

Parshas Shoftim

In this week's Parsha Shoftim, Moshe repeats the importance of pursuing justice through a court system and appointing judges and authority to enforce the laws of Jewish society. This follows from what was discussed last week, in that one may arrive at their conclusion on how to operate a society on Torah (and judicial) values and that since no one reports to any authority by Hashem, there is no need for order in society.

The Torah, therefore, tells us that we must pursue this part of what is essential to a functioning society: a clean justice system with a systematic approach to pursuing justice. The Torah provides us with the framework of what it means to pursue justice and how one must act in accordance with this pursuit.

We cannot take the law into our own hands but ensure that society has a functioning legal and judicial system. This means, and with Rashi's help in the early part of the Parsha, even in our personal lives, we ought to live devoid of external influences that cast unfair judgment on situations. We must listen to all sides and not believe without context or explanation all sides to a story.

The remainder of the parsha discusses someone who will lead in every generation; the significance is that we can understand that the Torah applies to every generation. That means the leader who indeed follows the edicts of the Torah will understand how to lead the society in its time according to the edicts of the Torah. Because one may say that their generation knows better and

that the Torah is Chas Vishalom not applicable or is ancient, which is invalid. Further discussion in the Parsha is against idolatry and sorcery, which connect to what was stated previously that perversion of Torah and not following it would bring Klala into the world because the opposite of Torah is evil that brings darkness into the world.

In the Parsha is famously written, "Ki Adam Eitz Hasadeh" (20:19) that a man is a tree of the field, which indicates the Torah's compassion of not wanton destruction of viable produce. This is appropriately connected to Chodesh Elul, which we begin by saying "Melech Basadeh" that Hashem is now in the field and we can connect with him. Often this is the message for us to connect back to Hashem (that He is out for open "office hours"), but this can be seen as Hashem checking in on his field. That Hashem is taking stock of his produce. And just as we are instructed against wanton or frivolous or unnecessary (even to an enemy) destruction of live produce, Hashem will not bring wanton, unnecessary destruction of his "Eitz Hashadeh", us Yidden in the field.

May we merit a Kesiva V'Chasima Tova, in all ways materially and spiritually, Good Shabbos!