

TAL TorahActionLife

COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

This week's edition is sponsored
Lehatslachat Raaya Bat Liora
Yehudit Vechol Mishpacha

SHOFTIM

6th ELLUL 5776

Shabbat begins: 19:15

Shabbat ends: 20:15



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Decisions

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (1:6) states that we should make ourselves (have) a Rabbi, and buy ourselves a friend.

Generally our perspective is highly subjective and biased with respect to all matters concerning our self. Our desires blind our eyes from anything other than the object of our desires and prevent us from weighing the pros and cons objectively. For this reason, writes Meiri in his commentary to Proverbs (20:18), one needs the perspective of someone who is removed from all the subjective biases that cloud one's vision, someone who can weigh the situation without having to contend with a welter of strong desires. With the help of good friends and advice from Sages we are destined to succeed along the right path.

Our Parsha commands us to adhere to the teachings of the Jewish Court: "According to the teaching that they will teach you and according to the judgment they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word they will tell you, right or left". Devarim (17:11).

Not only is there a positive command to listen to a Jewish Court, but moreover there is a negative prohibition of deviating from that which they tell you.

The Sefer haChinuch explains that the nature of human beings is that they are argumentative and have disagreements. People view things differently. The Almighty realized that if everyone had the ability to interpret Torah according to their own

disaster and the Torah would quickly disintegrate into a multiplicity of legal codes. Therefore, it is incumbent on the masses to follow the central authority of the Jewish High Court.

Lest we think that this only applies to the Sanhedrin that sat in the Hewn Chamber on the premises of the Holy Temple, the Chinuch continues: "And thus it is to be in each and every generation that the masses must listen to the Sages (of that generation) who received their tradition with much diligence and effort from the Sages of previous generations. And concerning this matter, the scripture enjoins us not to deviate from the words of our teachers 'to the right or to the left'. Our rabbis have interpreted this to mean that even if they tell us that what we think is our right hand is our left hand and what we think is our left hand is our right hand, we should accept their teaching." (Sifrei)

How can this be so? If we empirically know that the Sages are wrong, then why listen to them? The Chinuch addresses this question:

"Even if they are in error about a certain matter, it is inappropriate for us to dispute them and we should go along with their error. It is better to suffer with their single mistake (rather than undermine their authority), so that in general their good



understanding of the Pesukim, anarchy would reign amongst the Jewish people. Such an approach would be a recipe for

Living with Mitzvos

1. The possuk (16:18) brings the need for judges in each city. We know that there are three types of Beis Din – of three people, twenty-three and seventy-one. Which of these is referred to here as being needed in each city?
2. Rashi (16:22) brings the difference between a matzeva, of one stone, is forbidden while a mizbayach, an altar made from many stones is allowed. This is despite the fact that the matzeva was beloved to Hashem during the times of the Avos. It nevertheless became hated afterwards since the idol worshippers did the same. The question is why then is only the matzeva forbidden? The idol worshippers also used the mizbayach in which case it should also be forbidden?
3. The death of the Zoken Mamrei, rebellious elder, is delayed and only carried out by the next festival. (see 17:13 and Rashi). Why is his death pushed off to this time more than the death of other sinners who are killed immediately? Why wait and kill him by the place of the Sanhedrin in Yerushalayim?
4. What is the significance of the Kohanim being given only certain different parts of the animal – the foreleg, the jaw and the maw (18:3)?
5. The parsha that almost always appears at the beginning of the month of Elul is Parshas Shoftim. The Shlah (Parshas Vayishlach) says that the parsha of the week is also connected to the time of the year. How then is Parshas Shoftim connected to the month of Elul?

Answers On Page 3

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advice will remain sovereign and the masses will always be bound by their wise authority." In other words, they may be wrong on occasion but it is better for the "system" that they not be questioned, even about their obvious errors. Once people start arguing with the Sages, the entire infrastructure of Rabbinic authority will collapse. Once the system collapses, it's all over! It is better live with the mistake, rather than destroy the whole system.

The Alter of Novordok, Rav Yosef Yoisef Horowitz states that when the rabbis give a Mashal (parable) to explain the words of the Torah, its not accidental. They could have said if the Rabbi tells you white is black, or black is white then believe him. Why did they chose to express the belief in our Sages through the example of - if the Sages tell you that your right hand is your left and vice versa you should follow their words? Rav Horowitz gives an awesome explanation, when someone tells you that your right hand is your left, they are telling you that you are going in the completely wrong direction. You must turn around, and when you do, your right hand will be in the same place as your left and vice versa. When the Mishna taught; "Make a rabbi for yourself" – the real meaning is to make yourself have a rabbi that you are prepared to listen to. A Rabbi that you trust and have confidence in, so much so, that were he to tell you to change directions in life you would observe his advice.



**RABBI MENACHEM JUNIK
BEIS GAVRIEL LUBAVITCH**

**Ellul, A Taste Of The Days
Of Mashiach**

Moshe Rabeinu continues in this week's Parsha, Shoftim, to prepare the Jewish people before they enter the Land of Israel, he explains and elaborates on the many Mitzvot that had previously been given and teaches others that appear here for the first time.

