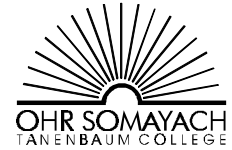


Parsha Q&A



Parshas Shoftim

For the week ending 7 Elul 5758
28 & 29 August 1998

Parsha Questions

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept "seek out a good *beis din*"?
5. Even though the *Avos* were permitted to use *matzevos*, the Torah later forbade them. Why?
6. "You will come to ... the judge *who will be in those days* (17:9)." Since it's impossible to go to a judge who lives at a different time, why does the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What promise does Hashem give to a king who doesn't amass too much gold, doesn't raise too many horses and doesn't marry too many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of "*chazeh, shok, and keiva*." Which ones?
11. When the *kohanim* served in the *Beis Hamikdash*, they served on a rotational basis according to families. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to "prepare the way" to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the word *eid* (witness) is written in the Torah?
15. "Through *the mouth* of two witnesses..." What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) *before* their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four "scare-tactics" the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens to the murderer if he is found after the calf has had its neck broken?

Sherlox Holmes World Famous Detextive

"I've little doubt that Mr. Links was not telling the truth when he claimed to be left-handed; he keeps his pen in his left jacket pocket, something only a right-hander would do," said world famous detextive Sherlox Holmes. "When something which should be on the right is on the left, something isn't right."

"Speaking of left and right," said Watstein, "something seems wrong with this text: Regarding the Sanhedrin, the verse states: Do not turn aside from the thing which they tell you, right or left." (Deuteronomy 17:11)

"What's wrong with listening to those wiser than we?" asked Sherlox.

"It's Rashi's comment that's troublesome," said Watstein. "On the words right or left, Rashi explains that we must listen to the ruling of the Sanhedrin: Even if they tell you that right is left and that left is right."

"Perhaps the Sanhedrin, the wisest people ever to grace the earth, were wiser than even you and I, Watstein" said Sherlox wryly.

"I've no question about that," said Watstein. "If my understanding runs contrary to that of the Sanhedrin, it is surely I, not they, who err."

"So what's bothering you, dear Watstein?"

"The verse seems perfectly clear without any need for Rashi's comment: We must follow the words of the Sages precisely, deviating neither right nor left; that is, not even a minute degree. Why does Rashi take the words right or left out of context? What's bothering Rashi?"

"When something which should be on the right is on the left," said Sherlox, "something isn't right."

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Answer

“A word should generally be next to the word which it describes,” said Sherlox. If the verse had meant simply that we must not deviate even a minute degree from the directive of the Sanhedrin, it should have said: Do not turn aside right or left from the thing which they tell you. That is, the words right or left should have been next to the words turn aside.”

“I see,” said Watstein. “If right or left describe the direction in which we should not turn aside, those words should all be written together.”

“Exactly. But they are not: Right or left are written at the end of the verse — Do not turn aside from the thing which they tell you right or left.” In this position, the words right or left describe the thing which they tell you: Don’t turn aside from the ‘right-left’ thing which they tell you.”

“What do you mean by a ‘right-left’ thing?” asked Watstein.

“A matter regarding right or left. Even if they tell you regarding your right hand that it is your left hand, don’t turn aside. To summarize, the words right or left don’t describe the turning away, but rather they describe the subject matter at hand.”

“So, it all boils down to the words right or left being at the end of the verse, on the left, instead of more towards the right!” said Watstein. “Ha, ha!”

“You couldn’t be more right, dear Watstein.”

Maskil L'Dovid /“Sherlox” is created by Reuven Subar

I Did Not Know That!

The Jewish king was commanded not to marry too many wives, not to have too many horses, and not to hoard too much silver and gold. If he fulfills these three commandments, the Torah promises that he and his

offspring will sit firmly on the “throne of his kingdom — kiseh mamlachto” (Deuteronomy 16-18, Rashi).

The three letters of the word kiseh (throne) hint to these three commandments. Kiseh is spelled kaf samech alef. Kaf stands for kesef (silver), samech stands for soos (horse) and aleph stands for isha (wife).

Kli Yakar

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

16:21	Trees
17:11	Obedience
17:15	Kingship
17:20	Conceit
18:15-16	Prophecy
19:8	Our Borders
19:13	Self Defense
20:8	The Torah Army

Sforno

16:21	Beautiful but Bad
17:3	The Sun and the Moon
18:14	Above the Stars

Sefer Hachinuch

491	Securing Justice
496	Antidote to Anarchy
498	Qualities of Leadership
503	Safeguarding the King
510	The Occult
516	True Prophecy
517	False Prophecy
526	Strengthening the Army
527	Humane War

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - "Tzedek tzedek tirdof..."
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although the judge of a particular generation may not be as eminent as those of previous generations, the Jewish People are still obligated to obey him.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayos* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn't hear, prophesies something that was told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post signs saying "refuge" at the road-crossings, in order to point the way.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony sent to the court, and testimony that is translated from a language which the judges don't understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute judgment in a just fashion, then they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 - 1) Clanging their shields; 2) Making their horses stomp and whinny; 3) Shouting; 4) Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The *Sanhedrin*.
20. 21:9 - He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

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