

15 AUGUST 2026 | 2 ELUL 5786

VOLUME 39 | #50

DAF HASHAVUA

שפֿטֿים | SHOFETIM

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 9.16pm
 Birmingham: 9.26pm
 Bournemouth: 9.26pm
 Cardiff: 9.32pm
 Dublin: 9.47pm
 Edinburgh: 9.51pm
 Glasgow: 9.55pm
 Hull: 9.32pm
 Leeds: 9.31pm
 Liverpool: 9.39pm
 Manchester: 9.34pm
 Nottingham: 9.31pm
 Sheffield: 9.34pm
 Southend: 9.12pm
 Southport: 9.42pm
 Jerusalem: 8.02pm



*"Is the tree of the field a man that
you should besiege it too?"
(Devarim 20:19)*

שַׁפְּטִים
SHOFETIM

5th Sidra in:
דְּבָרִים
DEVARIM

By Numbers:
97 VERSES
1,523 WORDS
5,590 LETTERS

Headlines:
JEWISH
PUBLIC AND
GOVERNMENTAL
LAW

SHOFETIM:
Artscroll p.1024
Hertz p.820
Koren Sacks p.1259
Soncino p.1078

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1199
Hertz p.835
Koren Sacks p.1609
Soncino p.1094

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – DEVARIM 16:18-17:13
Judges and officers must be appointed in all cities (Rashi). Judges must endeavour to avoid showing favour to any litigant. One may not erect (even) a single stone for worship, even to worship God. It is forbidden to bring a blemished animal as an offering. Idol worship is subject to capital punishment. If a halachic question or dispute cannot be resolved by local courts, the case should be taken to the Kohanim in the Temple.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 17:14-20
When the nation comes into the Land, they have the right to request a king. That king has to be appointed by God (through a prophet) and must be Jewish. The king must not lead the people to Egypt in order for him to acquire horses (where many were available and a symbol of prestige). He must also avoid having multiple wives and amassing too much wealth. He is obligated to have his own Sefer Torah, from which he must read daily.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 18:1-5
The tribe of Levi does not get a portion in the Land, unlike the other tribes. However, the Kohanim are to be given parts of certain Temple offerings to eat. They are also to receive the first tithe of the produce of fruits grown in the Land (*terumah gedolah*), as well as the first shearing of the flock (*reishit ha'gez*).

4TH ALIYA (REVI') – 18:6-13
The Kohanim are to be split into different groups, who will rotate performing duties in the Temple. The right to eat designated parts of regular offerings is reserved for whichever group of Kohanim is serving in the Temple that week (see Rashi). After coming into the Land, the nation must avoid the ways of the Canaanite nations, especially their various forms of witchcraft, divinations and sorcery.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 18:14-19:13
Moshe (Moses) tells the people that they will have prophets who will guide them and convey God's messages. A prophet's legitimacy will be tested by whether his prophecies materialise or not. Moshe gives instructions regarding the establishment of three cities of refuge (in addition to the three on

the east bank of the Jordan River – see *Devarim* 4:41-43). These cities are to provide refuge for a person who has killed accidentally and is fleeing from the relatives of the deceased. Instructions are given about what constitutes 'accidental' and how the community must endeavour to protect the accidental killer from those who are pursuing him. In Messianic times, another three cities will be added (Rashi).

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 19:14-20:9
One must not tamper with someone else's land boundary. Court cases are determined by the testimony of a minimum of two witnesses. The laws of conspiring witnesses (*edim zomemim*) are detailed, in which a second set of witnesses accuses the first set of having been unqualified to give their testimony, since they could not have been at the scene of the incident, due to their being elsewhere (Rashi). When the nation goes out to war, they must not fear the enemy, however mighty they may seem. Before battle commences, a Kohen is to encourage the people, reminding them that God is protecting them. Certain people are sent home from the battlefield before war commences.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 20:10-21:9
Before the nation goes to war, it must offer its enemy the opportunity to make peace. However, in the initial conquest of the Land from the Canaanite nations, their cities and inhabitants must be destroyed (Rashi). If a corpse is found between two cities and it is unclear who is responsible for the death, the elders of the city nearest to the location of the corpse must take a heifer and behead it in a valley, after which the Kohanim shall ask God for atonement on behalf of the elders (Rashi).

