



The Purpose of the Excursion

There is a famous parable for Elul, comparing it to a king strolling in his field, and anyone can approach him. This *moshol* is quoted as if it were a *midrash*; but it is not. [There is a *midrash* that the Tur brings about a group of people preempting the king, by coming to him while he's travelling, but its intent is quite different.]. It is a *moshol* of the Baal Hatanya [*Likutei Torah Reeh*].

On the surface of it, the parable seems to not have much content. It is simply a somewhat vague metaphor for having an easier way in with the king. But why would this be so? Why **don't we** need to make an appointment with the king at his palace like everyone else? What prompted the royal stroll?

Let us take a closer look at his words:

"Why are the *yud gimmel middos* revealed during Elul, though they are a very high revelation suitable mainly for Yom Kippur? One can compare it to a king who before he arrives in the town, is accessible to everyone and he is friendly with them. When the king goes to the city, **they then follow him**. And once he is in his palace they need permission to enter..."

I think that the words "they then follow him" are the crucial words. For although one needs special permission to enter the palace, these poor peasants are so far removed from the refinement of the monarchy that they lack any interest to even make an appointment to see the king. What does the king do? He extends himself undeservedly to them, so that they gain some sense of what he is. When their interest is aroused, and their passions are excited, they follow the king to his palace. And now they must deserve to enter.

If you wish, this is actually a *passuk* in *Shir Hashirim*. In the fifth *perek* there is a description of the king's beloved having become tired of the king. He begs her to open the door, and she replies that she is tired and has gone to sleep. He then puts his hand through the keyhole, and she begins yearning for him. But now he is gone, and she must spend the rest of her time pursuing him.

This is the same dynamic. A beloved has lost interest, and unless that interest is aroused again, she/he will never even bother to pursue the king.

The point of the Baal Hatanya's parable is that for the process of *din* to be meaningful, a desire must first be aroused in the populace to achieve closeness to Hashem. Thus, Elul is a time when Hashem grants us -undeservedly- a rush of spirituality. This is not the real spirituality, for real spirituality comes only by dint of effort. It is meant to draw us out of our beds of comfort, to begin following the king to his palace. And at the palace we must show ourselves deserving

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