

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 44

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SHOFTIM

7th 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 a Eglah Arufah. (A corpse which was found in-between two cities) is written in detail here.

Haftorah –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:

Mahatma Gandhi once famously quoted “An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind” All the Torah commentators make it perfectly clear that the words “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” written in this week’s Parsha should not be taken literally, the idea behind them is to not only teach us about punitive justice, where people are punished for doing bad things, but also about restorative justice, where there is reconciliation between people, or the damage done being repaired.

Using the Torah’s example for instance, if you punched someone in the eye and caused an injury. It would be your duty to do what is necessary to fix the impairment and the equivalent compensation paid to the victim for both the damage that had been sustained and any financial losses that have incurred along the way because of it.

Atonement is also a major theme running through this sedra and is a timely reminder of the mindset we should all be having as we approach the upcoming high festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Justice and forgiveness are very closely connected. During the month of Elul there is the custom to reflect on the mistakes you may have done wrong over the past year and try to rectify them. One solution is to approach the person / persons whom you wronged and ask for forgiveness; but just like the expressions mentioned in this week’s sedra. It’s vital that you don’t take this method to literally. Before you go trying to get people to forgive, you should first think to yourself ‘have I really done enough to display my true regret for what I did and assisted in making it right in order to deserve being forgiven.

This process is called teshuva, which is like returning the relationship we had, to what it was before someone got hurt. It is not enough to apologize to someone and expect to be forgiven straight away. You have to first demonstrate to them that you are deeply sincere and really mean it. . If the person does not forgive you, then think why not? If you can come up with a good reason, then fix it. If you cannot think of a reason, then ask yourself instead, should I have done more to resolve the situation I caused? or if the scenario was reverse would I have forgiven them if they approached me?

The whole point of teshuva is to focus on the big picture and changing our behaviour long term. For me personally, it doesn’t mean that the fact I’ve done something bad means I’m a bad person because I didn’t act responsibly enough in the first place. It just illustrates there are flaws in my character traits that requires more attention and needs more work to make me a better person. Hereby not replicating the same mistakes in the future and behave differently if the same scene happened to play out again.

If everyone of us just took and changed one thing during this special time leading up to the Yom Noraim for the good. Then our world would not only be a better place but Hashem will surely inscribe us all in the book of life filled with good health, financial stability and happiness.

