

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT SHOFTIM

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

WHAT ARE YOU CHASING?

A banker was vacationing in a small coastal village. While walking near a pier, he observed a small boat with just one fisherman. Inside the boat with the fisherman were several yellow-fin tunas. The businessman complimented the fisherman on the quality of his catch and asked how long it took to catch them. "Only two hours," he replied.

The businessman then asked why he didn't stay out longer and catch more fish. The fisherman said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs. "But what do you do with the rest of your time?" the banker asked. The fisherman responded, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a nap in the afternoon, and stroll into the village each evening with my wife where we relax and sing and I play guitar with our friends. I have a full and busy life."

The businessman scoffed, "You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat and with the proceeds buy a fleet of boats. Instead of selling your fish to a middleman, you could sell directly to a processor. You could eventually open your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You could leave this small village and move to a big city where you could run your expanding enterprise."

The fisherman asked, "But how long will this take?" The businessman replied, "15 to 20 years!" "But then what?" asked the puzzled fisherman? The banker laughed and said, "That's the best part. You can sell your business and retire and move to a small coastal fishing village where you could sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take afternoon naps, stroll to the village in the evenings with your wife where you could relax, sing and play guitar with your friends. You would have a full and busy life."

The fisherman smiled at the businessman,

quietly gathered his catch and walked away. What are you chasing after in life? Some people are chasing money, others work, leisure, friends or spouses! Yet the Torah interestingly informs us to chase something else. The Sfat Emet explains that the only time the Torah commands us to chase, is in this week's Parsha.

Tsedek Tsedek Tirdof – Chase after justice! The Targum Unkelos translates this Pasuk to mean pursue "truth" (kushta). We are taught to always pursue truth. Why not simply tell us to speak the truth? What's the idea behind pursuing truth? We live in a world termed by our Sages as a false world – 'Alma DeShikra.'

Rav Dessler ZT'L quotes the Zohar which explains that the original sin of Adam and Chava was due to a lie.

The snake approached Chava and said "Do you know why you can't eat from this tree?" She had no response.

The snake continued: "It's because G-d ate from this tree and through this was able to create worlds. He does not want you to be in the same situation."

Of course this was a blatant lie aimed at enticing Chava to sin.

But it was through this lie that Adam and Chava sinned and punishment was wrought on the world.

It is for this reason that this world which is influenced by the Yetzer Hara is called Alma Deshikra – a world of lies.

For us to get to the truth it's a constant battle. It does not come easy and it's very difficult to achieve, hence why we must pursue it.

Whenever the Torah wishes to forbid something, it merely tells us that it is forbidden. There is one instance in which the Torah goes out of its way to tell us that not only is it forbidden but one must also set a distance from it – "Midvar Sheker Tirchak – distance yourself from a lie."

Thus we must chase truth and run far from lies.

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THE ORIGINAL COMMUNAL PARASHA SHEET, SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 12 YEARS!

An old Midrash brings the story of Rabbi Shimon Ben Shetach (one of the earliest Tannaim) who was approached by a man in need.

He had grown up in a good home but been badly influenced and had ended up joining a band of robbers. He led a life of sin, until one day whilst robbing, he came across a child whose fierce words penetrated his heart.

'The wrath of the Almighty is turned to the doers of evil to erase their memory from the earth,' shouted the child.

The man was shaken and eventually took leave of the band of robbers, resolving to find honest work and redeem himself.

However, as time passed, he was tempted to return to his evil ways.

He was now approaching Rabbi Shimon to beseech him for guidance and help.

Rabbi Shimon commended him on his wish to do good and told him that his future success lay in promising never to lie again. 'Keep from falsehood. That is the key!' said Rabbi Shimon.

The robber was shocked: "Is this all you are going to tell me? Is there not more powerful advice and help to give?"

"You will see," replied Rabbi Shimon. "If you listen and keep from falsehood, you will not steal again."

The man was still unconvinced, but he had no choice but to go to the room he rented and hope that Rabbi Shimon was correct.

That night, he grew very hungry and went to the apartment of the lady from whom he was renting his room. He knocked, hoping to get some food. Since there was no answer, he opened the door and walked in.

The apartment was empty as the family had left, but in the corner was a great wooden chest. Walking over to it and opening it, the man gasped as he saw a whole treasure of jewellery and other valuable items. Hastily pocketing a handful of valuables, he tip-toed back to his room and lay down on his bed.

He thought to himself; "If the woman comes to me and asks if I was home during the theft, I will simply say that I was out and know nothing about it."

Suddenly, however, the man remembered the promise that he had made to Rabbi Shimon that he would always speak the truth. How then could he lie to the woman and say that he was out during the theft? On the other hand, if he did not lie, he would become the primary suspect.

