

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 45

19th July 2014

MASEI

28th Tammuz 5774

Kohen - First Aliya: Chapter 33, verses 1 – 9 and

Levi - Second Aliya: Chapter 33, verses 10 - 39

- ✚ Moshe recounts and reviews all the forty two places where Bnai Yisrael had encamped since departing from Mitzraim (Egypt), forty years earlier.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya: Chapter 33, verse 40 - Chapter 34, verse 15

- ✚ When they eventually cross the River Jordan, Hashem instructs Bnai Yisrael to expel all the inhabitants who are dwelling in the land of Canaan and destroy all of their idols.
- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe where the borders of Israel will start and finish. The southern border consists of the Zin desert, the edge of the Dead Sea, and the southern part of the Mediterranean. The northern border will cover the Mediterranean, Mount Hor, Zedad and Hazar-enan.
- ✚ To the east the border will be from Hazar-enan, Ribla, the Kinneret, the River Jordan and the Dead Sea with the Mediterranean Sea bordering the western side.
- ✚ As Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh were going to settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan The land of Israel was to be divided by lottery amongst the remaining nine and a half tribes

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya: Chapter 34, verses 16 - 29

- ✚ Hashem appoints a representative from each tribe to allocate their portion of land between their tribal members.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya: Chapter 35, verses 1 – 8 and

Shishi - Sixth Aliya: Chapter 35, verses 9 - 34

- ✚ In total the tribes have to build and allocate forty eight cities where the Levi'im can dwell as well as additional land for cultivation.
- ✚ Six of these cities are to be designated as 'Cities of Refuge' where someone who as inadvertently murdered another person can run to in order to be kept safe away from a family member of the deceased who wishes to avenge the death of the murdered victim. (which they a lawfully allowed to do if they catch the person before he / she reaches one of these safe havens)
- ✚ The murderer must remain within the confines of these cities until the current Kohen Gadol has passed away.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya: Chapter 36, verses 1 - 13

- ✚ The leaders from the tribe of Menashe approach Moshe with their concerns of who would inherit the land if the daughters of Tzelofhad decide to marry someone outside of their tribe as it could decrease their tribe's property if the land was allocated elsewhere.
- ✚ Moshe tells them not to worry as the Torah states that any inheritance given will always return back to its original tribe when the Yovel arrives and in addition any woman who receives an inheritance are only allowed to marry someone within her own tribe.
- ✚ Just as Hashem commanded Moshe, the five daughters of Tzelofhad obeyed by each marrying a man from the tribe of Menashe.

Haftorah –YERMEYAHU (JEREIMIAH) Chapter 2 verses 4 to 28 and Chapter 4 verses 1 and 2

OVERVIEW

- ✚ Yermeyahu transmits Hashem's message to the Jewish people, in strong tones chastising them for abandoning Hashem.
- ✚ He reminds them of the kindness Hashem did for them, by them leading them out of Mitzraim, through the desert and settling them in the Promised Land, yet they repaid his kindness with their disloyalty towards him.
- ✚ Yermeyahu then goes on to foretell the suffering the Jewish people will suffer at the hands of their enemies but encouragingly assures them that if they repent and do teshuva (return back to Hashem) with sincerity, they will be rightfully restored back to their full glory living in the land of Israel.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ This is the second of the three Haftorah's read during the period of the three weeks between the fast of Tamuz and the ninth of Av.
- ✚ The Haftorah continues the theme of the three weeks and the reasons why we continue to mourn throughout this period due to our tragic losses of not one but two beis Hamikdashim which were destroyed because of our lack of faith and commitment to Hashem.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

This week's sedra tells us that a person who kills someone unintentionally is required to flee to an Ir Miklat (city of refuge), and remain there until the death of the Kohen Gadol.

This seems to me to be a bit whimsical and unfair. One murderer might only have to wait a few months for the Kohen Gadol to pass away, whereas another murderer who had committed the same crime might have to wait years.

Torah justice differs significantly from today's legal systems. Modern justice attempts to go beyond the actual crime and tries to analyse the mind of the murderer, to determine a motive of why he / she committed the crimes they did, and based on this evaluation, the courts would then set and implement their sentences accordingly, depending on the perceived motive and the level of recklessness or remorse displayed by the killer; whereas our sages teach us especially in cases of unintentional manslaughter the Torah system seems to be the fairest because it is literally 'Divine'. A person remains in the Ir Miklat for the precise amount of time that it takes for him to atone for his actions and Hashem is the only one who can truthfully evaluate and determine the real motives behind each killer, and based on how long the Kohen Gadol remains alive, will determine how long each killer is supposed to remain there before being allowed to leave.

The Rambam once wrote about why the lifespan of a Kohen Gadol is dependent on how long an unintentional murderer must remain in the Ir Miklat. He explains that when a national tragedy occurs like the death of a Kohen Gadol, the people become united in grief. So the blood relatives of the victims will put aside their grudges and lose interest in killing the person whom by accident killed one of their family members.

Lord Sacks had a different approach; He believes that the Kohen Gadol had to bear some minute amount of responsibility because he should have begged and prayed for compassion. The simple explanation is that Hashem gives people the free will and ability to do evil things, but in a case where it concerns a mistake or an unforeseen event; then maybe if the Kohen Gadol had prayed harder then perhaps the unfortunate incident could have been less life threatening for the victim or not occurred at all.

No one can be expected to have such foresight and thoughtfulness as a Kohen Gadol, but I think the Torah is teaching us a valuable lesson here: Regardless of whom they are or what a person has done intentionally or unintentionally. We must all take responsibility for their actions and their future well-being by performing Mitzvahs (good deeds) and through our davening (prayers).