Point to Consider: *Why were the elders of the nearest city considered responsible for the death? (see Rashi to 21:7)*

HAFTARAH (YESHAYA 51:12-52:12)
Taken from the book of Yeshaya, this is the fourth of the seven 'haftarot of consolation' read after Tisha B'Av. Yeshaya tells the people that they may have suffered punishment, but they can 'awaken' themselves and emerge from their captivity. God is constantly ready to redeem the nation if they turn to Him.



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HUMANS NEED GUIDANCE

BY: **RABBI FAGLEMAN**

Rabbi of Allerton Synagogue and student chaplain for Liverpool and the Northwest

Western civilisation isn't overly interested in occult practices. Most would view a palm reading at the seaside as meaningless conjecture and are sceptical of anyone claiming to have control over what cannot be seen or rationally explained. Usually they are correct. However, the Rabbis teach that, in earlier societies, people were able to connect deeply with the supernatural world. A clear example is the story of the Exodus, which is replete with instances of the Egyptians knowing incantations that were capable of imitating signs and plagues (see *Shemot* 7:22).

I recently witnessed my first ever Tarot Card reading. It was the last day of the year at university (where I am enrolled on a MA qualification), and a member of the group brought in a pack of cards and was offering readings. I did not, of course, take part, aware that this week's portion of *Shofetim* tells us:

"Let no one be found among you ... an augur or diviner or soothsayer, or who practises sorcery, or consults ghosts or spirits, or seeks oracles from the dead" (*Devarim* 18:10). These acts are 'abhorrent to God' (18:12)

Instead of orphic practices, the Torah offers us a much better alternative.

"A prophet from among you, from your brethren, like me,

shall Hashem your God establish for you; to him shall you listen." (18:15)

Ramban (Nachmanides, 1194-1270) on 18:9 explains that, naturally, human beings desire to know what tomorrow will bring. We want assurances regarding our health, livelihood and success. Nevertheless, there are both proper and improper ways to seek guidance. The prohibition is to seek it from illegitimate sources that seek to subvert the system of nature that God intended for the world.

The *Sifrei* (18:17) notes that the promise of a prophet was made in response to the events at Mount Sinai. The Jewish people were overwhelmed by the direct communication from God at the Revelation and requested intermediaries who could convey God's will to them. Prophecy was therefore not merely a privilege; it was a necessity for the ongoing relationship between God and His people.

And whilst we no longer live in an era of prophecy, the prohibition regarding soothsayers and mediums obviously still stands. For actual guidance in a world in which we are bombarded with expert opinions telling us just about everything, we need to be judicious with regard to where and how we receive our information. From which

“ Ultimately, the mission of a Jew is to walk, as we are told just a few verses later, ‘wholeheartedly with God’ (18:13)

politicians to vote for, to where to invest our money, we need to be able to discern the motives and objectives behind what we are being fed. There is no shortage of charlatans and scammers! At the same time, balanced and trusted advice is available from those who are genuinely qualified to give it, and their support is able to improve our lives.

Ultimately, the mission of a Jew is to walk, as we are told just a few verses later, 'wholeheartedly with God' (18:13). The paths we choose need to be consistent with this fundamental Jewish value, for it is He who truly knows what is best for us.



ELUL REFLECTIONS

PART TWO

BY: **REBBETZEN VICKI BELOVSKI**

Formerly Rebbetzen at Golders Green United Synagogue

Last week, we suggested that perhaps the commonly used verse which epitomises the relationship between God and the Jewish people during Elul (the month preceding Rosh Hashanah) "*Ani l'dodi v'dodi li* – I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" should be replaced instead by "*Dodi li, v'ani lo* – my Beloved is mine and I am His." This suggestion is based on the approachability of God during this period – the parable of the King in the field.

