

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 7 Elul 5779. We say Kiddush Levanah if we are able to enjoy the light of the moon.

Mazel Tov to Joel Wainberg upon today's celebration of his Bar Mitzvah, and to Joel's parents Benjamin & Clara Wainberg and the entire family.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 820 Hz) (p. 1078 S) (p. 728 Hi) (p. 1024 AS)

SHOFTIM שׁוֹפְטִים Deuteronomy 16:18

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus, Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. The bulk of this Sidrah contains laws directed to the leadership of the people, to the judges, rabbis, kings, Kohanim, and even the prophets. It is so important for the national leaders to live up to the standards necessary to create a Torah society. Whether the person is appointed to a position of leadership or he is born into it, the incumbent responsibility is critical to the establishment of a safe, religious environment so that everyone can enjoy life and earn Hashem's blessings.

2. The order of subjects in the Torah is always food for Midrashic thought. Immediately after discussing the appointment of a king, the Torah discusses the gifts to the Kohanim and the prohibition of going to a sorceress. This is not the normal answer to the question, but I note the sequence of subjects reflects the events in the career of King Saul. He was appointed king of Israel and then stumbles on the next two subjects. He killed the Kohanim of the city of Nov and then he consulted with the sorceress of Ein Dor. Perhaps this is why the Torah placed these subjects together: to warn the king to support and sustain the Kohanim and not to make requests of sorcerers. (RED)

3. The appointment of the king. Our Sages comment that the king may not forego his honor, unlike a parent or a rabbi or a teacher, who may forego his honor. In my home, my children would never sit at my place at the table. Yet, after Shabbat dinner, when they wanted to play a board game where they needed my spot, they would ask me if they can sit in my place. And I would give them my permission. A parent who forgoes his honor is permitted to do so. The king on the other hand, is never allowed to do that. His position of king is never to be compromised. The Torah mandates the position of the king. If he foregoes his honor, then at that moment he is not the king, which would be a violation of the Torah mandate. (RED)

4. The king is not allowed to have an abundance of horses lest it lead the nation back to Egypt because the horses came from Egypt. There is a prohibition (of sorts) to live in Egypt. Yet the Rambam and the Radbaz chose to live part of their lives in Egypt. The Rambam would clarify that the prohibition of returning to Egypt is not to retrace our steps in the desert to return to Egypt from Israel. The Rambam did travel from Israel to Egypt, but avoided the trail that Bnei Yisrael used when they went from Egypt to Israel.

5. The Torah understood that being king would elevate the king immensely, even in his own eyes. Hence he was

required to have two Sifrei Torah (17:18). One Torah was kept in his treasury; the second Torah was on his person at all waking hours. Obviously the second Torah was a very small Torah. I guess it was similar to the small print tiny Sifrei Torah that we see in shuls on Simchat Torah. The purpose of the second Sefer Torah was an important aspect in keeping the king's ego in check. The position would elevate him tremendously. Take a look at the current president of the United States; his ego runs very high and gets the best of him. So, too, for the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of Russia. They all need a touch of humility to check their ego. In the United States, the "checks and balances" of the three branches of government was supposed to do this trick. So we recognize today's power grab at the top! (RED)

6. The Rambam (Hil. De'ot 5:11) states that normally a knowledgeable man should establish himself in business in order to sustain himself. Then he should buy a house, and then get married. To support this, he quotes from this parshah on the people who are exempted from the army in an optional war. A whole world of commentators ask the same question: in the Torah, the order is first he who builds a house. Secondly the Torah mentions the person who plants a vineyard. Why does the Rambam change the order and mention a person who sustains himself before building a house. The Chattam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer 1762-1839, Pressburg) wrote a novel approach. A person who plants a vineyard is not able to eat the fruit for four years. So he builds his house while waiting to gain the benefit of the vineyard, but really he planted his vineyard first.

