

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,
ויום השביעי שבת לה'

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MAKE TODAY A BLESSING

ROBERT AUERBACH
SHEVET HINEINI

As we head into the month of Elul, we enter a time of reflection and repentance. As we begin to look towards the end of the month, which is a time that we are judged over, I find it satirical that the first parasha of Elul is Parashat Shoftim. This is the parasha in which Moshe reviews the justice system for Bnei Yisrael and how the justice process works in his final speech. "You shall set up judges and law enforcement officials for yourself in all your cities that the Lord, your God, is giving you, for your tribes, and they shall judge the people [with] righteous judgment." (Devarim 16:18). He uses this time to mention the future kings of Israel and what is to become of the nation as they enter Eretz Yisrael.

In this week's parasha we learn: "the testimony of one witness does not stand against a person with regard to any sin or iniquity that they may have committed; a case can be established [only] through the testimony of [at least] two or three witnesses." (Devarim 19:15). This raises one important question; why is it so important to have two or three witnesses on a crime rather than just one? This question is emphasized when the penalty of false testimony is so severe (a convicted false witness's penalty is the penalty that would have been afflicted upon the person they accused).

This is due to a couple of reasons, the first being that no matter how credible or reliable the witness may be it is still not enough to sentence a person and tarnish their reputation if the wit-

ness stands alone; this is because depending on the situation, the witness may have seen something and assumed that the person was breaking halacha when in fact the situation allowed them to do so. To resolve this, two independent witnesses are required before a conviction can occur.

Another reason the Lubavitcher Rebbe gives for this is that there are two types of witnesses and Moshe uses this wording in order to emphasise this. The first is a witness who verifies specific facts or events. This can be seen, for example, when a witness is required to testify against someone for a crime they committed, often a bystander. The second is a witness who was themselves an integral part of the events. This can be seen for example in a *ketubah* (marriage certificate) or *get* (divorce certificate) where witnesses are required to sign the documents, as according to Jewish law a couple cannot become husband and wife without the presence of bonafide witnesses.

This reason is slightly peculiar, but when we delve deeper into it we find that not only does the reason for having two witnesses make sense in terms of the first reason but it also makes sense in terms of the second as it allows for us to see in which situations witnesses are needed. It is this parasha, Parashat Shoftim, that Moshe lays out a plan for how he expects Bnei Yisrael to approach halacha and other such areas of Judaism. While doing this he uses witnesses to help establish a legal system that will not be corrupt. "You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show favouritism, and you shall not take a bribe, for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts just words" (Devarim 16:19).

Shabbat shalom!

ROB WAS A MADRICH ON MACHANE ARI 5780.

London	In: 19:54 Out: 21:03	Oxford	In: 19:56 Out: 21:08	Leeds	In: 20:03 Out: 21:18
Manchester	In: 20:05 Out: 21:19	Bristol	In: 20:01 Out: 21:12	Liverpool	In: 20:07 Out: 21:22
Cambridge	In: 19:52 Out: 21:04	Birmingham	In: 20:01 Out: 21:14	Jerusalem	In: 18:40 Out: 19:53

SHOFTIM 5780: A SIMPLE LIFE

CHANA BE'ERI | CHINUCH WORKER



When writing a Sefer Torah, certain specific letters are traditionally written larger or smaller than the rest. Parashat Shoftim features a large letter *tav* as part of the following commandment:

תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

"You must be tamim with Hashem your God."
(Devarim 18:13)

The word '*tamim*' is often translated as simple. Tam is the simple son of the Pesach seder, the one who seems confused by the situation and requires basic answers to his questions. Tam is unsophisticated, childish, perhaps even stupid, and lacks a nuanced understanding of the laws and ordinances that Chacham, the wise son, seeks to comprehend. It hardly seems like a positive character trait to emulate, and yet here we are commanded to make *temimut* the essential characteristic of our relationship with God!

This strange mitzvah comes in the context of the prohibition against engaging in various kinds of divination and sorcery, practices which were common among the Canaanite nations. Rashi therefore understands the command to "be *tamim*" as an extension of this prohibition: rather than attempting to manipulate the world or investigate the future, we need to out our faith in God and accept His Divine plan. Practicing witchcraft or even believing in superstition is essentially a form of idolatry, denying God as the only source of power in the universe. '*Tamim*' in this sense means 'wholehearted', reflecting our complete devotion to God.

Famously, Ya'akov Avinu is described as אִישׁ תָּם, a simple man (Bereishit 25:27). This does not refer to him being simple-minded – after all, he was able to trick his brother out of the birthright and counter all of Lavan's attempts to manipulate him. The simplicity of *temimut* is not

due to a lack of appreciation of the complexity of the world. It is the ability to be wholehearted and complete in one's relationship with God despite all that complexity. It is acceptance of the fact that one can never truly understand God's plan. This is the quality of Ya'akov that we are commanded to embody in this week's parasha.

When we read the tale of the four sons, we see clear differences in the responses given to their questions. The wicked son and the son who does not know how to ask are rejected; they are not included in God's redemption. The wise son is given a technical, nitty-gritty answer to his question. Only the simple son is told "with great strength Hashem brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery". Only he, with his child-like sense of wonder, is able to fathom the great miracle that inspired the night's celebrations.