On Rosh Hashanah we recognise God as King, but before we can do that, we must first recognise ourselves and the part that each of us plays in the Jewish people as a whole. The Rabbis suggest that there are other verses which also contain the initial letters of Elul, helping us to achieve this perspective during this period.

In *parashat Nitzavim*, which we will read just before Rosh Hashanah, we find the verse "*Umol Hashem Elokecha Et Levavcha V'et Levav zarecha* – The Lord, your God, will circumsise your heart and the heart of your offspring" (*Devarim* 30:6). The idea of circumcision is used here as a metaphor for the concept of removing the barrier between the Jews and God, and is linked to the month of Elul when we also strive to remove any barriers between us and God.

Similarly, we must acknowledge that every individual is also a part of the Jewish people as a whole, as we find in the verse in *Esther* (9:22) from which we learn two of the key mitzvot of Purim, and which also contains the letters of Elul: "*Mishloach manot ish l'reieihu u'matanot le'evyonim* – [an occasion for] sending food gifts to one another and charitable gifts to the poor". The Purim mitzvot are designed to unite people, as a response to Haman's accusation that we were "*mefuzar u'm'forad* – scattered and dispersed". So too, as we approach Rosh Hashanah, we want to emphasise our unity before God.

If we do not know who we are, both as individuals and as a nation, it will be much harder for us to recognise God, even if He comes out to meet us. Elul is a time for introspection, a reassessment of our role and place in the community. If we break down the barrier between ourselves and God, and strengthen our relationships with other people, we will have a solid understanding of who we are and our place in the world. It is only once we have this and are confident in our identity,

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both as individuals and as part of the Jewish people – that we know who the "*ani* – I" is – that we can recognise that God is in fact "*Dodi*, my Beloved". At that point, we will see that "*Dodi li*, my Beloved is mine" – the King is in the field, God is right there, waiting for us.

Hence, although it is unusual to place ourselves first, before God, and notwithstanding His accessibility at this time of the year, the original verse, "*Ani l'dodi v'dodi li*", is an accurate representation of our relationship with God during Elul.

To be continued.

אני לדודי ודודי לי

ISRAEL IN THE PARASHA

This series is an adaptation of short ideas written by former Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits z"l in the 1960s, which were later reprinted in a compilation of his writings, 'Mishnat HaSar'.

SHOFETIM: THE LAND AND ITS LAWS

The Torah's system of justice is closely bound to the Land of Israel. This is reflected at the start of this week's *parasha*: "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your cities which Hashem, your God, gives you" (*Devarim* 16:18).

Ramban explains that this command is tied specifically to the Land: courts are to be established in each city once the Jewish people settle there. Outside the Land, however, there is no equivalent obligation to establish a formal

court system; rather, disputes are judged by qualified individuals where necessary, or the parties may come up to the Land, where judgement is delivered in its proper place.

The centrality of the Land is further emphasised by the location of the highest court at the *Beit*

Hamikdash (Temple) in Jerusalem, as reflected in the verse: "If a case is beyond your judgement... you shall arise and go up to the place that Hashem, your God, will choose" (*ibid.* 17:8). From here, our Sages derive that the *Beit Hamikdash* stands higher than all other places, as the ultimate seat of justice (Rashi).

“ Our Sages derive that the *Beit Hamikdash* stands higher than all other places, as the ultimate seat of justice (Rashi).

PHRASE OF THE WEEK

BY: **RABBI ALEX CHAPPER** | Borehamwood & Elstree United Synagogue

Each week, working our way through the alphabet, we explore a Jewish word or phrase, bringing clarity and deeper understanding to its meaning.

Does **GRAMA** mean:

1. The Talmud? | 2. Incense? | 3. Indirect causation?

A halachic term, *grama* refers to an indirect action, and has particular relevance to the laws of Shabbat and damages.

