

Divrei Jeshurun

Parshat Shofetim 5761

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Statistics: Shofetim

- ❖ 48th of the 54 Torah portions
- ❖ 5th of 11 in Devarim
- ❖ Written on 191.6 lines in a Sefer Torah --ranks 27th
- ❖ 18 parshiyot; 3 open, 15 closed
- ❖ 97 verses - ranks 36th
- ❖ 1523 words - ranks 10th
- ❖ 5590 letters - ranks 10th
- ❖ 7th in Devarim in all categories
- ❖ Shofetim contains 41 of the 613 mitzvot according to the *Sefer ha-Hinukh*, 14 positive, 27 negative - (see chart) -ranks 6th
- ❖ The top 6 mitzva Torah portions - Ki Tetze, Emor, Re'eh, Mishpatim, Kedoshim, and Shofetim, are 11% of the Torah's text and have almost 55% of the mitzvot. That is more than half of the mitzvot in less than a ninth of the text. Contrast this with 17 Torah portions that have none of the 613 mitzvot.

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Halakha Chart: Shofetim

The following is a listing of the commandments in this week's parsha. The first column is a simple ordinal listing within the parsha. The next column lists each mitzva relative to the total of 613. The next column states whether the command is positive or negative. The last column is where the command is listed in Deuteronomy.

#	613	☺	Command	Dt.
1	491	P	To appoint judges & officers in every Jewish community	16:18
2	492	N	Not to plant a tree in the Temple precinct	16:21
3	493	N	Not to erect a worship stone (<i>matzeva</i>)	16:22
4	494	N	Not to sacrifice an animal with a disappearing blemish	17:1
5	495	P	To listen to & heed the Great <i>Beit Din</i> (court) in every generation	17:10
6	496	N	Not to disobey the Great <i>Beit Din</i>	17:11
7	497	P	How to appoint a king	17:15
8	498	N	Not to accept as king a non-Israelite native	17:15
9	499	N	Kings cannot amass a large standing army (horses)	17:16
10	500	N	Not to dwell permanently in Egypt	17:16
11	501	N	Kings cannot marry more than a set number of wives	17:17
12	502	N	Kings cannot amass much of a fortune	17:17
13	503	P	Kings must write a <i>sefer Torah</i> for themselves	17:18
14	504	N	Levites cannot have an inheritance in Israel	18:1
15	505	N	Levites cannot receive booty of the military conquest of Israel	18:1
16	506	P	To give the <i>kohen</i> the shoulder, two cheeks, and stomach from the consumable sacrifices	18:3
17	507	P	To separate the <i>teruma gedola</i> (the tithe given to the <i>Kohen</i>)	18:4

18	508	P	To give the first of the sheep-fleece to the <i>Kohen</i>	18:4
19	509	P	<i>Kohanim</i> are to work in the Temple in shifts (<i>ashmerot</i>) on normal days and in unison on Holidays	18:6
20	510	N	Not to practice divination (<i>kosem</i>)	18:10
21	511	N	Not to practice sorcery (<i>khashef</i>)	18:10
22	512	N	Not to use charms (<i>chever</i>)	18:10
23	513	N	Not to consult mediums (<i>ov</i>)	18:10
24	514	N	Not to consult wizards (<i>vidoni</i>)	18:11
25	515	N	Not to employ necromancy	18:11
26	516	P	To listen to the prophet of ones generation (unless they try to add to or subtract from the Torah)	18:15
27	517	N	Not to give false prophecy	18:20
28	518	N	Not to give prophecy in the name of a false God	18:20
29	519	N	Not to prevent capital punishment for a false prophet & to refrain from fearing one	18:22
30	520	P	To prepare six cities of refuge	19:3
31	521	N	Not to be overly merciful in corporal punishment to the convicted criminal	19:13
32	522	N	Not to overreach one boundary in business (<i>hasagat gevul</i>)	19:14
33	523	N	Not to pass judgment on the words of one witness	19:15
34	524	P	To mete out to conspiring witnesses the selfsame punishment they sought with their false testimony	19:19
35	525	N	Not to be afraid in battle due to lack of faith in God	20:8
36	526	P	To anoint the War Priest (<i>meshuach milchama</i>) - the <i>kohen</i> who advises and ministers to the soldiers	20:5
37	527	P	How to declare a voluntary war (<i>milchemet mitzvah</i>)	20:10
38	528	N	Not to leave survivors from the evil nations who oppose the conquest of Canaan	20:16
39	529	N	Not to destroy fruit-trees when laying siege to a city; nor to allow any purposeless destruction	20:19
40	530	P	How to behead the heifer of the culpability-ceremony for an unknown murder victim	21:1
41	531	N	Not to plow or sow the riverbed of the beheaded heifer	21:4

