

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 48

19th September 2015

Vayelech

6th Tishri 5776

Kohen - First Aliya: Chapter 31, verses 1 – 3

- ✚ Moshe informs his nation that he is now 120 years old and Hashem has refused him entry into the Promised Land. He tells them not to worry because their new leader Yehoshua (Joshua) with Hashem's guidance will help them in conquering the land of Israel.

Levi - Second Aliya: Chapter 31, verses 4 - 6

- ✚ Moshe quashes Bnai Yisrael fears of their upcoming battles further by convincing them that Hashem will vanquish the inhabitants of Canaan as He did the Emorites and Bashanites previously.
- ✚ . Moses instructed the Israelites and Yehoshua to stay strong and not fear their enemies.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya: Chapter 31, verse 7 - 9

- ✚ Moshe writes down the whole Torah and presents it to the Kohanim, Levi'im and the tribal elders of Bnai Yisrael.

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya: Chapter 31, verse 10 - 13

- ✚ Moshe instructs his nation that at the end of every Shmittah year, during Succot. The Torah must be read by their Leader or King. This will be known as the 'Hak'hayl ceremony' and must be implemented in order to teach Bnai Yisrael to fear Hashem and to take great care when performing the mitzvot of the Torah.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya: Chapter 31, verses 14 - 19 and

Shishi - Sixth Aliya: Chapter 31, verses 20 - 24

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe he is about to die and reveals to both him and Yehousha that a time will come when the Jewish people will abandon Hashem and stray after alien and idolatrous gods.
- ✚ When that time comes, Hashem explains that he will hide His countenance from the nation, and that they will be subjected to much hardship and harm.
- ✚ Hashem commands Moshe to write a poem and teach it to Bnai Yisrael so it can be recited for all time.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya: Chapter 31, verses 25 - 30

- ✚ .Moshe obeys and presents the Poem to the Levi'im who place it alongside the Aron as a witness.
- ✚ Moshe tells the nation that he knows one day they will come to sin but Hashem will ultimately forgive them.
- ✚ Finally Moshe recites the words of the Poem to the entire congregation which is narrated in next week's sedra

Haftorah – Hosea Chapter 14, verses 2-10, Micah Chapter 7, verses 18-20 & Yoel Chapter 2 verses 11-27

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The prophet Hosea exhorts the Jewish people to "Return, O Israel, to Hashem your Lord, "encouraging them to repent sincerely and ask for Hashem's forgiveness.
- ✚ Hosea urges the people that if they place their trust in Hashem wholeheartedly, Hashem in return will promise to remove His anger from Israel and forgive them.
- ✚ The Haftorah moves to the Book of Micah, which describes Hashem's kindness in forgiving the sins of His beloved nation. Micah concludes with a supplication for Hashem to remember the covenants He made with the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- ✚ The Haftorah concludes with a section from Yoel who after predicting a plague of locusts, he urges the people to perform communal fasting and teshuva.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ In recognition of this being the Shabbat known as 'Shabbat Shuva' this week's Haftorah begins with the words 'Shuva Yisrael' (Return! People of Israel.)
- ✚ The Haftorah is always read on the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to highlight the importance of repentance and doing teshuva during this time.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Every Jewish Holiday has its own particular observances. Most of them are clear and finite Mitzvot and rituals. For example; On Pesach we abstain from eating chametz. We make a Seder, drink four cups of wine and eat matzo. On Sukkot we take the Lulav and Esrog and sit in the Sukkah etc. The period of the High Holidays is slightly different in this regard. In addition to the rituals performed on Rosh Hashanah, the blowing of the shofar and the various customs of eating certain fruits and vegetables, honey cake, sugar instead of salt on our Challah etc.; the ensuing days are chockfull with a variety of nuances that seem to pop up at different hours of the day and affect us some slightly and others more overtly at varying times throughout the whole month of Tishrei. Regardless if it is Morning, noon or night there are always activities that keep the spirit of the holidays sustained and alive, all the way to Yom Kippur and beyond. Our synagogues for instance; looks different from the average weekday or Shabbat because everything from the bimah. The ark and The Torah scroll covers are all bedecked in white. Alarm clock's rings out at least a half hour earlier than normal enabling us to be able to recite Selichot (additional supplications and prayers) before davening Shacharis (the morning service).

Even that is not enough. The daily weekday prayers that we recite have additional insertions that constantly remind us that we are in the midst of the days of awe too. Smack in the middle of the prayers just before the Shema, the Ark is opened in order to say a verse of Psalms; The Shemoneh Esrei (Amidah prayer) contains insertions and substitutions that refer to Hashem as our King as opposed to His usual title G-d. There are also other extra insertions in the tefillot. The Kaddish is altered with seemingly subtle amendments that bear the weight of fundamental changes. All these modifications and additions are put in place to remind us about Hashem's power as a Judge and Purveyor of life.

These constant reminders are so important that, by just forgetting to insert even one of these subtle changes would render the entire recitation of our prayers invalid; meaning you would then be obligated to go back and recite the whole thing again, correctly. Even though I can understand some of the reasons for these insertions and nuances, I often wondered: What is the objective of these insertions? Will they change our attitude toward life? Will they accomplish more than the shofar blasts of Rosh Hashanah and fasting all day on Yom Kippur praying and shedding tears of remorse as we try and clean our tarnished slates for the coming year?

Every variance represents an important symbolism and powerful supplication, During these days of awe we must keep on inserting tiny wake up calls that shout out to us, "Remember our Greatest Rabbi, our true King, Hashem himself and return back to him!" Switching words, opening the Ark, watching what food we are eating all may be just minor acts but in the greater view of things, they are reminders that we are living in a very spiritual and holy period and the King is waiting for us to remember him. We live in a world that is fraught with distractions. We become too immersed in our own little worlds and often get side-tracked and forget about the greater spiritual picture. During these ten days of penitence it is so important to have these subtle roadblocks inserted in the daily rote of our mundane lives to insert an extra boost of spirituality in all that we do in this auspicious time of year. May we all remember and acknowledge who our true king is and stand proudly once again by his side.

שבת שלום