



Issue #2

Parashas Shoftim



City	Candle-Lighting	Shabbos Ends
Jerusalem	6:22 PM	7:38 PM
Los Angeles	7:00 PM	7:54 PM
New York City	7:08 PM	8:06 PM
Chicago	7:02 PM	8:03 PM
London	7:27 PM	8:34 PM



Parasha Summary

- **שפטים ושטרם, לא תסור, שום תשים עליך מלך** The fundamentals of Jewish leadership: the Torah requirement to appoint judges and establish courts in every city, to follow the rulings of the Sanhedrin and the Torah Sages of all generations, and to appoint a Jewish king after settling in the Land of Israel.
- **תמים תהיה עם השם** The commandment to serve and be wholehearted with Hashem with perfect faith and the prohibition of idolatrous acts and sorcery.
- **ראשית דגנך תירשך ויצהרך וראשית גז צאנך** The tribe of Levi was not given a land inheritance in Israel but were provided priestly gifts called "a portion of Hashem."
- **עיר מקלט** Laws concerning the establishment of cities of refuge where an unintentional murderer flees, atones for his guilt, and is protected from retaliation of the victim's family.
- **כי תצא למלחמה** Laws of a war, to make an offer of peace before attacking a city, and to not fear the enemy by their strength or numbers.
- **עגלה ערופה** Atoning for an unknown murder which happened in the land of Israel after discovering a corpse on the roadside or field.



Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah Count

41



Dvar Torah | by. Aharon Mikail

THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTION: There are so many ways one could express appreciation: saying the words, writing a letter, acts of kindness and creative expression, investing time, a face to face visit, etc.

What is your favorite way to show gratitude?

Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li

שִׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן לָךְ בְּכָל־שַׁעְרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ד' אֶלֶיךָ נִתְּנָן

"Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities - which Hashem, your God, gives you"
(Devarim 16:18).

Many commentaries ask the obvious questions: why does the verse address the individual ("*titein lecha*—appoint for yourself") when Hashem is commanding to choose judges and officers for each city as a whole? Is Hashem speaking to the lone individual or the entire nation?

The *Nesivos Shalom* (1) answers that Hashem is speaking both to the individual and the nation as a whole. In addition to establishing court systems for justice in each city, each person possesses several "gates" which signify the 5 senses and their functions— eyes (vision), ears (hearing), nose (smell), mouth (taste), and hands (touch). (2) He explains that we must appreciate the capabilities Hashem has blessed us with and try our best to use the senses to do His will and safeguard ourselves from doing wrong. This is the meaning of the continuation of the verse, "*which Hashem, your God, gives you*" – Hashem gifts us with these tools to do good and use them as gates which bring one closer to Him! Furthermore, when one truly understands that Hashem fills the world and is watching over us, we will constantly want to do good and draw ourselves closer to Him.

The month of Elul is a tremendous time of mercy, connection, and closeness to Hashem. One of the famous and beautiful acronyms for the month of Elul is the verse from *Shir Hashirim* (7:11): "**Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li**" ("*I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is for me*"). One way to interpret this verse is: Once I know that I am my Beloved's, that Hashem really loves me, then as a result of feeling so loved, I reciprocate that love back to Him even greater. As the verse in *Mishlei* (27:19) says "*As water reflects one's face, so does a man's heart to another.*" When a person feels loved by another, they naturally become drawn to that person, developing affection for them and ultimately reciprocating that feeling of love. Like a mirror, the more you contemplate God's love for you, the more love you will reflect back to Him. (3)

(1) *Parashas Shoftim*, 1; (2) R' Chaim Vital zt"l, *Shlah HaKadosh* zt"l; (3) *Kuntres Ma'amrei Chizuk* by R' Tzvi Meir Zilberberg התעלות באהבת השם מביא משיח פרשת פנחס ובין המצרים תשע"ח חס שליט"א

Challenge: Think of one way you could express gratitude to Hashem and at least 1 person. (For example: Give a shout out to one or more people at the Shabbos table for something good they did this week!)



Teachings - In-Depth Reflections on the Parasha | by R' Asher Brander

א"שליט author Teachings, Rosh Kollel and Dean of Link Kollel Los Angeles

New and Improved!

Every once in a while, when I wander into a supermarket, I find the same old comforting brands, the ones to which we are so accustomed. Honey Nut Cheerios, Maxwell House, Reynolds Wrap, Heinz, Erewhon (for California people). What's amazing is that these same reliable brands that have been around for 30, 40, and 50 years somehow manage to carry that magic "n" word. The whole psychological torah of using words that sell is a lucrative one. The right sounds and the proper formulations are critical. At the top of the list of those alluring words is the word "new".

Somewhere deeply embedded in the human psyche is a love of the new, and a boredom/antipathy for the old. These days, it boggles the mind that in the fast paced internet media era, a Google headline may have a 30 minute shelf life. It is not only a Madison Avenue thing. The intellectual world realizes the value of the new. One cannot earn a Phd without a novel thought, theory, invention, or analysis. Nor is the fascination with the new limited to the secular world.

