



South Head Youth Parasha Sheet



PARASHAT SHOFTIM

Moshe informs the Jewish people that Hashem will be appointing a Jewish king to rule over them. The king will be chosen from the tribe of Yehudah and will be responsible for the entire Jewish nation. He will need to ensure that the nation follows Hashem's Torah and Mitzvot and that the land of Israel is governed in accordance with Torah law. He will also be required to lead the Jewish army in war. Moshe tells the Jewish people that the Jewish king is to be held in such high regard, that when they see the king, the Jewish people are



required to make a special blessing! Moshe also tells the Jewish people that a Jewish king has to perform four Mitzvot specific to a Jewish king. No other Jew is required to perform these Mitzvot. The first Mitzvah forbids a Jewish king from having too many horses. The reason for this is because the more horses a king has, the stronger his army is. Hashem wants the Jewish king to realise that the strength and the victories of the Jewish army come from Hashem and not from the number of horses he owns. The second Mitzvah forbids a Jewish king from collecting too much gold and silver for himself. He is however, permitted to collect large amounts of gold and silver for the Beit Hamikdash. This is because if a king has too much gold and

silver he will become haughty and full of pride and Hashem does not want the Jewish people to have an arrogant king. The third Mitzvah forbids a Jewish king from marrying too many wives. The king is permitted to have up to eighteen wives but no more as too many wives would turn his heart astray. The fourth Mitzvah of a Jewish king is the Mitzvah to write two Torah scrolls. One is to be kept in the palace treasury and one with the king at all times. Even if he inherited two scrolls from his father, he must write one scroll himself. No matter where he is, a Jewish king always has a Torah scroll in his back pocket. This ensures that the Jewish king remembers Hashem no matter where he is and that he is a servant of the Torah. When a Jewish king carries a Torah scroll with him he will remain humble. He will constantly remember that Hashem is the true King and the One who governs the entire world! The second Torah scroll is kept in the royal treasury where the presence of his immense wealth could easily blind the king to his responsibilities. The sages use this passage as a prime example of the wisdom of the Torah.

In addition to the appointment of a Jewish king, Moshe tells the Jewish people that a Jewish court will be appointed for the Jewish people. The Jewish court is the Beit Din. The Beit Din will base all of its decisions on the Torah law. Moshe tells the people that every city and town in Israel, no matter its size, is required to appoint a Beit Din consisting of three judges. The Beit Din in the towns and cities is only permitted to judge small cases such as cases of theft. All major cases are required to be brought before the big Beit Din in Jerusalem which is called the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy judges and one leader. They had a special room in the Beit Hamikdash in which they would judge the various cases brought before them. Moshe tells the Jewish people that they may never go against the words of the Sanhedrin nor should they contradict the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin should always have the last word. The Sanhedrin, unlike the Beit Din was permitted to give a death sentence if deemed necessary. Moshe tells the nation that even if they believe the Sanhedrin is wrong they are forbidden by the Torah to go against the word of the Sanhedrin. Any person who doesn't listen to the Sanhedrin will be punished. Additionally, if a Beit Din is unable to settle a case, the case would be sent to the Sanhedrin.

Hashem ensures that the Beit Din and Sanhedrin are set up in a very fair manner. Rule number one is that a Beit Din and Sanhedrin may only judge a case if there were at least two witnesses present at the incident. If there was only one witness they may not judge. The judgement is left for Hashem. During the court case both the Beit Din and Sanhedrin ask each of the witnesses to speak one at a time. While one witness speaks the other witness may not be present in the room.



After speaking and questioning both witnesses individually, the Beit Din or Sanhedrin compares the facts given by both witnesses. If the facts given by both witnesses are identical then the Beit Din or Sanhedrin knows they have a real case before them. However, if the facts do not match up, the Beit Din or Sanhedrin will not judge the case but rather, will leave the case for Hashem to judge. Hashem will then reward and punish the innocent and guilty people accordingly. If the Beit Din or Sanhedrin finds that the two witnesses had conspired together against another man by making up a case, the two witnesses are punished with the same sentence that the victim would have served had he been found guilty. He shall have done to him as he conspired to do to his fellow - life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. The punishment was announced publicly so it would deter others from a similar conspiracy. It is also the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to ensure there is clear signage and smooth roads leading towards the Ir Miklat, the city of refuge. The details of the Ir Miklat were described in our Massei Parasha sheet.

The Parasha also speaks about the Jewish army and its preparation for war. It is very important that the Jewish army always remembers Hashem, particularly during battle. After all it is Hashem who enables the Jewish army to be victorious. At times when it seemed impossible for the Jewish army to win the war Hashem performed miracles and enabled the Jewish people to win the war. A modern day example of this is the 1967 Six Day War in Israel. It truly seemed impossible to win this war. However Hashem caused miracles to occur and the Jewish army fighting for the Jewish state of Israel was victorious. The Jewish nation managed to utterly route four powerful enemies; Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. In the times of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash the Jewish people would always follow Hashem's war command.

If a king wanted to know whether to start a certain war, he would go to the Kohen Gadol and ask him to consult the Urim Vetumim to see whether the Jewish people should go to war. The Urim Vetumim was placed inside the Kohen Gadol's breastplate, also known as the Choshen. The Urim Vetumim was Hashem's ineffable name which was embedded within the folds of the Kohen Gadol's Choshen. To answer the king's question, the Kohen Gadol would look at the Choshen. He would see some letters on the Choshen light up. When he read the letters, he knew the answer. The answer would either be to go to war or not to go to war. The prediction of the Urim Vetumim always came true.

A Kohen was appointed as the Kohen for war. This was done by choosing a Kohen and pouring the anointing oil that was used to anoint the Kohen Gadol over his head. The 'Kohen for war' had the job of comforting the soldiers. He reassured them that Hashem was there with the soldiers helping them win the war. He would lead the Jewish army into the war by chanting the famous verse of Shema. This verse reminded the soldiers that they need not fear because Hashem, the Creator of the heavens and earth was there by their sides protecting them. The Kohen would also announce three categories of soldiers who were exempt from fighting. These exemptions only applied in an optional war. In a mandatory war such as in the conquest of the land of Israel, all Jewish soldiers were required to fight. In the optional wars the soldiers exempt from fighting were soldiers who had just built homes but had not yet moved in; soldiers who were engaged, and soldiers who had planted vineyards but had not yet had a chance to eat from their harvest. The Kohen would also dismiss from war those soldiers who were frightened when they saw swords being drawn.



Moshe instructs the Jewish people that they must behave appropriately during war. They are forbidden to waste. They have no right to cut down trees unnecessarily. Hence, if the Jewish army surrounds an enemy city in a time of war, the Jewish army may not chop down the city's fruit trees to starve the enemy.

Mission: Tell your friends what qualities you admire in them.

It was great seeing you in Shule! We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family! Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew!