Then it dawned upon him. This was what Rabbi Shimon meant! It would be impossi-

ble for him to steal if he never lied. Jumping up from his bed, he ran back to the woman's apartment and returned the property he had stolen.

"Bless Rabbi Shimon," he said. "He is indeed a wise man. Now I know that if I but adhere always to tell the truth and never tell a lie, I will be saved from the sin of robbery." Such is the power of truth – and falsehood. It can change our lives for good or evil depending upon whether we are true or false to ourselves and to others.

When someone wants to sign an important document, their signature represents their presence.

The Gemara (Shabbat 55) tells us that the seal of the Almighty is Truth.

Hashem desires that we turn away from lies and pursue the truth.

The day that Adam and Chava sinned was none other than Rosh Hashanah. That is the day that we are all judged. We will stand in front of the Almighty and there will be nowhere to hide from our falsehood.

The original sin that caused so much sorrow to the world emanated from a lie. It is up to us to correct it via pursuing truth.

We must garner the strength and stamina to talk truth to all those around us.

We have less than a month to chase after something real – let's get going!



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT SHOFTIM

וְלֹא־יִתְקִים לְךָ מִצְבֵּה אֲשֶׁר שָׁנָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

You shall not erect a stone pillar; for such your G-d Hashem detests.

A מצבה is a one stone monument where as a מזבח is built also out of a collection of stones. What's the difference between מצבה and מזבח? Why was Hashem Okay with the מצבה

before קבלת התורה as we see by our forefather Yaakov, but after קבלת התורה Hashem detests it?

A מצבה represents a way of serving G-d up to a certain limit. This way of serving Hashem was fine before קבלת התורה. So, if a person decides to do Mitzvot for 20 years and then stop doing them, it's fine. But after קבלת התורה, Hashem wants us to serve him like a מזבח. Consistently adding on, building stone by stone, going higher and higher, from strength to strength, never saying "I did enough, now I'm

going on vacation". Always striving to do more, to be more.

Only after 120 it's a time for מצבה. Because then the person cannot add more Mitzvot and good deeds.

According to this idea we can understand the custom of putting little stones on the מצבה, and that is to show that although the נפטר is in a status of מצבה and not able to add Mitzvot, we, their descendants, are able to do for their זכות, adding more and empowering their Neshama.



RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

PARSHAT SHOFTIM

Why do we have two ears, two eyes but

only one mouth?

In פרשת שופטים the Torah teaches us the importance of establishing ערי מיקלט cities of refuge for those who have unfortunately killed someone by mistake.

Rav Shamai Zahn, the previous Rosh Yeshiva of Sunderland cited ר' איצ'ל ר' איצ'ל who noted, that while there were signposts directing people towards the ערי מיקלט there were no signs

directing the רגל towards the בהמ"ק. Why so?

He suggested that this is indicative of the following important idea. If there had not been signposts indicating the route to the עיר מיקלט, an individual who had killed somebody accidentally would need to ask directions from passers-by. Aside from delaying him this would also cause him extreme embarrassment, as people would ask him why he needed to go to the עיר מיקלט. Giving details about the unfortunate incident is not something one wishes to do whilst running for their life. Discussing the "what ifs" and answering irrelevant questions is not something one wants to do whilst running for their life.

The תורה wants to avoid a scenario whereby the news about the mistaken murder spreads around town, be it via WhatsApp or over supper with one's wife, before the one seeking refuge has managed to reach the עיר מיקלט. This is why the תורה puts this system in place, in order to limit and mitigate derogatory

and unnecessary speech.

However, it is quite the opposite in regards to the עולי לרגל. The Torah encourages and loves meaningful and helpful speech, implementing a system that forces one to ask directions for the בהמ"ק. Being that there are no signposts one is forced to stop and ask passers-by for directions towards Yerushalayim. This will result in a conversation as one Yid converses with the other, inspiring and encouraging them to make their way to the בהמ"ק for the upcoming טוב יום. Motivating them to make their way early with time to prepare and settle into ירושלים, for a father to learn with his sons a few days before the Yom Tov. This Yid is so impressed he tells his friends and the news spreads before this family has even reached the בהמ"ק. Everyone is talking about it, impressed and awed at the dedication and זריזות for the מצוה. Each individual has the same discussion at supper with their wives and the next day they too are on their way to be עולי רגל.

These two contrasting scenarios hint at

the power of one's speech and the guidance one must take from the תורה as to how to use it correctly. One can use speech to spread senseless information and sensational news, or one can use speech to inspire, motivate and encourage.

The following idea is found in תלמיד בירושלמי ברכות פרק א הלכה ב. הר סיני says if he would have been at הר סיני when the תורה was given, he would have requested that Hashem give man two mouths. One to learn Torah and one for all other speech. However, he changed his mind and said that if with the one mouth that is used for both Torah and regular speech, we say so much unnecessary and unkind words. One can only imagine the damage that would be done had we been given two mouths. From this, we can understand why we have two ears, two eyes yet only one mouth.