The pursuit of the new - or *chiddush* - is a vaunted one in the Jewish world. Perhaps the greatest achievement of Torah scholarship is a Torah chiddush – a Torah innovation which creates an entirely new perspective on aged wisdom. A *chiddush* might allow us to reevaluate a piece of knowledge in a completely different manner. Perhaps it will explain a difficult Rambam, or oft-misunderstood laws; better yet, it will allow us to extrapolate to new scenarios that have not yet been placed under the halachic microscopic.

Arguably, the leading school of Torah thought, the Brisker approach, is predicated upon a revolutionary system of categorization/analysis that is scarcely 100 years old; a fairly new structure in a society that has been learning Torah for about 3300 years.

One might even say that *chiddush*, the act of developing new approaches, is a form of Divine imitation. God, we pray daily, *mechadeish b'chol yom tamid* – constantly renews His world. Chassidic thought (also a relatively new development in Jewish History) teaches that the act of creation is constantly being renewed, such that the act of destruction requires nothing more than ceasing creation. Thus, finding the new becomes a sacred activity of clinging to our Creator.

But not all that is new need to appear as new. (In other words, let us present a new notion about new)

The Hebrew word for new, "*chadash*" appears four times in the Torah. Three of the four times, the word is descriptive. Two of those three times appear in our parsha, *Shoftim (Devarim 20:5,8)*. The context: the draft exemptions for a *milchemes reshus* (a permissible war). The four famous exemptions are those men who had contracted a new marriage in the previous year - (1) established a new marriage, (2) planted a new vineyard and (3) built a new home. The fourth appears to occupy a category of its own and exempts those who are afraid. In the opinion of R. Yossi Haglili, we are not talking about primal fear, but spiritual fear – those who are afraid of sins that they possess.

So much Torah can be said here. What do these categories represent? What link might there be between the first three and the fourth category? Are these mandatory exemptions? (1)

Here's an apparently technical detail that ultimately looms large: What if the home is not new, but is being renovated? The shell or perhaps the façade remains – but the inner home is being completely gutted. Does that constitute new?

The opinion of Rabbi Yehuda in the Talmud is that this is not new (2). One needs to raze the structure and start afresh and expand (3) in order to cop the new home exemption. There does not appear to be any dissenters in the Talmud. It would appear that renovations do not constitute a new home.

Remarkably, Rambam (4) claims that the new home exemption applies even for a renovation. The difficulty is that he argues with R.Yehuda the Tanna (a Mishnaic sage). Rambam, as great as he is, does not have license to argue with a Tanna unless he has some Talmudic support. There appears to be no basis for Rambam!

R. Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (aka *Ben Ish Chai*) comes to *Rambam's* defense.

He claims that if we must look at the first time the Torah uses the word *chadash* (5):

Vayakam melech chadash al mitzrayim asher lo yada es Yosef

A new king came into power over Egypt, who did not know Yosef.

The wording appears redundant. If he was a new king, he surely did not know Yosef (at least as a monarch)?!. Rav and Shmuel argue (6). Rav states that it was really a new king. Shmuel (7), however, says it was the same ole Pharaoh who had an epiphany (or a political makeover) and no longer acknowledged Yosef's role in the development of the Egyptian empire.

Shmuel teaches that a new person need not express a different physical or external persona. Pharaoh was the same man and yet a new person. Rambam, says Rav Yosef Chaim, simply transposes that definition to a new home, and derives that a home that has the same external façade is still called new as long as it possesses a completely different internal structure. In his view and ultimately, in the view of the halacha, *new* as a Torah concept, relates to the inner world.

Transposed to our world, new means developing a new attitude, not a new wardrobe; reworking one's character - not renovating one's home. Creating new things (new cars, homes, spouses) is not really new but rather working with what is and developing a proper and healthy- internal metamorphosis. Most significantly, new means the hard work of introspection and evaluation that is the precursor of internal change.

The *moon* of Elul has arrived. No, that was not a typo! We Jews count by the moon – a twin paradoxical symbol of dynamism and consistency. Constantly changing - waxing, waning and doing everything in between and yet starting the cycle again and anew, the moon symbolizes our people. We sanctify the new moon, and its ability to renew, while at the same time lauding the moon (and the various luminaries) who happily and consistently carry out the bidding of their Creator.

The challenge of Elul is to renew the stale without razing the infrastructure, to revitalize our Divine service without changing it, and to walk into the new year finding new meaning within our traditional milieu. Let us pray for success and a beautiful new year and may the inner work begin.

(1) More on the topic see *Meseches Sotah 43* and *Maimonides*, Laws of Kings, Chapter 7; (2) Sotah 43a; (3) Cf. Rashi, Sotah, *ibid* who implies that even complete destruction without changing the dimensions would not constitute a new home; (4) Perush HaMishnayos; (5) Shemos 1:8; (6) Sotah 11a; (7) The Talmud is not clear who said what. Ben Ish Chai assumes that the opinions are presented in order. One can dispute this assertion – but working with this approach, Rambam follows Shmuel in monetary matters (as is a classic Talmudic principle) and thus exempts the homeowner.