According to Torah law, *melacha* (creative activity) is forbidden on Shabbat. However, if it happens automatically, even as the result of a person's prior action, it is considered *grama* and the individual would not be held directly responsible under Torah law. Although *grama* is still rabbinically prohibited, in cases of great need, it may be

used to achieve the result of a *melacha*. For example, if a fire is spreading (in a non-life-threatening situation), it may not be extinguished directly, but it can be surrounded by containers of water. When the fire reaches them, the containers burst and the water extinguishes the fire automatically. *Grاما* is only permitted in exceptional circumstances like this, to avoid loss, for the sake of a *mitzvah*, or for another significant need.

Torah law includes an explicit

exemption for *grama* - damages caused indirectly. For example, if a person lights a fire in their field and an unusually strong wind blows it into someone else's field, causing damage, they would not be held liable since it was indirect and unforeseeable.

In Israel, the Zomet Institute utilises this principle to develop halachically acceptable technological solutions in situations of pressing need, including those involving the preservation of life.

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THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT SHOFETIM

14-15 AUGUST | 2 ELUL

A NEW PERSPECTIVE



BY: **NATANA SOBEL**

Tribe gap year student

Parashat Shofetim discusses the mitzvah to establish cities of refuge. If someone unintentionally kills another person, there is a safe place to which they must flee and remain there until the death of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest). These cities existed so there would be places where an inadvertent killer would be protected from the victim's blood relatives.

We can understand the

superficial reason for these cities of refuge. Is there something deeper? And why was the freedom of the killer dependent on the death of the *Kohen Gadol*? This period of time was, obviously, unknown; a person could be there for the majority of their life!

Why would someone need to spend time in a city of refuge for something they did accidentally? One thought is that even if someone kills by accident, there is a level of carelessness and disregard for the life of another. The cities of refuge were places mainly inhabited by Levites, people who devoted themselves to serving God in the *Beit*

Hamikdash (Temple) and they were the teachers of Torah to the rest of the nation.

Someone who was sent to a city of refuge had the opportunity to see up close Jewish lives with the highest values. They were given an opportunity to shift their perspective on life to one that focuses on Torah and mitzvot and the highest regard for the lives of others.

Just like the atmosphere in cities of refuge were intended to help change someone's outlook on life, we can also view our experiences as opportunities to reflect on our values and deepen our appreciation for our lives and the lives of others.

Parasha Wordsearch

Find these words in the grid. The words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

V	U	C	E	P	M	Z	Y	S	R	U	R	A
V	N	R	L	D	J	R	E	F	U	G	E	D
S	F	O	I	M	D	H	F	H	I	W	F	R
J	T	R	I	A	Z	P	Q	B	A	U	I	W
S	A	F	E	T	Y	C	S	X	Z	R	E	O
D	M	E	H	S	A	H	I	V	Z	K	O	A
V	T	E	M	Q	C	I	M	T	C	A	P	T
A	T	O	F	D	V	V	C	Q	Y	Q	I	T
L	L	E	V	I	T	E	S	E	U	R	A	G
U	F	X	H	Z	L	V	K	V	R	V	V	E
E	O	W	Z	D	T	M	C	S	Q	P	W	N
S	N	U	C	I	P	I	P	R	G	T	P	X
Q	Q	Y	N	R	G	A	M	Q	V	D	U	A

LEVITES
REFUGE
TORAH
HASHEM
LIFE
SAFETY
MITZVOT
CITY
VALUES
APPRECIATION

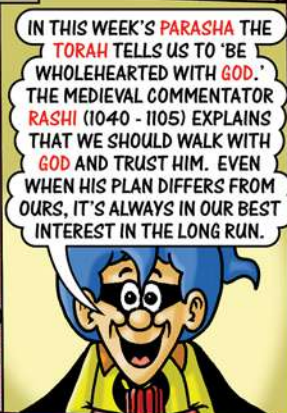




THE TRIBE SCRIBE

SHOFETIM: PARK LIFE!

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