

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 47

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VA'ETCHANAN

13th AV 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 3, verse 23 – Chapter 4, verse 4

- ✚ Moshe Relives the moment when he pleaded with Hashem to allow him entry into Israel but Hashem refuses. Instead Hashem did allow Moshe to stand on top of a mountain to view the whole land from afar where he tells him that Yehoshua (Joshua) will appointed to lead the people in his stead.
- ✚ Moshe explains to Bnai Yisrael what to do and how to behave when they enter the Promised Land.
- ✚ Moses instructs the people to follow Hashem's Torah, and never to add to or detract from it

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 4, verses 5 - 40

- ✚ Moshe warns the nation not to forget the Torah's revelation and all the miracles they witnessed at Mount Sinai.
- ✚ Worshiping any forms of graven images is totally forbidden and would result in exile and annihilation. However in his mercy, Hashem would eventually forgive them and allow them to return once more.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 4, verses 41 - 49

- ✚ Moshe sets aside three (Ir Miklat) cities of refuge on the western bank of the Jordan River: Betzer, Ramot and Gilad.
- ✚ These cities are to be used to house anyone who has accidentally killed another in order to keep them safe.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 5, verses 1 - 17 and

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 5, verse 18 - Chapter 6, verse 3

- ✚ Moshe reminds Bnai Yisrael what occurred at Mount Sinai and he stood between them and Hashem, because they were afraid of the fire that had engulfed the mountain.
- ✚ The Ten Statements (Commandments) are repeated to remind Bnai Yisrael that Hashem's covenant to them is eternal and not just for those who were physically present at the time of the original revelation.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 6, verses 4 - 25

- ✚ The first paragraph of the Shema is recited here.
- ✚ Moshe expresses all the wonderful things both agriculturally and in construction that Bnai Yisrael is going to receive after they've conquered the land as long as they don't forget it was Hashem who had given it to them.
- ✚ Moses instructs the nation what to respond to their children who might inquire why they observe all the commandments: "We were slaves in Egypt, and Hashem took us out in order that we serve Him, so that we could reap the rewards for doing so."

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 7, verses 1 - 11

- ✚ Moshe reassures his people, although the seven nations who currently occupy the land of Israel are strong, they will be no match for them.
- ✚ Finally Moshe warns Bnai Yisrael about the prohibition of intermarriage because Hashem has chosen them over all the other nations to be Hashem's holy people.

Haftorah – YISHAYAH (ISAIAH) Chapter 40 verses 1 to 26

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ This week's Haftorah begins with Hashem's encouraging and inspiring the prophets by revealing that Jerusalem's period of golus (exile) has been fulfilled and that all past sins have been forgiven.
- ✚ Yishayah describes some of the miraculous events that will unfold with the onset of the messianic era, such as the return of the exiles to Jerusalem, the revelation of Hashem's glory to the world etc.
- ✚ Yishayah comforts the people, by reassuring them that Hashem has always had and always will love, care and look after his chosen nation.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ This is the first of the seven 'Prophecies of comfort' which are read between the ninth of Av and Rosh Hashanah.
- ✚ The Haftorah begins with the words "You should be comforted" describing the bright future that Bnai Yisrael are destined to receive.
- ✚ Va'etchanan is always read the Shabbat after the fast of Av because it contains the ten statements, symbolizing the fact that our sadness has ended and we can once again resume in embracing Hashem's torah with joy and happiness.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: The Importance of the Shema

The Shema is the oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism, recited both morning and night since ancient times. It is one of only two prayers that are specifically commanded to recite in Torah (the other being Birkat Ha-Mazon (Grace after meals)). Unlike most other prayers which were written by humans to bring us closer to Hashem; the Shema is unique because it is a prayer to Hashem written by Hashem.

The content of the Shema talks about the very core of Hashem and our relationship towards him. The first part of the Shema begins with one of the best-known and most fundamental expressions of Jewish belief, and the one from which this prayer gets its name: Shema Yisrael Hashem Kelohainu, Hashem E'chad (Hear O' Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one). The second line however, (Barukh sheim k'vod... (Blessed is His name, whose glorious kingdom is forever) is actually not part of this passage read from the Torah. It's a congregational response from the temple times whenever the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) would say Hashem's Divine Name, the people would respond with this line. Today, it is not said aloud except during the Yom Kippur services.

The Shema itself is a declaration of faith, So much of Judaism is concerned with observing practical laws, both positive and negative, both ethical and ritual. The Shema stands out as a cry of belief, something that cannot be complacent with or ignored. The words have to personally penetrate all our hearts. Not simply carried out ritually or avoided, it has to be personally taken to heart.

The Shema also includes two particular rituals as reminders that Judaism is not just for once a week on the Sabbath, nor reserved for a special place or time to practice and embrace the religion. Both the wearing of Tefillin and placing Mezuzah's at eye level on our doors show us that Judaism is integral for all times of the day and week, and in every place ("when you sit in your home and walk in the street, when you lie down and rise up").

I believe our daily readings of the shema will enforce our Jewish values, traditions, and heritage preparing us to overcome any obstacles we find across our paths. This will bring us all, ever closer to Hashem showing the world that Hashem truly is one' who will ultimately allow us to live our lives in united peace in the land of Israel, together as one.

