

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 43

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MATTOT

21st Tammuz 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 30, verses 2 -17

- ✚ Moshe explains to the heads of all the tribes the importance of honouring all vows they have instituted, regardless if they were made to Hashem, another person or even a promise made to themselves to prohibit or refrain from doing something.
- ✚ If a young person makes a vow, in some circumstances their father has the capability to annul it. However if the father hears the oath being made and decides to ignore it. The son or daughter has to fulfil it.
- ✚ Similarly a husband has the power to negate his wife's vows, but if he remains silent she is then obligated to keep them.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 1 - 12

- ✚ Hashem orders Moshe to avenge Bnai Yisrael by waging war with the Midianites for their part in seducing the Jewish men into performing Aveiros (Sins).
- ✚ Moshe forms an army consisting of a thousand men taken from each tribe and appoints Pinchas to lead them into battle.
- ✚ During the fighting all of the Midianite men, including their kings and the prophet Balaam were killed.
- ✚ The soldiers returned back not only with Midian's wealth but with all their females and their children whom they took as captives.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 13 - 24

- ✚ Upon witnessing this Moshe gets very angry, even though they were only following orders relayed by Balaam, the women were still the original instigators of persuading Bnai Yisrael to bow down in front of idols.
- ✚ Moshe gives the orders to kill all the women who are Non-Virgins along with any of their male offspring.
- ✚ Elazar the Kohen teaches the soldiers the laws purify themselves from the ritual impurities caused by war and to how to make their spoils kosher. I.e. if the vessels came into contact with fire they can only be koshered by passing them through fire etc.

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 25 - 41

- ✚ The spoils of the war were then evenly divided between the soldiers and their tribes.
- ✚ From this the soldiers had to give a tithe of 1 in 500 as Terumah to Elazar the Kohen.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 42 - 54

- ✚ The rest of the people in their respective tribes had to set aside 1 in 50 of the spoils for the Levi'im.
- ✚ The army commanders all reported back to Moshe that they suffered no casualties in the fighting and to show their gratitude they brought all of the jewellery taken and donated it towards the upkeep of the Mishkan.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 1 – 19 and

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 20 - 42

- ✚ Due to the fact of owning a large supply of livestock, the tribes of Reuven, Gad along with half the tribe of Menashe make a pact with Moshe that once the land of Israel has been fully conquered, they would be allowed to settle down on the eastern side of the River Jordan.

Haftorah – Yermeyahu (Jerimiah) Chapter 1 verse 1 to Chapter 2 verse 3

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Yermeyahu recounts how Hashem appointed him as prophet and his initial reluctance to accept the task.
- ✚ He describes two prophetic visions shown to him. The first featured an almond tree branch which is interpreted as that just like an almond tree is very quick to blossom, so too Hashem will carry out his plan of punishing his people for any sins they have committed.
- ✚ The second vision was that of a boiling pot whose foam was directed northward. Hashem explains, this is an allusion to the afflictions the Jewish people who will suffer at the hands of their enemies, the Babylonians because they abandoned Hashem and worshiped idols instead.
- ✚ Yermeyahu is encouraged to deliver the prophecy and not to fear the Jewish populace who would certainly not take kindly to such harsh words because Hashem reassures him that because of Bnai Yisrael's commitment and devotion at the time of Matan Torah he will eventually forgive them and return them back to the land of Israel where they belong.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ As we are now in the period between the 17th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av, the regular Haftorah is replaced with three different prophecies relating to affliction of our people and our first two beis Hamigdos's ultimate destruction.
- ✚ This first Haftorah is read as a reminder of why we are in a state of mourning and why we have to fast on the seventeenth of Tamuz and the ninth of Av

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: Vows and keeping one's word

David Cameron once said during an interview regarding another politician's honesty and integrity "Words flow around us all day long and sometimes are taken too lightly. If what they pledged is not faithfully honoured then how can that person ever be trusted again in the future?"

Throughout the Torah there are numerous references to the importance of keeping vows and the dire consequences which results from breaking them. Judaism teaches the importance of not initialising a verbal commitment unless you really truly mean to carry it out.

The torah is teaching us how important it is to think before we speak and not to make promises lightly or not even to say "No" or "Yes" to something if we don't believe that we can stand by our words. Apart from the issue of how easy it is to say or promise something that we don't ultimately mean. What a lot of us do not realise is, that In Torah law, once such a commitment has been pledged regardless if it later becomes beyond your power to ever achieve what you said you would do or not do; you are still morally obligated to fulfil it, however inconvenient it may become.

Keeping vows demonstrates our "True Inner Self." It shows whether or not we have corruptible or incorruptible morals inside of us. Integrity, honour, self-respect and most importantly honesty means everything to our fellow man and especially to Hashem. How can we expect to respect someone who constantly breaks their promises? A broken pledge means a broken trust and relationship.

A broken vow, while serious, is not an unforgivable matter. There is plenty of opportunities to annul them. Reciting Viduay on Yom Kippur is a prime example.

Any vows that has been made foolishly or that you have the realisation that you cannot or should not keep them; the most important thing do is to confess. Hashem will not hold us to vows made imprudently, Truth and respect as well as one's honour is the basis of keeping our strong relationship with Hashem intact. He expects us to keep our word, so the next time we vow or make a promise to another, make sure it is one you will be able to keep.

