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 beit din”?
5. Although the avot built matzevot, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. “You will come to...the judge who will be in those days.” It’s impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn’t amass much gold, doesn’t raise many horses and doesn’t marry 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. Families of kohanim served in the Beit Hamikdash on a rotational basis. 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 Torah writes the word eid?
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 zommim (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 if the murderer is found after the calf’s neck was broken?

KASHA!
(kasha means “question”)

How would you answer this question on the Parsha?

“Do not take a bribe, because bribery blinds the eyes of the wise...” (19:19).

In this week’s Parsha the Torah says that bribery blinds the “chachamim” — “wise people.” Earlier (Exodus 23:8) the Torah says bribery blinds the “pikchim” — “open-eyed people.” Why does the Torah use these two different expressions, chachamim and pikchim, to describe judges?

ANSWER

A judge in a Torah court must be wise in two areas. First, he must be expert in all areas of Torah law. Such people are “chachamim” — “wise.” Second, he must be well-versed in worldly matters so he can properly interrogate the litigants and see if they are trying to fool him. To do this, he has to know “every trick in the book.” Such people are “pikchim” — “open-eyed.”

Vilna Gaon in Aderet Eliyahu
I Did Not Know That!

The Jewish king is commanded not to marry many wives, not to have many horses, and not to hoard silver and gold. If he obeys, the Torah promises that he and his offspring will sit firmly on the “kisheh”.

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

Deuteronomy 16-18, Rashi, 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 War1

Answers to this Week’s Questions

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 a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
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 - Chayot (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, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying “refuge” at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony 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 fair judgment 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.