

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 50

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KI TETZE

11th Elul 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 21, verses 10 - 21

- ✚ Moshe forewarned us of the moral and hereditary dangers of warfare. If a soldier see a beautiful woman and brings her home, he must shave her head, let her nails grow and allow her to mourn for parents for a month before he can marry her. If he decides not to, then he must set her free.
- ✚ If a man has two wives, one he loves and one whom he despises; if his firstborn child comes from the wife he hates, the man must nevertheless give a double portion of his inheritance to the child.
- ✚ If a son refuses to listen to their parents no matter what they do. They must drag him to the elders of the city and declare him as a 'rebellious son' before putting him to death by stoning.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 21, verse 22 - Chapter 22 verse 7

- ✚ When a murderer is put to death by hanging, their body must not be left on the gallows overnight. It must be buried on the same day.
- ✚ The laws relating to returning lost property and assisting with a fallen animal are discussed.
- ✚ Men are not allowed to wear women's garments and Women are forbidden to dress in Men's clothes.
- ✚ Sending away the mother bird before you take her eggs, will guarantee you a prolonged life.

Sh'lisi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 22, verse 8 - Chapter 23, verse 29

- ✚ If you build a new house you must make fences around the roof so no-one should fall off.
- ✚ The Laws of Shatnez (forbidden mixtures), wearing Tzitzits are explained here.
- ✚ The laws pertaining to a betrothed woman, virgins and mamzer's (a child born from adultery or incest) comes next, followed by the prohibition against marrying either an Ammonite or Moabite.

R'Vi' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 23, verses 7- 24.

- ✚ Only a third generation Edomite or Egyptian can marry into the Jewish nation.
- ✚ Laws pertaining to the sanctity of an army camp, sheltering runaway slaves and prostitution are laid down in detail.
- ✚ A Jew is forbidden to charge interest to a fellow Jew but is allowed if the transaction is with a non-Jew.
- ✚ All vows which have been pledged to Hashem must be kept.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 23, verse 25 - Chapter 24, verse 4 and

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 24, verses 5 - 13

- ✚ A Labourer may eat as much produce as they like while they are working in the fields or orchards but must not take any home with them.
- ✚ Laws relating to divorce, remarriage and military exemptions for a new husband are discussed next in detail.
- ✚ A kidnapper who enslaves or sells his captive will be put to death.
- ✚ The general laws regarding security for loans are discussed next.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 24, verse 14 - Chapter 25, verse 19

- ✚ When you hire a person to work for you, make sure you pay them on time.
- ✚ When you reap your field and forget or drop a bundle, don't go back to retrieve it. It must be left for the poor. The same applies when regarding vineyards.
- ✚ If a person has been found guilty and whose punishment is malkos (Lashes) they must not receive no more than forty.
- ✚ An unmarried brother must marry his late brother's widow (Yibbum) if she was left childless. If the brother refuses then he has to perform the Halitza process (removal of the widow's shoe and spitting) in front of the elders of the land.
- ✚ Make sure you are honest with your weight and measures.
- ✚ Bnai Yisrael are commanded to remember what Amalek did to them while they were on the road. They are instructed to blot out their memory from under the heavens and don't forget!

Haftorah – YISHAYAH (ISAIAH) Chapter 54 verses 1 to 10

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ One of the ways to ensure a nation's survival is its numbers. Being fruitful is one of the best blessings Hashem can bestow on his people.
- ✚ Hashem comforts the Jewish nation promising them that all their barren women will all conceive and give birth, so their desolate cities will be once more be inhabited.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ This week's Haftorah is the fifth of a series of seven "Prophesies of Consolation." Read between the fast of Av and Rosh Hashanah.
- ✚ . The Haftorah compares the final Redemption to the pact Hashem made with Noah. Just as Hashem promised to never bring a flood over the entire earth, so too He will never again be angry at the Jewish people

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Out of the seventy four mitzvot mentioned in this week's sedra, I would like to pick out just one. 'Sending away the Mother bird before taking its eggs. What is the reason for this unusual mitzvah?

The Rambam would say "In order to teach us compassion". He insists that animal mothers, just as human mothers, suffer deeply when their offspring are harmed. Others have different explanations for the mitzvah. The foremost Torah commentator, Rashi, writes "Hashem did not give us His commandments because of compassion, but rather to place upon us, a set of decrees to make us aware that we are His servants."

I remember a speaker from the JLE who was once asked about this and he seemed to side more with the Rambam. He indicated that compassion is indeed the issue here and stressed quite correctly that Hashem is known as 'Harachaman', the compassionate one, (just look at the attributes of Hashem indicated in the Torah (Exodus 34:6), the first attribute of Hashem, after omnipotence, is mercy.

However, this rabbi argued, sending away the mother bird is not considered 'a complete act of compassion'; the true act of compassion would be if we were forbidden to disturb the nest at all. He believes that the permission to take the young after sending away the mother bird is a concession, like the concession He asserts that the Torah's ultimate goal is for us to be so sensitive that we won't want to disturb the nest at all, but the Torah deals with reality, its human instinct to take it all, mother and child. Hence, while the commandment to send away the mother bird aims to sensitize us to the moral act of what is right, it can't be invoked as an ideal of compassion based on which we can ask for Hashem's compassion.

In spite of this consideration of the now, limited compassion involved in this mitzvah, the Torah promises a great reward, a long life, to the person who fulfils it. The only other mitzvah for which long life is promised is for honouring one's parents, the fifth of the Ten Commandments. Many have puzzled over why the same reward is promised for the extremely difficult mitzvah of honouring parents and the relatively simple mitzvah of sending away a mother bird. Perhaps the connection is that when a child sees his parents showing compassion to a mother bird, he or she will be reminded of his obligations to his or her own parents.

I'll finish off with a quote from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, an outstanding 19th century philosopher who eloquently summarizes what I've wrote nicely.

"The Torah prohibits Jews from causing tsa'ar ba'alei chayim, any unnecessary pain, including psychological pain, to any living creatures. Here you are faced with Hashem's teaching, which obliges you not only to refrain from inflicting unnecessary pain on any animal, but to help when you can, to lessen the pain whenever you see an animal suffering, even though it may be no fault of yours.