We see how important it is to have refined speech.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Mitzva of Escorting Guests

The Gemara in Masechet Sota (46) comments, "Anyone who escorts his fellow four cubits – he does not suffer harm." This passage establishes the Mitzvah of escorting guests from one's home after their leave. The Sages teach that if a host walks with his guest even just four Amot (6-8 feet) outside the door of his home, it grants the guest protection along his journey.

A number of Halachic scholars raise the question of why this Halacha does not appear anywhere in the Shulhan Aruch. Some explain that this Halacha applied only in ancient times, when road travel did not entail as much danger as it does nowadays, and thus escorting guests four Amot could protect them. In our times, however, escorting guests cannot guarantee protection. The En Yaakov, however, disputes this position.

In any event, although the Halacha of escorting guests does not appear in the Shulhan Aruch, it is mentioned by the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204), in Hilchot Abel (chapter 14). He writes (listen to audio recording for precise citation) that there is a Misvat Aseh (affirmative command) to escort one's guests, which falls under the general category of Gemilut Hasadim (performing acts of kindness). Although this specific obligation was ordained by Hazal, the Rambam adds, it is also included in the Biblical command of "Ve'ahabta Le're'acha Kamocha" ("Love your fellow as yourself"), which requires treating others in the manner in which one would want them to treat him.

The Rambam emphasizes the great reward for escorting guests, and notes that this practice was instituted by Abraham Abinu, who would invite guests, feed them, and then escort them. The value of hosting guests, the Rambam writes, exceeds that of greeting the divine presence, and escorting guests is even greater than hosting them. The Rambam concludes his discussion by citing Hazal's remark that one who hosts guests but does not escort them is considered as though he kills them – because he denies them the protection that they need as they travel to their destination.

The Kaf Ha'haim (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in Siman 110, writes that the word "Levaya" ("escorting") may be read as an acronym representing the words "Le'hayim U'le'shalom Yelech Ha'ore'ah" – "The guest shall go for life and peace" – indicating the protective powers of escorting. Furthermore, when the word is read backwards, its letters spell the phrase "Ha'melave Yelech Ve'yashob Le'shalom" – "The escort shall go and return in peace" – indicating that the merit of this Mitzvah protects the host, as well. And the Abkat Rochel noted that the letters of the word "Levaya" also represent the phrase "Ve'lo Yiten Ha'mash'hit Labo" – "He will not allow the destroying angel to come" – further emphasizing the ability of escorting to protect the guest from harm.

The Kaf Ha'haim adds that after the host escorts the guest, the guest should not tell the host to go back home. He should rather allow the host to return when he chooses to. A story is told of the Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797) that demonstrates the

importance of escorting guests. There was a man who lived at that time and was renowned for his generous hospitality. He welcomed many guests and treated them with royalty. One day, a fire broke out in his home and burned the entire house. The people approached the Vilna Gaon and asked how it was possible that a home that welcomed so many guests with such generosity could burn down.

The Gaon answered by citing the verse in the Book of Bereshit (21:33) that relates that Abraham Abinu planted an "Eshel." Rashi explains that this refers to Abraham's hospitality, as the word "Eshel" represents the words "Achila" ("eating"), "Shetiya" ("drinking") and "Levaya" ("escorting"). The Gaon noted that if a person welcomes guests but does not escort them, fulfilling only "Achila" and "Shetiya," then instead of "Eshel," he has only "Esh" – "fire," Heaven forbid.

Indeed, great Torah Sages have always gone to great lengths to escort their guests outside their homes. Hacham Ben Sion Abba Shaul (Israel, 1923-1998), even when he was old and frail, would ensure to put on his slippers to escort guests outside his apartment, to the elevator or to the stairs. Many Tzadikim would escort their guests outside their home and wait until the guests were out of view. Technically speaking, however, one must escort guests only four Amot out of his home. And the merit of this great Mitzvah will guarantee protection to both his guests and himself.

Summary: It is a Mitzvah to escort one's guests four Amot (6-8 feet) outside his home, and this serves as a source of protection and blessing for oneself and for his guests.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Shoftim

Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations, according to Torah criteria, to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may have possessions and symbols of power only as commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two Sifrei Torah – one to be kept

with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty. Neither the Kohanim nor the Levi'im are to inherit land in the Land of Israel. Rather, they are to be supported by the community, by a system of tithes.

All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a true prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to frame a third party are to be punished

with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A kohen is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill the nation's trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com



1. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
2. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
3. What is the source for the concept "seek out a good Beit din"?
4. Although the Avot built Matzevot, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
5. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn't amass much gold, doesn't raise many horses and doesn't marry many wives?



1. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
2. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
3. 16:20 - "Tzedek tzedek tirdof..."
4. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
5. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.

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