

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 49

30th August 2014

SHOFTIM

4th Elul 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 16, verse 18 - Chapter 17, verse 13

- ✚ Moshe tells Bnai Yisrael to assign judges and officers for the tribes. Once appointed they are instructed to make sure they adjudicate fairly.
- ✚ Moshe warns the people not to plant any idolatrous Asherah trees or erect anything linked to idol worship. The penalty for anyone found committing any acts of idolatry is stoning as long as it witnessed by at least two people. A single witness cannot condemn a person to death.
- ✚ If there is a dispute which the local courts are unable to settle. The case is then taken to the Kohanim and Levi'im to determine the outcome. Anyone who refuses to listen or comply with the final judgment is put to death.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 17, verses 14 - 20

- ✚ Moshe explains how an anointed Jewish King should behave, i.e. He must not have an excessive amount of horses, wives, silver and gold because they might lead him astray.
- ✚ The King is instructed to write two Sefer Torah's, one copy must be kept with him at all times in order not to become too arrogant and deviate from the commandments.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 18, verses 1 - 5

- ✚ Moshe explains, the reason why the Kohanim were not allocated any land was because they were chosen by Hashem personally to be his holy servants and that instead of an inheritance they will be the beneficiaries of receiving priestly gifts, selections of meat kept behind from certain Korbonos as well as tithes given to them by the other tribes.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 18, verses 6 - 12

- ✚ Even though the Kohanim are designated with their own role, serving in the Mishkan or the future temple, they can retain the right to offer up their own personal korbonos at any time.
- ✚ Moshe lists the kinds of false Prophets, soothsayers, sorcerers and astrologers amongst others, which the other nations listen to but are prohibited to us because we have Hashem.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 18, verse 13 - Chapter 19, verse 13

- ✚ If any Jewish Navi (Prophet) speaks in Hashem's name and declares that certain things will happen or must change but never transpires or goes against the Torah. They are classified as false-prophets and punished accordingly for trying to lead others astray.
- ✚ Moshe then reiterates the command to establish cities of refuge for inadvertent murderers.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 19, verse 14 - Chapter 20, verse 9

- ✚ The laws of witnesses are discussed in detail here.
- ✚ The rules of engaging an enemy in war are described here, including the prohibition of those people who are exempt from going into battle for various reasons.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 20, verse 10 - Chapter 21, verse 9

- ✚ Before waging war with the enemy we are commanded to try and make a peaceful resolution with them first to avoid bloodshed. If they refuse to listen, only then are we allowed to go out and fight.
- ✚ The procedure of what should be done relating to an Eglah Arufah. (A corpse which was found in-between two cities) is written in detail here.

Haftorah – Page 27, YISHAYAH (ISAIAH) Chapter 51 verse 12 to Chapter 52 verse 12

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ In answer to the past two weeks that Israel will not be consoled by any words offered to them by any Prophet; The Haftarah begins with Hashem assuring his people he will be the one who will comfort them personally.
- ✚ After briefly reprimanding Israel for forgetting Hashem and the suffering they had to endure because of it, Yishayah tells them the time has now arrived when our oppressors will become the oppressed and our hardships will cease to exist.
- ✚ Yishayah highlights the differences between the exodus from Mitzraim (Egypt, and the future Redemption which will end all exiles.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ This is the fourth prophecy of comfort read between the fast of Av and Rosh Hashanah.
- ✚ Unfortunately I was unable to find a direct connection between the Parsha and the Haftorah

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Amazing as it seems the month of Elul is with us. Not only is the last month of the Jewish calendar year, we should treat it with immense awe and a subdued moment in our lives committing ourselves to slow down and take stock of your life and self-analysing of all the successes and failures you may have done in the past; in order to be ready to bring in the New Year with a clean slate and renewed hope that after all the terrible atrocities we've unfortunately witnessed this past year will cease, so peace will once again reign supreme.

Elul is a time for personal growth. During Elul, we should ask ourselves if we made the most of our life and reached our potential this past year and how we can improve ourselves in the upcoming year. Having once identified our past mistakes through introspection, the next step is find a way to do Teshuva properly, by repenting with all your heart the Aveiros, (sins) committed.

Once again the month of Elul comes to the rescue, with the recitation of the special prayers called Selichot. This prayers focuses on entirely of producing Teshuva in which we ask Hashem personally to forgive us. The Sephardic communities have already began reciting Selichot on, Rosh Chodesh Elul however the Ashkenazi Jews begin reciting these prayers on the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah. The Selichot prayers describe the 13 merciful attributes of God. It was during the month of Elul that the Jews sinned by building the Golden Calf, Moses pleaded to Hashem to forgive them, and where Hashem explained the 13 Attributes of Mercy.

The sounding of the shofar is also crucial component during Elul so to speak, is the charger for our life battery that allows it to be fully functional in Tishrei and in the months beyond. We have all experienced the frustration of a dying battery on our cell phone or laptop computer at a vital moment. Well I think that this is how our soul feels if it was not somehow meaningfully recharged in the month of Elul. It runs out of power at crucial moments of our life. And that is usually the time that we need it most.

The sounding of the shofar in the month of Elul lends a sense of immediacy and drama to Elul. Small things never are a big deal. But Jewish tradition has chosen to make a big deal out of Elul and I totally agree. In reality the effect of any wrongs we have done, both individually and collectively, does not go away. We have to ponder the consequences of our words and deeds, express our remorse, and, above all, act upon it now before it in the month of Elul before it's too late. We have the capacity, to love and forgive all of Hashem's creations. Hashem has bestowed his inspiration on this great responsibility! I pray that we as a community will not let him down