HAFTORAH

(p. 835 Hz) (p. 1094 S) (p. 914 Hi) (p. 1199 AS)

ISAIAH יְשַׁעְיָהוּ 51:12

"Awaken, awaken, put on your strength, O Zion; put on the garments of your beauty, Jerusalem the Holy City, for no longer shall the uncircumcised or the unclean continue to enter you." (52:1) Awaken from the deep sleep of pain and put on the strength you had in the past. (Mezudat David). The uncircumcised are the kingdom of Edom, who are uncircumcised. The unclean are the Ishmaelites, who show themselves as being clean and pure with their constant bathing, but who are, in fact, unclean because of their evil deeds. These two kingdoms occupied Jerusalem since the destruction of the Temple, and they are constantly battling over it, first one occupying it and then the other. From the time of the redemption, they shall no longer enter the Holy City (Redak). Abravanel points out that God answers the Jews with the identical expression with which they prayed to Him (see 51:9). The double expression alludes to the loss of the First Temple and the Second Temple. During the time of the Second Temple the Jews were remarkably strong, and during the days of the First Temple the city was very holy. Both these gifts will be returned in Messianic times. The prophet, therefore, announces, "Awaken, awaken, put on your strength" – that you enjoyed during the time of the Second Temple; put on the garments of your beauty, O Jerusalem the Holy City – restore your sanctity of the days of the First Temple, etc.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT SHOFTIM 5779
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

I. From the Text

1. A plaintiff and a defendant have a case with a judge. As the plaintiff walks into the room, the judge and the defendant are talking (about the weather). The plaintiff storms out of the room, claiming foul. Is he right? (16:19)
2. Hashem hates a Matzeivah, a one stone pillar (16:22). Didn't the Patriarchs have Matzeivahs?
3. How many witnesses (minimally) are necessary to prove a matter in a court of law? (17:6)
4. How many Torah Scrolls was the king to write for himself? (17:18)
5. What portion of each ritually slaughtered animal (not a sacrifice) was given to a Kohen? (18:3)

II. From Rashi

6. A plaintiff offers a gift to the judge but makes no request of the judge. Is the judge allowed to accept it? (16:19)
7. A man committed idolatry in one city, but was tried and convicted in another city. Where is he executed? In his hometown or in the city where the trial was held? (17:5)
8. What is the maximum number of wives that is permitted for the king to have? (And which king had that number of wives?) (17:17)
9. How does Rashi explain "Tamim" as in "You shall be Tamim, wholehearted, with Hashem"? (18:13)
10. What was written on the sign to indicate that this was the way to a City of Refuge? (19:3)

III. From the Rabbis

11. What would attract a man to move a neighbor's boundary? (The key is "which the early ones marked out.") (R. Bachya)
12. What is novel and innovative about the law of Eidim Zomemim, Conspiring Witnesses, when the court believes the second pair of witnesses? (Sanhedrin 27a)
13. In what kind of war were certain men excused from the battle? (Rambam)

IV. Haftorah : Isaiah

14. Who will guard the Jewish people as they will return to Jerusalem?

V. Relationships

- a) Noach - Canaan
- b) Yefet - Aram
- c) Dan - Chushim
- d) Menasheh - Orde
- e) Dinah - Peretz

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT SHOFTIM 5779

1. Yes, he is. "You shall respect a person's presence."
 2. They did, but over the years they had become associated with idol worship.
 3. Two (or three).
 4. Two Torahs: one for his treasury; and one to keep with him all the time.
 5. The foreleg, the jaw, and the maw (stomach).
 6. No. It is impossible for the judge to accept a gift and not feel obligated to its donor.
 7. In his hometown.
 8. 18 wives. King David had 18 wives.
 9. You should try not to predict the future. Accept Hashem's way.
 10. "Miklat" "Refuge"
 11. A Jew is disappointed with the divinely inspired division of land, created by the casting of lots.
 12. There were two pairs of contradictory witnesses. Logic would dictate that the witnesses cancel each other out. The Torah states that we believe the second set of witnesses.
 13. In an optional war. No one was excused from a required war (such as the wars to conquer Eretz Yisrael).
 14. Hashem.
- Relationships**
- a) Grandfather Noach
 - b) Uncle Yefet
 - c) Father Dan
 - d) First Cousins
 - e) Aunt Dinah