



OD YOSEF HAI NEWSLETTER

ROSH YESHIVAH AND COMMUNITY RABBI
DAYAN ABRAHAM DAVID SHLI"TA

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Thoughts on Parashat SHOFTIM Year 23

by Dayan Abraham David

The Parashat begins with the appointments of Jewish judges and law courts in all our cities. The Torah warns the judges of how careful they must be to achieve true justice; '*lo tate mishpat*' do not turn the judgement towards even a deserving case, i.e. to give an advantage to a poor man who needs the money more than his rich opponent; '*lo takir panim*' do not show favour to one side even when hearing their dispute i.e. smile at one more than the other or have one side sit and the other stand for this can effect the confidence of the person not shown favour. '*Lo tikach shochad*' do not accept a bribe even a gesture of one, even with the intention of judging correctly. The requirement is for judgement not just for law and order as the law courts of the world, for the laws and judgements we follow are the laws of G-d and His ultimate wisdom in this world as revealed to Moshe in the Torah. That is why this command is followed immediately by some laws connected to the Temple and '*Korbanot*' the offerings; '*lotita ashera*' do not plant trees in the Temple; '*lo Takim Matsevah*' do not set up a single stone for an altar; '*lo tizbach, asher yehe bo moom*' do not offer an animal with blemish. In fact, from here we learn a requirement that the

highest Court of Judgement, the Sanhedrim HaGadol, was placed by the Temple in Jerusalem to teach us even our civil and criminal law courts are all part of our spiritual service to G-d. In fact Shlomo Hamelech's throne which depicted judgement had six steps leading to it, each one contained one of the above mentioned pasukim – 3 of the requirements of judgement and 3 of the requirements of the temple offerings. The Seforno explains how these are connected with each other.

The first comparison to an '*Ashera*' a beautiful and attractive tree planted in the courtyard of the '*Avodah Zarah*' drawing people to idolatry, a warning to choose Dayanim with spiritual qualities of righteousness and not only the for hype of physical beauty and personality which are pitfalls for arrogance and pride.

The second, '*lo takim matsevah*' not to sacrifice on a single stone altar, which was quite acceptable in the times of our forefathers, but is not for us. They were giants who could rely on themselves on a single stone of service, but we need a '*mizbeyah*' of many stones together for after having fallen with the sin of the golden calf we need each other, for advise and spiritual input and communal growth. Similarly a Dayan should not judge alone but take into account the opinions of his colleagues to clarify and achieve a true Pasak. The Seforno explains that we prefer to choose a Dayan whose past was

completely clean over one who has had rumours of a bad past even if this was only in his younger years.

The third. *'Moom'*, a blemish in the animal to be offered; even the smallest blemish in a big, beautiful and strong animal of great monetary value would disqualify it from being offered.

Instead a small offering of much less value but without a blemish would bring the offering to its purpose. The indication that we would disqualify even a great personality and clever person of great social standing from being a judge if he had a blemish in his character or lacked qualities of honesty and kindness. We would choose instead someone with good qualities of character *'midot tovot'* even though he would be of a lesser social or material standing with more modest capabilities for the laws of the Torah, are not just a faculty of knowledge but need the help of Heaven to achieve its true understanding.

Here we are given an insight into what we should look for in leadership and example in our service of G-d. We should not be mesmerized by the hype of physical beauty or personality, but seek the qualities of righteousness. We should keep away from those who conduct themselves with arrogance and pride, relying only upon themselves. But seek those who have humility and can listen and take advice. The Talmud tells us that we rely and follow the Halacha more like Hillel than Shamai because Hillel would listen and repeat the words of Shamai before giving his dissenting opinion. We should value good character of honesty and kindness rather than the dazzle of power and success of those lacking them.

TORAH GEMS

This Parasha gives us an insight into how a Jewish army should look as

they did in the days of Yehoshuah. *'Vahaya kekorbechem el hamilchamah venigash haCohen'*.

The Cohen came forward before the battle and spoke to the soldiers not to be afraid even when facing great odds, for G-d will be going with you to war and to save you, go with faith, without fear. Then the Cohen enumerates those who are more susceptible to fear than the others. Someone who has built a house but not lived in it he should go back, as one who has planted a vineyard but not eaten from its fruit and also one who has betrothed a woman but not lived with her. Then the Cohen adds a fourth – *Hayare ve rach lebab* a person who is frightened and of timid heart, he too should go back. There are two opinions in the Talmud, Rabbi Akiva says *'KePashuto'* as the simple inference of the pasuk – someone who is frightened of blood and cannot stomach battle. But Rabbi Yosi Haglili says it is someone who is frightened because of the sins he has committed, he should go back and not spread fear on to his brothers in battle. He goes even further to say that all the previous three were only released to cover up for the sinner so as not to embarrass him when he left the ranks. But what we may ask according to Rabbi Yosi why is he called *'vare ve Rach Lebab'* and not just described as *'Me she yesh averah beyado'* one who has sinned since anyhow he is being covered by the other three and will not be embarrassed? We may ask further since he still has the *'Averah beyado'* why does he not do *'teshuvah'* surely his *'teshuvah'* now will help? The answer must be: that is exactly why he is described as *'Rach Lebab'* soft of heart, queasy, for he has no heart for the battle within him. He recognises he has