**IF ONE APPROACHES
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The Ba'al Haturim explains that the large letter *tav* symbolizes the fact that if one is *tamim* with Hashem, it is as if one has fulfilled the Torah from *alef* to *tav* i.e. in its entirety. If

one approaches the world through a lens of openness and acceptance of God's sovereignty, accepting the Torah is easy. There will be no challenges to grapple with, no difficulty fulfilling elements of it that a person does not understand. *Temimut* negates the need for full comprehension as a prerequisite for keeping the Torah's commandments.

We have just entered the month of Elul, when we blow the shofar daily. The Bartenura on the Mishna Rosh Hashana (3:3) tells us that the shofar of Rosh Hashana is the straight horn of a mountain goat because our tefillot on Rosh Hashana should be straight and simple. We are not judged for the details of our actions. Rather, it is our attitudes and our connection to Hashem that influence how we will be seen on Rosh Hashana. Elul is the time to focus on *temimut*, wholeness and simplicity, as we assess our relationship with God.

A TASTE FROM THE ARCHIVES: SHOFTIM 5771

JUDGING YOURSELF, A TORAH REQUIREMENT

In Parashat Shoftim we are commanded to appoint judges and we are told how they should behave in a righteous manner:

שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֵּן לָךְ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשִּׁפְט־צִדְקָה:

"Judges and officers you shall appoint for yourselves in all the gates that Hashem has given you for your tribes, and they shall judge the nation with righteous judgement." (Devarim 16:18)

The Kli Yakar explains that this pasuk is addressing those who are appointing the judges, i.e. the powerful people in the community, and not to the community as a whole. This is because the pasuk is inconsistent and would say "and they shall judge you" if it was referring to the whole community.

Therefore, the important members of the community should be careful not to appoint shoftim that will show preferential treatment to those who appointed them. As such, the pasuk can be read: "Judges and officers you shall appoint for yourselves", i.e. the important members of the community, and, if you have done this, you can be certain that the general population will be judged "with righteous judgement".

The Gemara in Moed Katan (17a) describes some parameters as to the type of person who should be chosen as a judge. Rabbi Yochanan taught: "If the judge is like an angel of Hashem, then seek Torah from him." Darchei Musar explains that a judge is similar to an angel as angels are described as not turning from side to side as they move. They go straight in accordance with

Hashem's will without taking into account any external influences. This is how a judge should be judging. When a situation is brought before him, he must ignore all outside factors and decide the clear, pure will of Hashem as presented to mankind through the Torah. Just like an angel, no external influences should be taken into consideration.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, however, offers an alternative explanation to the above pasuk. Instead of reading "judges and officers you shall appoint for yourselves" it should be read "every person must be a judge over himself". Each person must view themselves as if he is a judge and judge himself to ensure that they are doing what is right.

This interpretation of the pasuk is the perfect reminder to each of us as we begin the month of Elul.

We should use this opportunity to judge ourselves and like the angels, go straight in accordance with Hashem's will, ignoring the external pressures around us.

THIS DVAR TORAH WAS WRITTEN BY MICHELLE HART (NOW POMERANCE) (SHE-VET ACHIYA) AND WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN SHABBAT LASHEM VOLUME 17, ISSUE 46 ON 3RD SEPTEMBER 2011.

WE ARE CURRENTLY DIGITISING OUR HISTORICAL RECORDS AND CHINUCH MATERIALS. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SPONSORING OUR ARCHIVE PLEASE CONTACT ADAM AT OPERATIONS@BAUK.ORG.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- We are delighted to launch applications for **WINTER MACHANE 5781!** Join us at an exciting new site from **21st-28th December** and enjoy a fantastic Bnei Akiva residential full of fun, friends and Ruach! **NEW THIS YEAR: Machane Seenai for Year 11!** Sign up today at bauk.org/camps or email camps@bauk.org for more information.

- **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Coronavirus has hit Bnei Akiva hard, costing us over £150,000. Over the last six months our Mazkirut and Bogrim have been working tirelessly to put on a range of fantastic programming for our youth, from Machane Aviv in the Spring, to a celebration of Israel like no other on Yom Ha'atzmaut, and now a packed summer of programming for over 400 children. Please support our **Yad Achim Campaign**. Visit bauk.org/yad-achim for more information and to donate.

- Applications for **Sviva 5781** close on **Monday 24th August!** If you would like to be involved as a **Madrich, Sgan or Rosh** fill out the application form at: bauk.org/sviva-registration-form **NOW!** Don't miss your opportunity to shape the movement!

- Look out for **Inspiration-Elul**, a series of short daily videos containing thoughts from bogrim in the lead-up to the Yamim Noraim. Available on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

- We are launching a **chesed initiative** planned

by madrichim and chanichim who volunteered at GIFT this week: **donate your old football shirts, shorts and boots** to those who can't afford them! Drop off any donations (clean and in good condition) at the London Bayit.

- Mazal tov to **Yehuda Fink** (Technical Director 5775, Shevet Shvut) and **Jodie Collets** (Shevet Hagevurah) on their engagement!

- Mazal tov to **Zahava Hill** (Shevet Morasha) on her Aliyah!

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to stay informed of our online content!

- To receive weekly copies of **Shabbat Lashem**, sign up for our mailing list at bauk.org/contact.

- Visit bauk.org/feedback for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why is it forbidden to alter the tribal land boundaries of Eretz Yisrael? (See **Rabbeinu Bachya on 19:14**)

2. Why is Am Yisrael addressed in the singular in the context of going out to war? (See **Alshich on 20:1**)

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!



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