

Parsha Q&A



Parshat Shoftim

For the week ending 2 Elul 5759
13 & 14 August 1999

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* (witness)?
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 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*

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Parshat Shoftim — 2 Elul 5759, 13 & 14 August 1999

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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 “*kiseh*”.

The three letters of the word *kiseh* (throne) hint to these three commandments. *Kiseh* is spelled *kaf samech alef*. *Kaf* stands for *kesev* (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 War ¹

Answers to this Week's Questions

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

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