



Parshas Shoftim 2022, all the same

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of Ruchma Leah Bas Sarah. And loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

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 wealth. He relates why Kohanim will not inherit any portions in 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: Following the rules and regulations for Kings, Moshe repeats the fact that the tribe of Levi will have no piece of Israel. Instead, they will sustain themselves with the sacrifices and tithing that are due to them. Why does Moshe reiterate that his tribe, Levi, will not inherit the land after discussing the rules for a Jewish King? What is the connection between kingship and the priesthood?!

The Chizkuni (*Rav Chezekiah ben Manoah, a French Rabbi from the 13th century*) gives a simple explanation. He writes that these two seemingly unrelated topics are actually deeply connected.

He explains that the primary purpose of a Jewish king is to look after the physical well-being of the nation. To lead the Jewish army in battle and destroy our enemies.

Therefore, Moshe continues with laws about the tribe of Levi, who are meant to look after the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people. They are specifically tasked with representing the Jewish nation before G-d and serving in the Beis Hamikdash on behalf of the people.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, a Moroccan commentary and Kabbalist from the 18th century*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Moshe reiterates these topics in succession **to teach us that the king is no greater than the rest of the nation.** Although he may occupy one of the most influential leadership positions, **he must still tithe and give part of his offerings to the Kohanim.**

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains that Moshe knew that the power the king may yield could be very intoxicating and give him delusions about his purpose. He may think he has total control over the Jewish people when he has very little.

The king has no legislative powers and can make no rules or regulations as other kings do. He needs to listen to and obey G-d's prophet to understand what is truly required of him. He must realize that being king means he is responsible for the welfare and protection of G-d's chosen people.

The Ohr Hachaim's powerful lesson is ever more relevant as we enter the month of Elul and prepare for the high holidays. For Elul is a time of introspection and repentance for the past year.

The first step of self-reflection is realizing that each of us has a unique connection to our Creator and Father in heaven. This means that we must not judge ourselves by the standards of others but by Torah principles. Nor should we be sad or depressed from our failures; rather seek inspiration to change direction and maintain that path.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we realize that each of us is on a unique journey with the same purpose, to reveal G-d's oneness in the physical world. This means that every person has a singular mission they must fulfill before we can all be redeemed. No job is too small, no path inconsequential, and no soul is non-essential in the eyes of G-d.

**"Whenever feeling sad, each person should remember,
for my sake the entire world was created."**

-Baal Shem Tov

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*