

א ביסל תורה!

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שופטים

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The Judge Inside Ourselves

By Ariel Jeselsohn

The first פסוק of this week's פרשה states: "Judges and police you should make for you in all your gates that 'ה' your God gave to you, to your tribes, and they shall judge the nation justly" (דברים ט"ז:י"ח). Here, משה רבינו commands כלל ישראל to appoint judges for themselves. אבן עזרא, in the very beginning of the פרשה explains why the פרשה of the שלוש רגלים/עלייה לרגל is juxtaposed with the מצוה of appointing judges, which our פרשה got its name from. אבן עזרא says as follows: even though when you go up to ירושלים during the שלוש רגלים, and there the סנהדרין גדולה sits, and all the כהנים are serving in the בית המקדש, and if you wanted to you could ask them about the laws of the תורה, it will never be enough until judges, "שופטים", are appointed in every city in ארץ ישראל. רש"י explains what exactly "שופטים" and "שוטרים" are: שופטים are the judges who judge court cases and make rulings based on the הלכה, and שוטרים are people who enforce the laws, and intimidate people to ensure that they follow the rulings of the שופטים. רש"י then points out the redundancy in the פסוק when it says both "שעריך" (literally means "gates" but in this context it means cities), and "לשבטיך" - tribes. If I already know that you must appoint judges in every city, then there is no reason to say "לשבטיך". רמב"ן answers by saying that it teaches that there we must appoint in every city and for every tribe, and the רמב"ן explains that this is necessary for a city like ירושלים, which belongs both to יהודה and בנימין, and the two separate phrases are coming to teach that there must be two separate בתי דינים in ירושלים: one for יהודה and one for בנימין. This is how one would read the opening פסוק on the simple level. However, there is another, a bit deeper, way to read it.

The רמב"ן on the words "צדק צדק תרדוף" which is the third פסוק of פרשת שופטים, explains that this is teaching us "אם תדין עצמך תחיה", if we judge ourselves we will live. But what does it exactly mean to judge ourselves? Rav Moshe Feinstein points out that the "לך" in "לתן לך" is quite superfluous; the פסוק would have been perfectly fine without it. Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that it is teaching us that we must constantly be a judge, a שופט, over ourselves to make sure that we have good מידות. Going according to רש"י's definition of a שופט, we need to rule in our head what the correct thing we should be doing, and how we can maximize every day, with מצוות and תורה. And we must always be שוטרים; we must enforce the doing of מצוות that our שופט side of us told us to do. If we are being lazy in the performance of מצוות, let the שופט inside yourself take over, just like the גמרא in עמוד א' says: "נשבטין על המצוה", we should take vows to perform a מצוה. Additionally, the תורה says: "לא תכיר פנים", a judge should not judge in favor of a particular person unjustly. Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that this is talking about תלמיד חכם who does lots of מעשים טובים, even if he has to judge himself like he is a normal person and make sure that his מידות are good. Then the תורה also says that a judge should not take bribes. This means that a person should automatically say that what he is doing is good, rather "צדק צדק תרדוף", which in the case of the תורה means that one should go to a good בית דין. But in our case, it means that one should find himself a Rebbe, as the אבות in משנה א' says, and learn what the right thing to do is, instead of relying on one's own self-judgment, because a lot of the time we are wrong. This idea can also be learned from "בכל שעריך". As we saw, there is a redundancy in the פסוק which רש"י addresses. But there is also another way to explain שעריך in light of what Rav Moshe Feinstein taught so nicely. Reb Mordechai Leiner, known as the Ishbitzer Rebbe,

teaches that “שעריך” means that we must appoint judges in every city, and it also teaches that everyone must place judges in one’s soul.

There are a lot of times when we almost forget what our role is in life, and we start to slowly fall off the path that the **הקב"ה** wants us to go on. During these times, one must take a step back and let the judge inside ourselves take control. We must examine our deeds, and think whether we are living a life that the **הקב"ה** wants us to live: a life of **מצוות**, **תורה**, and **מעשים טובים** to the best of our capabilities. Only through this practice can one make sure that one is maximizing their time and potential in this world. As we enter the month of **אלול**, it is the perfect time to examine ourselves. We must examine everything we have done in the past year, and ensure that we are going on the right path. We also must constantly make sure that we stay on that path. Anything bad we may have done in the past year, the **שופט** inside of us will catch it, and the **שוטר** will tell us that we must do **תשובה**, one of the greatest gifts the **הקב"ה** has ever given us. Through this practice of self-examination, that the **תורה** teaches us about at the beginning of this weeks **פרשה**, may we achieve a full **כפרה**, **אם ירצה ה' כפרה**.

Does the **תורה** repeat commandments?

By Eitan Orkaby

This week’s **פרשה**, **פרשת שופטים**, has many **מצוות** that discuss what **בני** are supposed to do when they arrive in **כנען**. One of these is the **מצוה** of “**לֹא תִלְמַד לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּתוֹעֲבַת הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם**” “when you come to the land... do not learn to do the abominations the non-jews have done” (**דברים י"ח:ט**). This **מצוה** seems unnecessary, as there are many other places in which **בני** are commanded not to practice other nations' practices. For example, it says, “**וְכַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן ... לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה**” “and like the practices of the land of **כנען** ... do not do” (**ויקרא י"ח:ג**). The **Torah** does not repeat words for no reason, so why is this **מצוה** repeated?

פסוק gives an answer based on how the **פסוק** is written and the words used. The wording used for the first **פסוק** is “**לֹא תִלְמַד**” “don’t teach.” **רש"י** doesn’t read the **פסוק** as “don’t learn” but rather as “learn not.” Therefore, this **מצוה** is a positive commandment, to teach children not to follow in the bad ways of the non-Jewish natives, rather than a negative commandment, not to practice **כנען**’s ways.

אברבנאל, however, says that this **מצוה** is here for an entirely different reason. He says that the command is not to learn the practices of the nations in **כנען**, specifically the “**כְּתוֹעֲבַת הַגּוֹיִם**” “the abominable actions of the nation.” He also differentiates this **פסוק** from the one in **ויקרא** by focusing on the words “**לֹא תִלְמַד**” “when you come to the land.” When **בני** enter the land of **כנען** it is because the other nations are being kicked out. The other nations were kicked out because they practiced all of these abominations.

אדרת אליהו has a different explanation for the doubling of the **מצוה**. He explains that the first time when we are commanded not to follow the nation's practices it is strictly not to practice their ways. The second time, however, it is to tell us to teach and understand the practices, therefore distancing ourselves from them. This teaches us an important lesson: understanding what not to do just as much as what to do. It might seem very obvious that it is important to study the laws of an upcoming holiday, but it might be even more important to learn what is allowed along with what should be avoided.

Many assume that **ספר דברים** is a summary of the first four books of the **תורה** and many of the laws are repeated, however, **דברים** has mostly new laws and only a very small portion of the book is a summary of the first four books. Furthermore, nothing in the **תורה** is repeated without a reason. Every word and letter has a reason and a purpose for being where it is. May we be able to appreciate the greatness of the **תורה** in all of its intricacies and beauty.