I promise you, Leizer, if you work slowly and consistently on small improvements, you will become a great *tzaddik*.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

let's review:

- Why is it probably not a good idea to bring a menorah to cheider during Elul?
- What small thing can you start working on this Elul?



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