



Snapshot Torah

GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 29

2nd May 2015

ACHAREI/ KEDOSHIM

13th Iyar 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 1 - 24

- ✚ The Kohen Gadol (High Priest) is instructed to only enter the Holy of Holies chamber of the Mishkan / Beis Hamikdash once a year, on Yom Kippur. Once inside, He must conduct a special service and specific offerings which are detailed in this reading.
- ✚ The Kohen Gadol had to dress in his special white garments for this occasion and was only permitted to enter this holy sanctum amidst a cloud of burning incense. During the Korbonos, the Kohen Gadol would "confess" on behalf of the entire nation, attaining atonement for the past year's sins.
- ✚ The Aliyah continues with a description of the ritual involving two goats.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 25 - Chapter 17, verse 7

- ✚ After concluding the order of the Yom Kippur service in the Mishkan / Beis Hamikdash, the Torah instructs us how to observe Yom Kippur as a Day of Atonement by abstaining from performing any work and "afflict" ourselves by fasting.
- ✚ Bnai Yisrael are then forbidden to offer Korbonos (sacrifices) anywhere else other than the Mishkan or the Beis Hamikdash.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 17, verse 8- Chapter 18, verse 21

- ✚ Bnai Yisrael are ordered not to consume any blood. When slaughtering fowl or undomesticated animals, the law is to cover their blood with earth.
- ✚ Bnai Yisrael are admonished not to follow the depraved ways of the Egyptians and Canaanites.
- ✚ The Torah then provides a list of prohibited sexual relationships which includes adultery, cohabiting with a menstruating woman, and forbidden close relatives amongst others.

R'Vi'l - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 18, verse 22 - Chapter 19, verse 14

- ✚ The prohibitions against homosexuality and bestiality are mentioned here.
- ✚ Hashem commands the Jewish people to be holy and warns them that engaging in any of those forbidden relationships will result in their expulsion from the holy Land of Israel as it cannot tolerate immoral behavior.
- ✚ Several laws are then briefly touched upon: revering parents; observing the Shabbat; prohibitions against idolatry; the obligation to burn "leftover" sacrificial flesh; the obligation to leave certain parts of one's harvest for the poor; not to lie, cheat, withhold wages, swear falsely, cursing and misleading others.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 19, verses 15 - 32

- ✚ Other Torah prohibitions are described here, including with the laws of one who commits adultery with a half-free maidservant, the laws of "orlah," the prohibition against eating the fruit of a new sapling for the first three years and the obligation to sanctify the fruit of the fourth year.
- ✚ Engaging in witchcraft, prostitution, or having tattoos are also forbidden.
- ✚ Men are instructed not to destroy the hair at the edges of their scalp or the corners of their beards.
- ✚ Finally we are commanded to observe the Shabbat; respect Hashem's sanctuary, all Torah scholars and the elderly.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 19, verse 33 - Chapter 20, verse 7

- ✚ We are commanded to love any person who has converted to Judaism. We are also enjoined to be truthful in the way we conduct business. E.g. maintaining honest weights and measures.
- ✚ The Torah prescribes capital punishment for anyone who worships Molech (a form of idolatry which required human sacrifices.) and also describes the punishment which will befall the nation if they neglect to punish these worshippers.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 20, verses 8 – 27

- ✚ Punishments are set out for individuals who curse their parents or engage in prohibited sexual relationships.
- ✚ The sedra concludes with instructions not to follow the customs and traditions of heathens, and to be meticulous about eating only kosher food, re-emphasizing Hashem's request that we should all be holy.

Haftorah – Yehezkel (Ezekiel) Chapter 20, verses 2 - 20

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The prophet Yehezkel transmits Hashem's message, reminding the Jewish people how He chose them as His nation, how He took them out of Mitzraim and promised to take them to the Holy Land of Israel.
- ✚ Yehezkel goes on to mention Hashem's punishments of Bnai Yisrael in the midbar (desert), namely that they did not enter the Holy Land.
- ✚ Finally he admonishes the children not to follow in their fathers' ways, but to observe the laws and to sanctify the Shabbat.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ The basic theme of both the Parsha and Haftorah is the responsibility of us as Jews to maintain a life style of Kedusha (Holiness) that sets us apart from all the other nations, which grants us the right to live in Eretz Yisrael.
- ✚ The Sedra deals with the Yom Kippur service and explains how it helps to purify people.
- ✚ In the Haftorah, we read that the kingdom of Yehuda had sunk once again to a very low level of morality.
- ✚ The Jewish people were told because they had behaved in the exact opposite of what Hashem wanted and commanded, that they would be thrown out and exiled away from the holy land of Israel.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Looking at what is going on around us today. Three statements in this week's double sedra stood out to me, in which the Torah guides us as to the proper conduct and response we should have when someone has grieved and wronged us in some way. The first one is "You shall not hate your brother in your heart". The second "You shall not take revenge." and the third you should not bear a grudge against the members of your people".

The Rambam explains that a person should not harbour hatred in their heart against one who has offended them; instead he should discuss their grievance with the offender and that if the offender regrets his actions and asks for forgiveness, they should be forgiven. For a loving person will never allow hatred to fester in their heart.

Thinking about it, the phrase in the torah that prohibits hating your fellow and the verse prohibiting bearing a grudge actually contradict one another. It seems like the Torah is legitimizing the right of feeling hatred and resentment towards someone who has wronged us. Even though hurting or insulting another is not permitted, per se. The Torah is telling us that these acts don't actually violate the prohibition of "You shall not hate". Whereas in the second verse the Torah commands us not to have any feelings of hatred and resentment at all. Thereby just bite the bullet, forget that anything ever happened and move on. So which is it?

The Answer is, as most things in life, depends on what type of grievance was done. I don't believe the Torah would ever command a person to forget about and ignore what had happened, removing any trace of resentment from your heart towards someone who has genuinely hurt you in some way. However even then the Torah is instructing and warning us not to keep those feelings of hatred and resentment inside for too long, as it will only make the situation worse and make you ill.

The Rambam stresses this point further. Even though harbouring hatred is not punishable by the Courts, It's a very bad trait to have. A person should try their utmost to rise above it all because in most cases once the dust settles. Everyone, even the offender will come to realise it was just a trivial matter after all and could have been worked out amicably and was not worth seeking revenge for.

The Rambam then goes on to say that bearing a grudge is also a pointless exercise. For as long as a person keeps bringing the grievance to the fore, they are just fuelling their own will of seeking out revenge. Meaning that what could have been easily resolved and nipped in the bud as soon as the grievance began, has now escalated and spiralled out of control.

At the end of the day this is how divisions between two people, families, communities and wars start; and the longer it goes on as history has proved, the longer it will take to heal and mend those bridges. This is the reason why I think the Torah condemns holding grudges. The Torah's therapy for dealing with anyone who wrongs us, if we feel legitimately hurt, is that we have a right to be upset but should not keep those feelings inside for too long. Instead we should approach the one who hurt us and ask for an explanation or an apology. And if the wrong doing was not serious, more of the 'Garden Tool variety' then we are instructed by the Torah not to fill our heads with all that anger but instead forget about it just let it go for your own good.