Hilchos Shabbos

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Redacted by Dr. Emile Amzallag

How is Kiddush recited on Friday night?

The *Shulchan Aruch* (O.H. 271:1) writes that when one returns home from the synagogue on Friday night, one should immediately recite Kiddush. The *Mishna Berura* (M.B., O.H. 271:1) mentions that if one is not hungry when one returns, one may wait to recite Kiddush since one already sanctifies the Shabbat during Arvit. Notwithstanding, the *Mishna Berura* adds that for the sake of one's wife, kids or guests, one should not delay Kiddush and the ensuing meal. Accordingly, if one sees that one's wife or guests may be hungry, tired or the like, one may forego all the introductory portions of Kiddush, such as *Shalom Alechem*, *Bar Yohai*, or *Azamer Bishvahin* and recite them after Kiddush.

The *Rama* (*ibid*:10) writes that it is preferable to sit down while reciting the Kiddush of Friday night, and only briefly stand up at the beginning in honor of Hashem. The *Kol Bo* explains that since Kiddush must be followed by a meal, it is proper for Kiddush to be recited in a way a meal is conducted, that is, sitting down. The *Vilna Gaon* (M.B 46) offers another explanation that when Kiddush is recited standing up, it lends itself to those present to move around and not have the requisite concentration or decorum for this Mitzvah. Indeed, the custom in many Ashkenazic communities is to stand during the verses of "Vaychulu" but then sit for the remainder of Kiddush. Nevertheless, the Sephardic custom, based on the *Arizal*, is to stand for Kiddush on Friday night (*c.f Peri Etz Haim Shaar Shabbat 14, and Kaf Hachaim ibid 62*). It goes without saying that at synagogue or other gatherings, in which there is a tendency for people to move about and socialize, those present should stand still and listen intently to the one reciting Kiddush.

As for the actual drinking of the Kiddush, however, one should sit since the *Gemara* (*Gittin 70a*) explains that drinking while standing damages the body. (*c.f Ben Ish Hai Shana II, Bereshit 29*).

Summary: One should recite Kiddush as soon as one returns from synagogue on Friday night. If necessary, one may skip the introductory portions of Kiddush. Kiddush on Friday night is recited standing. The Kiddush is drunk sitting down.



Maase Shehaya - Hashgacha Pratis Stories

Doing the Right Thing

I happened upon this recent beautiful story when I was learning in Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. There was a man who was heading on his way and happened to see an old tallis which was left on the side of a *sheimos* bin in an unhonorable way (a *sheimos* is a place designated for disposing of religious articles in a respectful manner). *Sheimos* bins can be commonly located in Israel and are scattered around the different cities. Despite not having much change, the man paid the simple cost of 5 shekel and placed the tallis in the bin. Immediately afterward, as the man continued on his way and crossed the street, he found a 20 shekel bill worth exactly 4 times the amount it had cost to dispose of the tallis in the *sheimos* bin. He thought, "You never lose out when you do the right thing!"



Stories of Tzadikim | Gateway to Happiness by R' Zelig Pliskin שליט"א

It's All Good

Two brothers, Rabbi Shmelke and Rabbi Pinchos who were students of the Maggid of Mezeritch, asked the Maggid, "How is it possible to fulfill the Talmudic obligation of blessing Hashem for misfortunes with the same joy as when one blesses Him for good fortune?" (*Brochos 54a*). The Maggid advised them to ask their question to Rabbi Zushe who was extremely poor and frequently lacked the basic necessities and despite having many difficulties in life, he was always happy. So they went to the study hall where they found Rabbi Zushe, and told him the Maggid said he would explain how it is possible to bless Hashem with joy over misfortune. He responded, "I'm surprised that our Rabbi sent you to me about this, replied Rabbi Zushe. "You should rather ask someone who suffered some misfortune in his life. I have never experienced anything bad in my life. Only good things have happened to me." (*Midor Dor*, p. 216)



Zemiros | Mayim Rabim by. Derech Achim

Before Shabbos,
scan the QR-Code below to
listen and prepare this week's
song for the Shabbos table!



Parasha Song | by. Chayim B. Alevsky

Ani L'Dodi Song! (Melody: Don't Walk by Uncle Moishy)

*Ani l'dodi v'dodi li
I love Hashem and Hashem loves me
This is what the month of Elul is all about
To greet the King in the field when He comes out (2)*

Y'mei ratzon...Y'mei rachamim (2)

*Ani l'dodi v'dodi li
I love Hashem and Hashem loves me
This is what the month of Elul is all about
To greet the King in the field when He comes out*



Jokes: Mitzvah Gedolah Lihiyot B'Simcha!

1. Singing

Q) Why aren't you allowed to sing outside on Shabbos?

A) *Because you're carrying a tune!*

2. Flowers

Q) In which letter in the alef-beis can you put flowers for Shabbos?

A) *Into the veis!*

Wishing everyone a safe, healthy, beautiful, happy, uplifting, and restful Shabbos Kodesh!

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