The Significance of Rosh Chodesh and the Month of Elul
Rabbi Michael Rosensweig



"Dirshu Hashem be-himazo kerahu bihiyoto karov". This *pasuk*, which plays such a central role in times of crisis and contemplation as the introduction to the *haftarah* on fast days, implores us to seek out Hashem and cultivate a more profound relationship with Him precisely when His Presence is near. While the gemara in Rosh Hashanah 18b interprets this as a reference to *asseret yemei teshuvah*, the midrash in Vayikra, as understood by Meiri (Hibbur ha-Teshuvah, p. 250), seems to characterize the entire month of Elul as

"*bihiyoto karov*", an opportune time and propitious opportunity in which Hashem's presence is particularly accessible. It is on this basis that he reports the *geonic* view that one should say *selihot* every Monday and Thursday throughout the month. However, it is apparent from his formulation- "*kedai she-yikanes le-Rosh Hashanah be-taharat ha-lev*" - that Meiri apparently perceives the primary significance of Elul as a means of preparing for Rosh Hashanah in such a way as to ensure that one enters into Rosh Hashanah already in a state of purity with a clean slate so that he can better capitalize on the opportunities presented by that unique day. Thus, the exigency of *teshuvah* and *tefillah* during Elul constitutes nothing more than a lengthier preparation for the *Yomim Noraim*. From this perspective, there is no fundamental difference between the thirty-day period that precedes R. H. and those that introduce other *chagim*.

It is, however, conceivable that Elul represents "*bihiyoto karov*" in its own right, distinguishing it from other thirty-day preludes. Undoubtedly this would qualify it still further as the most effective vehicle through which to prepare for the *Yomim Noraim*. It would also accent that the *din* and *kapparah* generated by these transcendent days cannot take place in a vacuum, but constitute the culmination of a rigorous process of introspection and spiritual re-invention.

The Tur (no. 581) introduces the laws of R. H. by citing the Pirkei de-R. Eliezer's explanation of the origin of *shofar* on Rosh Hodesh and the month of Elul. It is reported that Moshe's ascension to the mountain to receive the second *Luchot* was marked by the blowing of the *shofar*, signifying the abandonment of idolatry which had doomed the first *Luchot*. We are informed that Hashem, Himself, was elevated by this *shofar* blast (based on Tehilim 47- "*alah Elokim be-teruah, Hashem be-kol shofar*"). The Tur proceeds to explain that the *minhag* to blow the *shofar* during the entire Elul in order to inspire *teshuvah* was based upon the verse in Amos (3:6), which establishes that the sound of the *shofar* has the capacity to inspire fear and awe. The Beit Yosef speculates why two distinct sources (the anniversary of Moshe's ascension and the verse in Amos) are required to ground the practice of *shofar* in Elul. A close reading of the text, however, may indicate that the Tur distinguishes between the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah that commemorates Moshe's renewed mission and the verse in Amos that conveys the role of the *shofar* in inspiring *teshuvah*, serving as the foundation for the *minhag* during the entire month. [The Bach and Perishah seem to allude to this distinction, as well.] In light of this analysis, it is noteworthy that Hashem's remarkable reaction coincides with Moshe's ascension on Rosh Chodesh Elul. Indeed, the Bah argues that Hashem was twice elevated by means of *Kelal Yisrael's* initiative of *tekiat shofar*. He projects that while "*alah Elokim be-teruah*" refers to Hashem's response to the *shofar* of R. H., "*Hashem be-kol shofar*" occurred on Rosh Chodesh Elul!