sinned but does not battle with his inclinations to accept sincerely not to sin again. *'Ein Tzaddik baharetz asher ya'ase tov velo yehete'*. A *'Tzaddik'* sometimes succumbs to sin but before the day is out he has done his *'teshuvah'* – but someone not willing to fight his inclinations with *'teshuvah'* – repentance, is considered a true coward capable of affecting his brethren *'velo yimas et lebab echav'*. The gates of *'teshuvah'* are open and help is at hand and the prisoner does not dare to save himself by escaping.

Ellul is a time set out for repentance before the days of judgement – four little steps can make all the difference; *'Azivat Hacheit'* letting go of the sin, *'Charata'* to feel genuine regret for having sinned, *'Kabablah Al Habah'* acceptance not to repeat the sin in the future and *'Viduy'* confession verbally – an instant formula to become a *'Tzaddik'*.

STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

The Reform movement together with the Political Left were putting pressure on the Rabanut of Israel to allow Reform Rabbis to perform Chupah and Kedushim. Rabbi Mordecai Eliyahu z"l was Rishon Le'Zion and he was approached. Of course his answer was 'No Way! The Reform threatened to take the case to the Civil Courts, again he refused. They then came up with a compromise as follows:

The Rabbi from the Rabanut would prepare the Ketubah and supervise this wedding and the Reform Rabbi would say the Berachot. Again the Rabbi refused. Once he was visited by a Barrister who eventually became a Judge in the High Court. She asked him: "I do not understand you, I was recently at a wedding where a man was given the Berachot and I found out

he worked as a street cleaner. How come he can be given to make the Berachot in the Kedushim and a Reform Rabbi, who is of greater intelligence and standing is not allowed to?" The Rabbi cleverly answered: "you know in the Beracha we are required to say *'Asher Kedeshanu Barmitzvotav Vetzevanu'*, that G-d has sanctified us with His Mitzvot and commanded us to keep them – if the Reform Rabbi would say these words he would be a liar, for he does not believe and keep the Mitzvot, whereas the street cleaner who believes and practices the Mitzvot can say it sincerely."

Shabbat Shalom

HALACHOT

1. As a preparation for Yamim Noraim we start saying selichot from the beginning of Elul. Our Ashkenazi brethren blow the shofar after Shaharit every day.
2. Even though we do not blow the shofar after Shaharit some have the minhag to blow it during the Kadish Titkabal after Selichot. There are others who also blow during the Selichot while saying the Thirteen Attributes *'Yud Gimel midot'*
3. The best time for Selichot is before dawn to be able to pray the Amidah with sunrise. But if this cannot be done then it should be said as early as possible before Shaharit. Selichot may also be said at night but only after midnight *'chazot'*

4. One should be very careful to say the 'Yud Gimel midot' deliberately and with kavanah.

5. Ellul is the appropriate time for Teshuba, Tefilla (Selichot) and Tzedaka as indicated in the letters of the word

אלול (Ellul).

Teshuba

ומל ה' את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך

Tefilla

אני לדודי ודודי לי

6. Tzedaka
איש לרעהו ומהנות לאכיונים
for Tzedaka, but if it is to atone for his sin, he is allowed to give more (Egereth Hateshuba)

7. It is recommended by our Great Rabbis that especially during this period we should examine our deeds before going to bed at night to see what needs correcting and what can be bettered. (Chedah)

To make Teshuba easier one who wishes to correct a fault should do it on a day to day basis taking it on one day at a time and not putting it off until tomorrow, repeating the process subsequently on a daily basis. One should take something on even only for the month of Ellul and Yamim Noraim. Before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur one should make a change for the better.

**We have a regular Youth
Minyan organised by Jason
Ibrahim and Jordan Moses
followed by a kiddush**

*If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush
Please contact
Nathaniel Bendayan 07825 871749
For Seuda Shlishit
or to rent the
Nancy Reuben Hall
for a Simcha
Please contact
Yanky David 07725 408724*

SHABBAT TIMES

Shabbat commences	8:04 pm
Shabbat terminates	9:14 pm
Mincha Erev Shabbat for the summer	7:15 pm
Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat Shacharit	8:30 pm
Shiur Pirke Avot	6:35 pm
Mincha on Shabbat followed by Seuda Shlishit & Arbit	7:35 pm
Shacharit Sundays	7:00 am
Shacharit Weekdays	6:50 am
Mincha followed by Arbit for the summer	7:30 pm