Shoftim deals primarily with the establishment of a system of leadership, beginning with the appointment of courts, judges and officers in every city in Eretz Yisroel. The Torah says 'Judges and officers you shall appoint at all of your gates'. Rashi

Baruch Hashem this generation has been blessed with Talmidei Chachamim, Great Sages that are happy to grant advice and help us lead the correct path.

I recently heard a story of a Holocaust survivor who was permitted to remarry on the basis of evidence that her husband had perished in the concentration camps. Then, after more than 20 years, when she had grown children of marriageable age, she met her first husband. The distraught woman came to seek Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's guidance.

R Moshe asked the woman to tell her story. She told of how she had brought her case before a well-known Rav in one of the Displaced Persons Camps after the war. Based on available testimony and evidence, this Rav had ruled it correct to assume her husband dead, and had given her a document containing this decision. It was on the basis of this ruling that she had remarried. The Rav had passed away not long after the war, and, due to the chaotic post-war conditions, she had lost the document. Now she and her family were suffering indescribably from a mistake that was not theirs.

Rabbi Moshe asked to repeat her story, and she did so. He asked her to tell it a third time. Why was R Moshe tormenting the poor woman so? R Moshe then rose, leaned

across the table and said agitatedly to the woman, "It cannot be! I knew the rav of whom you speak. He was a Gaon and a Tzadik, and I do not even approach his ankles in Torah. I have permitted over two thousand Agunot to remarry and never did the first husband reappear. Now you are telling me that such a thing could have happened to that Tzadik? It is impossible! It cannot be!" The people in the room were shocked that R Moshe, who was famous for his mild manner and compassion, could have spoken in such a way to a woman in distress. But their shock gave way to incredulity when the woman broke down in tears and admitted that her story was indeed false. She had been sure that her husband was dead - how could he have survived, she had asked herself. When she heard that a highly respected rabbi had passed away, she made up the story concerning the document, using that rabbi's name.

The Torah is the blue print of the world, and our Sages are constantly connected to it. They live their every second by it, and are true servants of Hashem.

They too are human and there is of course always the possibility that they can err, nevertheless the Torah commands us to follow them every step of the way. That is the right thing, even if we think it might not be.

explains that the judges mean those who will pass judgment, and officers means those who implement the words of the judges. This verse reminds us of the eleventh Bracha of the silent Amida which we say 3 times a day, where we mention 'Return your judges as of old and your advisors as in the beginning'.

We see that unlike in our Parsha where it mentions officers to enforce the law, when it is said in the Amida all we mention is judges and advisors but not officers of enforcement. Why? The Rabbis tell us that our Parsha talks about the times of exile, whilst the Amida talks about the era of redemption- the days of Moshiach.

This week's Parsha connects the judges and the officers, as one is dependent on the other. The Midrash stresses the need for both of these roles: 'Without the policeman, there is no judge. For if the court finds a person guilty, once he leaves the courtroom the judge is powerless unless the policeman takes control.'

In the times of the Galut, our commitment to Torah and Mitzvot are at times weaker and we don't always have the full focus, therefore officers of the law are needed to make sure

that the judge's words are enforced. In the days of Moshiach, by the final redemption, when our relationship with Hashem will be stronger in a more revealed manner, and our commitment to Torah and Mitzvot won't be hampered by the Galut mentality, the judges will be seen as advisors and we will regularly follow their words and it wont be necessary to have officers to enforce the words of the judge.

There is a fundamental difference between a judge and an advisor. A judge pronounces his verdict and whether the recipient understands the reasoning for the verdict or not, or whether he wants to fulfil and obey those words, he has no choice and must follow the words of the law. This represents the days of the Galut. In the days of Moshiach the emphasis is on him being an advisor, who is someone who speaks to the recipient at a level that they can understand and they see that it is to their benefit.

This week is the second Shabbos of the month of Elul-the month in which we prepare for the days of judgment-Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. As the Alter Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi said, 'In the month of Elul the



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king is in the field and Hashem is accessible to us more than any time of the year'. Unlike when the king is in the city, when it is very difficult to approach and greet the king, now in the month of Elul we don't have to go through any protocol or wait in long lines to see Hashem, our King. Our ability to interact and to connect to Hashem is more open and available to us and we should enhance

our relationship through Mitzvot, prayer and Torah study. Elul is also the month of reckoning. Just like a businessperson must periodically take an accounting and correct any faults in his business, likewise this month we make an accounting of our spiritual connection to Hashem of everything that occurred over the last year.

May the month of Elul encourage us to move forward from our Galut mentality, where officers are necessary to implement the will of the judges, to the Era of Moshiach, with the Final Redemption, where we ourselves will be involved with great devotion in Torah and Mitzvot. As Maimonides, the Rambam says, the entire world will be filled with a knowledge and appreciation of Hashem.



STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM

Rabbi Shalom Shimuni

The home of Rabbi Eliyahu in the Gaftsa district of Tunis was small and modest, but the light of Torah shined and radiated outwards, attracting the Jews of Tunis.

Grace and goodness were always found on the lips of Rabbi Eliyahu and his wife. As Dayan of the community, the Rav set aright the behavior of the faithful, smoothing out difficulties and rendering equitable judgments.

It was in this home that their son Rabbi Shalom Shimuni was born in 5543. Like his father, he became a Dayan and spiritual guide. Beginning from his early years, he would visit great rabbis such as Rabbi Yeshua Bessis and others.

Rabbi Shalom Shimuni attained exceptional depths in Torah learning and derived from there a vast number of its secrets and a great amount of its wisdom.

He trained students as shochatim (ritual slaughterers) and instructed them in all their regulations. We tell the story of how, one day, a shochet (a ritual slaughterer) arrived in Tunis from a tiny village. The shochatim of Tunis began to slander him and claimed that he didn't perfectly know all the regulations pertaining to shechita (ritual slaughtering). Actually, they feared that he would compete against them for business and harm their livelihood.

The shochatim addressed themselves to Rabbi Yeshua Bessis and asked him to examine the man's shechita so as to verify his expertise.

Rabbi Yeshua Bessis summoned the shochet and asked him to present his knife. The shochet took out his knife and gave it to the Rav, who then examined it thoroughly and found it to be perfect.

The city's shochatim once again succumbed to feelings of jealousy against their colleague and took off with his knife, damaging it in numerous places. The shochet found out and sharpened the knife several times, presenting it to Rabbi Yeshua Bessis who once again found it to be perfect.

Rabbi Yeshua Bessis wanted to verify the expertise of the shochet in matters of shechita. The shochet confidently answered all the questions asked him, surprising all his listeners by the clarity and precision of his responses.

Rabbi Yeshua couldn't understand: How could a simple Jew, one who had never seriously studied Torah, know so perfectly well all the regulations of shechita?

He therefore asked the shochet for the name of his teacher.

"Rabbi Shalom Shimuni was my teacher and Rav," replied the shochet.

And so Rabbi Yeshua Bessis was reassured.

"I knew that there was no one like him to teach others," he said.

Rabbi Shalom Shimuni rendered his soul to his Creator in 5624 at the age of 81. According to his last wishes, they buried a drum full of no-longer used Torah scrolls. Certain individuals in the surrounding area thought that the drum held all of Rabbi Shalom's gold, and so they decided to dig up his tomb in the middle of the night in order to get away with all the loot.

The next day, passers-by to the gravesite found his body uncovered, with his hand over his heart.

They rushed to the community leaders and told them of this terrible discovery. Sorrow and dismay fell upon the city. The gravediggers and their directors (the community leaders) hastened to the site to repair the grave and ask for forgiveness from Rabbi Shalom HaTzaddik.



Living with Mitzvos

1. See Rabbeinu Bechai who seems to say that in Parshas Shoftim it is referring to the need of the Beis Din of twenty-three, known as the Sanhedri Ketana. They had the power to judge cases with death punishments.
2. The Ramban answers that the mazteva was used everywhere while the mizbayach was only used in some places. Therefore only the mazteva was forbidden. Another answer is that the mazteva was situated at the entrance of the place of worship and was the focus of it. However, the mizbayach was just used afterwards as a means to bring up the sacrifices.
3. Perhaps the idea is that this sinner is unique in some ways. We are not scared that the average person will do this sin since the criteria for it is to be a wise elder. However, such a person must be influential in imparting his false views to others. Therefore, to show that their views are incorrect and stop them being continued by others, his death is done publically by the festival. It is done by the place of Sanhedrin in Yerushalayim, the place that is the source for the correct Torah views.
4. Rashi brings that these parallel three things Pinchos did. The Rambam (Moreh 3:39) that these three are the beginning of different parts of the body: the jaw is the start of the body; the maw is the start of the stomach and the foreleg is the start of the extension of the main body. The Ibn Ezra says that these are the most tastiest cuts of meat. The Ralbag learns that these allude to different things the Leviyim do to assist their fellow Jews.
5. The month of Elul is when people start preparing for their Din on Rosh Hashana, which is seen as the function of the shoftim – the judges! Thus it is a reminder and introduction of what is coming and is the focus of the month of Elul.

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Three days later, two Arabs from a surrounding village tremblingly presented themselves to the leaders of the community.

"Forgive us, sages and saintly men, for we admit our sin. It was we who desecrated the grave of Chacham Shalom," they said as they broke into tears.

"We thought we could find a great treasure in the tomb, but while we were digging in the middle of the night, the deceased himself terrified us. Now my legs don't function properly, my friend has become blind, and there was a third person with us and we don't know where he disappeared to," he concluded.

The leaders of the community looked at one another in shock as they listened to such an amazing story.

All the inhabitants of the village where the Arabs come from suddenly became ill and were at death's door until such time as they asked for forgiveness and began to pay for the salvation of the Tzaddik Rabbi Shalom Shimuni's soul.



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