

Torah Weekly



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Parshas Ki Seitzei

For the week ending 14 Elul 5755
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Summary

The Torah describes the only permissible way that a woman captured in battle may be married. In a case where a man is married to two wives, one of whom he hates, and she gives birth to the firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to give this to the children of the favored wife. The penalty for a wayward and rebellious son who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous human being is death by stoning. The body of a hanged man must not be left on the gallows overnight — as it was the dwelling place of the soul which is holy, it too has become holy. A person finding lost property has a responsibility to track down the owner and return it. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs, rather the mother must be sent away first. A fence must be built around the roof of a house to prevent people falling. It is forbidden to plant a field with a mixture of seeds; or to plow using an ox and a donkey together; or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads or *tzitzis* on its corners. Laws and penalties in regard to sexual offenses are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. If, as a result of the battle a slave escapes, he must be freed and not returned to his master. Promiscuity is prohibited to men and women alike. Taking any kind of interest for loaning money to a Jew is forbidden. Bnei Yisrael are not to make vows even in a good cause. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting, but not take it home with him. Divorce and re-marriage are legislated. A new husband is exempted from the army and stays at home the first year to make his wife happy until the relationship is cemented.

(Continued on next page)

Commentaries

"An Ammoni or Moavi may not enter the congregation of Hashem, even to their tenth generation, they may not enter into the congregation of Hashem for ever. The reason is they did not come out to meet you with bread and water on the way, when you were leaving Egypt" (23:4-5).

What was so terrible about Ammon and Moav not coming out to meet the Bnei Yisrael with bread and water on their way out of Egypt? Even an Egyptian may convert and, after three generations, marry a Jew. And their ancestors used Jewish children for bricks in their palaces and mausoleums! Just because of a lack of hospitality, an Ammoni and a

Why, in spite of having perhaps the best armed forces in the world are we giving back lands to people we defeated thirty years ago?

Moavi can never join the Jewish people?! The reason is that the Ammoni and the Moavi peoples owe their very existence to the Jews, for it was Avraham Avinu — the father of the Jewish People — who rescued Lot from being killed when Sodom was destroyed. Lot was the father of Ammon and Moav. Were it not for Avraham, there would never have been an Ammoni or Moavi People. When the people of Ammon and Moav didn't come out to greet the Jewish People, the descendants of Avraham, they showed the essence of their character — lack of gratitude. Ingratitude cannot be allowed to infiltrate the Jewish People, because to give thanks — to admit that one is beholden — is the essence of being Jewish. The word *Yehudi* is from the root to give thanks, to be grateful. We can take a lesson from this when looking for a spouse: If chronic ingratitude makes a person unfit as a marriage partner, then, necessarily, the greatest asset is someone who is always grateful. An ingrate is impossible to make happy. But someone who is always grateful, who sees everything as a gift — he/she is the easiest person in the world to make happy. That's the ideal spouse.

(Heard from Rabbi Moshe Carlebach)

Summary

(Continued from previous page)

Collateral on a loan may not include tools of labor for this may prevent the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease of *Tzara'as* is forbidden. Even if a loan is overdue, the creditor must return the debtor's collateral every day if the debtor needs it. Workers must be paid immediately. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, proselytes and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court has the right to impose the punishment of lashes. An ox must not be muzzled in its threshing, but be allowed to eat while it works. It is a *mitzvah* for a man to marry his brother's widow if there were no children from that marriage. Weights and measures must be honest. The Parsha concludes with the *mitzvah* to wipe out the name of Amalek, for in spite of knowing all that happened in Egypt, they ambushed the Jewish People after the Exodus.

"Do not plough with an ox and a donkey together" (22:17).

The ox represents the elevated side of man, his gazing heavenward, his desire to attain lofty spiritual goals. The donkey, on the other hand, is emblematic of everything physical, materialistic, and earth-bound. If a person wants to serve Hashem, to *plough* and labor in the field of spiritual elevation, he cannot hope to succeed if he is still yoked to the donkey within himself...

(Based on Meor V'Shemesh)

Pirkei Avos

"If there is no learning of Torah there can be no proper dealing with people. If there is no proper dealing with people there can be no learning of Torah" — Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah

(Avos 3:17.)

If one fails to learn Torah his dealings with people will not be proper, for he will not be aware of his responsibilities. It has been pointed out by Chazal (Bava Kama 30a) that one who wishes to be a truly righteous person must study the Gemoras of Seder Nezikin which deal with man's responsibility to his fellow man. If, on the other hand, one does not deal properly with people his Torah will be forgotten as a penalty for causing the Chilul Hashem, described by Chazal (Yoma 86), of people saying "How corrupt are the actions of this person who learns Torah."

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Parshas Ki Seitzai

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"When a camp goes out against your enemies" (23:10).

Look around. We have a genuine claim to the land of Israel. And yet all our valid arguments sound like rhetoric and propaganda. And our enemies — with claims as tenuous as thread, steal the sympathy of the world — usurping the moral high-ground. And every day Jewish blood is spilled. Jewish blood is still cheap. Why is this all happening? Why, in spite of having perhaps the best armed forces in the world are we giving back lands to people we defeated thirty years ago? Look around. Do you see unity amongst the Jewish People? Do you see love and tolerance?

It is only when we go out as "a camp" — united as one — "against your enemies" — that we succeed. But while *Sinas Chinam* — baseless hatred — rules in our camp, we will be forced to give and give and give...

(Based on the *Sifri* and *Mayana shel Torah*)

Haftorah: Yishaya 54:1-10

"and My kindness shall not be removed from you..." (60:10).

The words "shall not be removed" appear twice in our tradition. Once here, and once in Yehoshua 1:5 — "This book of the Torah shall not be removed from your mouth." It is the merit of learning the Torah — it *not being removed* from our mouths that gives us the merit that "My kindness shall not be removed from you."

Chapter #3

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