



Parshas Shoftim 2019, charity, the Jewish way

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of Moshe Morris ben Nagiah HaKohen, may his soul be uplifted and his memory a blessing.

Our Parsha outlines the leadership structure for the Jewish nation. We begin with the commandant of appointing judges and law officers to maintain peace and order in each city. Moshe then details specific laws for judges against corruption and perversion of justice, as the Pasuk says (16:20), *"Tzedek Tzedek tirdof - You shall surely pursue justice."*

Moshe continues and gives over regulations for kings, such as not having many wives or acquiring excessive amounts of wealth. He relates why Kohanim will not inherit any portions of Israel, for G-d is their inheritance. Although they were scheduled by family to work in the Beis Hamikdash, a Kohen always has the right to offer his sacrifices personally.

Moshe then explains rules and regulations against going and listening to sorcery or witchcraft. He describes how to differentiate between a genuine or false Prophet and punishing those who falsely claim that G-d spoke to them.

However, a question comes to mind: after the Calf is slaughtered, the Rabbis must say (21:7), *"Our hands did not pour this blood, nor did we see this crime."* Rashi explains that we obviously don't think that the Rabbis committed this murder!

So what they are truly saying is that they did not see this person in their city and let him leave without food or an escort. Why does the next Pasuk say, ***"Atone for Your people Yisrael"***? If they didn't know of his need for food or a companion, they are guilty free, so why the need for atonement?!

The Rambam writes in the laws of Matonas Aniyim that the leadership of each city should include a person who is in charge of charity for the less fortunate.

The reason for this is that over time, he will get to know those in need and be able to help without being asked. It is quite possible that a person in need will not know where to go or be too embarrassed to ask.

Therefore, the city leadership must appoint someone who will make it a point to find out who requires some assistance and be able to help them out discreetly.

Being charitable to the less fortunate is part of our DNA and one of the three characteristics of the Jewish people. In fact, we give more charity than any other religion despite being less than 3% of the population. We have amazing Chesed organizations that can assist a person in need in most areas of their lives.

The reason the Pasuk says, *“Atone for Your people Yisrael,”* is not for the person’s death, but rather because they were unaware of this person's needs. For it is essentially their responsibility to provide him with food or an escort, and since it was unfulfilled, they carry partial responsibility. If they were genuinely focused on kindness, they would have a system in place to provide for him and stop such an unfortunate event.

In his final address, Moshe Rabbeinu is ingraining within the Jewish nation the ethos of charity. We must not stand by until a person asks for assistance; instead, actively seek out and help those in need.

Although this may seem like a recurring theme in the book of Devarim, it is one of the keys to the success of the Jewish people; therefore, it is necessary to be reiterated so that it is instilled in the generations to come.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we understand that we must be charitable to those in need, not just with our money but also with our time, hearts, and minds.

We must not stand still when we know a person requires assistance, even if they did not ask for our support. And when we do offer assistance, we must do so in a kind, compassionate, and discrete manner, for that is the way of the Jewish people.

***“We make a living by what we get.
However, we make a life by what we give.”***

-Winston Churchill

*Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*