



Parsha: Shoftim

The Torah introduces certain laws which are exclusively applicable to the leaders. Because these individuals were granted special authority, they needed special guidelines to prevent them from misusing their positions and becoming arrogant.

The judges, for example, were severely warned against taking any form of bribery, even to render an honest ruling. They were also obligated to follow the majority ruling of the court. If a judge or Torah scholar, regardless of his level of scholarship, defies and rules against a decision of the court, he is liable to be put to death. This uncharacteristically severe punishment was necessary to prevent the undermining of the court's authority by other great leaders. This would ensure that the court remain a central authoritative body, whose decisions would be binding upon the entire nation.

The king was also subject to special obligations and prohibitions. In contrast to many of the other monarchs of the ancient world, the Jewish king was not allowed to indulge in physical or material excesses, such as a large harem of women, or an excess of money or horses. The Torah warns that these excesses would inevitably lead the king's heart astray.

The king was also required to write his own copy of the Torah that would be carried on his person at all times. The constant review of this Torah would, hopefully, inspire his reverence for G-d and prevent him from becoming haughty.

The Kohanim (priests) were also guided by a unique set of laws. They did not receive their own inheritance in the Land, because they had to be available to devote themselves to the service of G-d. Their livelihood would be taken care of by the other tribes, who would give them the priestly gifts. Their dependence on other people would also prevent their feeling arrogant.

The prophet's responsibilities are also discussed. The prophet was a person of exalted character and scholarship, who was able to receive certain communication from G-d. Accordingly, he too was held to a higher standard. If the prophet would suppress his Divine prophecy, he would be guilty of a severe offense. If a person prophesies something that he did not receive from G-d or in the name of another god, it is considered an even worse offense, and he is punished by death.

No public leader in the Torah is above the law. Each position has its own set of rules specifically tailored to its own unique challenges.

Insights: Shoftim

...You should be wholesome (in your faith) in G-d...

(Deut. 18:13) A budding Torah scholar approached Rav Elya Lopian for his blessing to leave the yeshiva and study a profession. Rav Elya felt the man was destined for greatness in Torah. He asked the fellow why he wanted to leave full-time Torah study. The man replied he was concerned that he would not be able to provide for a family when he would marry. "How do you know you will be able to find a job?" Rav Elya asked. "G-d willing I will find a job." The student replied. "And how do you know you will even find a woman to marry?" Rav Elya asked. "What do you mean? I hope G-d will help me find a wife!" the student replied. "Do you need so much to support one person?" Rav Elya continued. "I hope to have children too!" said the student. "How do you know you will have children? Not everyone has children, you know?" "Rebbe," the student exclaimed, "Why do you scare me? G-d willing we will have children!" "Listen to yourself," Rav Elya concluded, "If you have to trust in G-d anyway for everything else in life, don't you think he can help if you remain in Torah study as well?" The student was convinced. He gave up his plans and eventually became a successful Rosh Yeshiva.

Did You Know?

There is special atonement for people who are buried in Israel, which is why some families bury their beloved there at a great expense, even though the families may live elsewhere. On the other hand, many authorities caution that one should not request burial in Israel if it will cause undue financial strain on the family. Others feel that it is more important for the grave to be easily accessible for the children to visit than to be buried in Israel. It is permitted for a corpse to be exhumed in order to be buried in Israel, or for other purpose of respect for the deceased, such as if the cemetery will be desecrated. It is important, however, when exhuming the deceased, to show the proper respect for the corpse. The family practices the laws of mourning on the day of the exhuming.

Thought for the week: A man should be more respected for what he has made of himself than for what he is. *(A Candle by Day)*

Friday, September 6

7:00 Shacharis

7:34 Candlelighting
7:35 Mincha / Maariv

Shabbos, September 7

8:45 Shacharis.
*Kiddush is available
for sponsorship*

6:25 "Pirke Avos"

7:25 Mincha
*Shalosh Seudos is
available for
sponsorship*

8:40 Maariv

Sunday, September 8

8:00 Shacharis

~9:00 Minchas Chinuch class
w/ R. Stoll

10:00 Maariv

Monday, September 9

7:00 Shacharis

8:00 "Apples, Honey, &
Stuffed Cabbage" :
Fasting as Part of
Repentance (2/4)

10:00 Maariv

Tuesday, September 10

7:00 Shacharis

8:00 Pirke Avos (Stoll)
10:00 Maariv

Wednesday, September 11

7:00 Shacharis

8:00 "The Prophets Still
Speak" (Stoll) –
YONAH!
10:00 Maariv

Thursday, September 12

7:00 Shacharis

10:00 Maariv
10:15 Parsha Class

Mazel Tov

*Dan and Ruth Jacob
upon the birth of a
daughter*

Condolences

*Drs. Bill and Barbara
Wieder upon the loss of
her father*