What emerges from these sources is that the events of *Rosh Chodesh Elul* are marked independently both with respect to Moshe's and *Kelal Yisrael's* initiative, as well as Hashem's reciprocal response! Moshe's *Rosh Chodesh* mission actually signified a renewed and changed relationship between Hashem and *Kelal Yisrael*. According to *Chazal*, the sin of the *egel* forever changed Jewish history and the nature of the relationship between Hashem and His people. Much evidence, including the *pesukim* that characterize the two sets of *luchot*, points to the fact that the renewed relationship would be one in which the nation would be required to invest more obvious effort and initiative and responsibility, and which would accent a more evidently reciprocal relationship, one in which man would also have greater input within prescribed limits. The explicit renunciation of idolatry and, symbolically, significant dimensions of their spiritual profile that characterized the pre-*egel* period, and Hashem's elevation by virtue of *Kelal Yisrael's shofar* initiative perhaps reflected the imminent change, capturing the essence of Moshe's renewed mission to reconstitute *Yahadut*. The momentous events of *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, then, constituting as they did a watershed in the reciprocal relationship between Hashem and *Kelal Yisrael*, surely demand commemoration and generate anew yearly the obligation of contemplation and introspection.

Of course, Moshe's dramatic and ambitious mission, initiated on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, encompassed that whole month and did not conclude until Yom Kippur. Notwithstanding the independent significance and theme of *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, the link to the *yomim noraim* is undeniable. Indeed, as alluded to previously, the themes represented by *Rosh Chodesh Elul* and by the *yomim noraim* are interconnected and mutually enhancing.

Consequently, one can and should relate to the entire month of Elul both as the aftermath and continuation of the *Rosh Chodesh Elul* initiative of old that produced the second and normative *luchot*, and as the necessary and conducive vehicle of preparation for the upcoming *yomim noraim*. Indeed, the reassessment of personal religious status generated by the anniversary of Moshe's mission to reinvent the relationship between *Kelal Yisrael* and Hashem establishes Elul as the ideal precursor to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The Perishah speculates why *shofar* and not *divrei hitorerut* emerged as the visible symbol of Elul if preparation for the *yomim noraim* is the primary goal of this period. Perhaps, however, the motif of *Rosh Chodesh Elul* and the renewed reciprocal relationship that developed through the second *luchot* accounts for this phenomenon. It was precisely the dual impact and implication of that *kol shofar* on *Rosh Hodesh* that dramatically encapsulated this new spiritual foundation.

This idea can be highlighted by the fact that the Abudraham and others invoke "*Ani Le-dodi Ve-dodi Li*," the *pasuk* that particularly underscores the close and reciprocal relationship with Hashem, as an acronym that conveys the special role of Elul. It is precisely a reassessment of that intimate relationship in its broadest strokes, (alongside an evaluation of individual actions and transgressions,) which characterizes the unique agenda of this month. Elul, in all of its dimensions- independent, preparatory and integrated- truly affords the opportunity of "*kerahu bihiyoto karov*".

Insight in the Parsha: Structure of Devarim

This is a recap of the structure for Devarim (as discussed in the *Divrei jeshurun* of Ve-etchanan). Shofetim is the middle of the covenant proper (which began in last week's parsha).

1.	1:1 to 4:40	Introduction (exhortation to repair past misdeeds)
2.	4:41 to 5:30	The Covenant made at Mount Sinai (Horeb)
3.	6:1 to 11:32	The Introduction to the new Covenant to be made with the second Generation (who wasn't present at Sinai)
4.	12:1 to 26:15	The Covenant (laws) made at the Fields of Moab
5.	26:16 to 30:20	Conclusion of the Covenant (& the punishments for failing to uphold the covenant)
6.	31:1 to 34:12	The Death of Moses