



Snapshot Torah

GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHAH
ISSUE 18

25th January 2014

MISHPATIM

24th Shevat 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 21, verses 1 - 19.

- ✚ Bnai Yisrael receives the social laws from Moshe beginning with how Masters should treat their Jewish slaves and maidservants.
- ✚ A person who kidnaps or intentionally kills another will be put to death. However if the victim was killed unintentionally, the murderer is allowed to seek sanctuary in a city of refuge.
- ✚ The death penalty would be meted out to a child who either curses their parents or strikes them hard enough to make them bleed.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 21, verse 20 - Chapter 22, verse 3

- ✚ Someone who wounds another, but not fatally must compensate them for the injury caused as well as all of the financial losses sustained during their recovery. Including medical fees and lost income.
- ✚ Any slave that is hurt due to the negligence of their master, must be released.
- ✚ Any murderous ox who kills someone must be put to death. If the ox's owner was aware of his dangerous ox and was found guilty of not taking the necessary safety precautions he must pay the victim's family damages to the value of their loss. The laws relating in compensation for goring animals, and fines meted out for theft are also discussed.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 22, verses 4 - 26

- ✚ Damages and reimbursements relating to animals grazing on another person's field and any land or property destroyed by fire are related here.
- ✚ An unpaid custodian cannot be held liable for any loss of an object if they swear they were not negligent in any way; however if they are employed, they are held responsible and must reimburse the owner for the loss. They are also made to pay damages if an object gets broken or livestock in their care dies. Unless they make an oath, stating there was no way it could have been prevented.
- ✚ If a man seduces a single woman, then he must marry her or pay the woman's father 50 shekels if he doesn't agree with the marriage. Anyone caught practising the occult or performing idolatry must be killed.
- ✚ A person is prohibited to oppress a stranger or charge interest to his fellow for loans borrowed.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 22, verse 27 - Chapter 23, verse 5

- ✚ The prohibition of cursing anyone of authority over you, i.e. a judge or a king.
- ✚ Firstborn children, animals and all first produce harvested must be redeemed as they belong to Hashem.
- ✚ The rules of what you must do if you come across a stray or fallen animal is discussed next.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 23, verses 6 - 19

- ✚ The prohibition of taking bribes or favouring a poor person without sufficient evidence and giving false testimonies are mentioned here.
- ✚ The mitzvahs relating to Shmittah, Shabbat and the festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot are spoken about next along with the prohibition of consuming meat and milk products together.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 23, verses 20 - 25

- ✚ Hashem instructs the nation to respect the authority of His Navi's (Prophets) and Rabbis.
- ✚ Hashem then promises to chase out the seven nations who currently inhabit the land of Israel and forewarns Bnai Yisrael in against making a treaty of peace with them.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 23, verse 26 - Chapter 24, verse 18

- ✚ Hashem explains the means by which the seven nations will be chased out of Israel.
- ✚ The borders of Eretz Yisrael (The Land of Israel) are defined.

- ✚ Moshe builds an altar and offers up a Korban (sacrifice). Bnai Yisrael proclaim "Naaseh Vnishma (We will do and we will listen). Moshe is told by Hashem, to ascend Mount Sinai where he will remain for 40 days and nights learning torah, so he can teach Bnai Yisrael all the mitzvahs upon his return.

Haftarah –

YERMEYAHU (JEREMIAH) Chapter 34 verses 8 to 22 and Chapter 33 verses 25 & 26

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Jerusalem is under siege by the Babylonians and is on the brink of defeat.
- ✚ King Tzidkeyahu (Zedekiah) proclaims that all slaves must be set free. At first the slaveholders comply, but they soon regret this and force them back.
- ✚ Yermeyahu (Jeremiah) sees this as a violation of the covenant made at Mount. Sinai and against the essence of creation.
- ✚ Hashem promises Yermeyahu that even though, Jerusalem will fall because of their actions. In the future, out of love for his people, he will personally assist them in reclaiming what's rightfully theirs.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ The first laws mentioned in this week's Parsha are about purchasing Jewish slaves and emphasizing the point they must be released after 6 years of labour.
- ✚ In the Haftarah the slave-owners did not adhere to this, so Hashem had to stress to Yermeyahu that he himself is the true master of the Jewish Nation, as only he has the power of protecting them from harm.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: Insights to the ethics of a Jewish Judicial System

In Jewish Law, the Torah only allows someone to be sold into slavery if they are caught stealing and is unable to repay back the debt owed. I'm betting that if you were asked what you would do to a thief who stole from you, the majority of you would say regardless if the thief can repay you back or not, they still need to be punished for his actions, even if it means going to prison.

Jewish Law is not concerned solely on the crime, but the perpetrators too. The Beth Din (Jewish Court) wouldn't send them to jail. Why? Because they believed sending them into the penal system, alongside murderer's and other criminal connections would more likely than not, once released, lead them to further and possibly worse acts of crime than just being a petty thief.

Since most people are commonly influenced by their surroundings. The Beth Din would send thieves to a place, not just to pay off their debts, but to educate them with good torah values, enabling them to become a better person.

The main aim of the Jewish Judicial System is to integrate the offenders, not to alienate them. Jewish Judges wanted to make sure that the criminals entered back into society, not once they had done the time and paid off their debts; but while they were paying them off. In that way the perpetrators would feel a sense of achievement and respect for both themselves and others in their lives, rather than feeling unloved and neglected whilst in prison.

The whole idea of Jewish ethics in my opinion is to create a positive environment where we can all live in harmony with one another, doing mitzvahs, learning torah etc., instead of a place full of negativity. If the Torah can show a master how they should treat their servants, aiding them to soften the blow of servitude and turn a common crook into a proper torah observant person, then surely we can learn the same lessons enabling us to become a more productive and successful community.

שבת שלום
S h a b b a t S h a l o m !