



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

It's Still Holiday Time!

Whilst the holiday season is coming to an end, we remind those in town to please support the Shul Minyanim.

Battle Cry of the Jew **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)**

Approaching war correctly may be more difficult than waging war itself. In order to prepare Klal Yisrael for war a series of queries were presented to them. Soldiers who were newlywed or had recently built new homes or planted new vineyards were told by the officer in charge to leave the army and return home. Furthermore, soldiers who were faint of heart morally or spiritually were asked to return home so as not to weaken the hearts of others in battle.

But war must begin with encouragement. So before the officers ask the questions that may relieve some soldiers from active duty, the kohen gives a moral boosting speech. The kohen opens with Judaism's most famous words, "Sh'ma Yisrael – Hear Oh Israel! You are about to approach battle on your enemies. Let your hearts not wither and do not fear, tremble, or be broken before them. For Hashem who will go with you, fight with you, and save you" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4).

Rashi comments on the hauntingly familiar expression of "Sh'ma Yisrael – Hear oh Israel!" Those words are the national anthem of the Jewish nation whose doctrine of belief is contained in the declarative that follows. "The L-rd our G-d the L-rd is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Rashi connects the pre-battle pep-talk in Parshas Shoftim with the famous words read week's earlier in Parshas Va'eschanan. He explains that the expression, "Hear oh Israel" used in the kohen's prologue is actually used as a hint to Hashem. The kohen is in essence reminding Hashem of the unofficial anthem that Jews recite twice daily, world-over. The kohen is in essence declaring that "even if the Jewish people have only the merit of the words Hear oh Israel, they are worthy to be victorious and saved (from the ravages of war)."

I was wondering. Isn't the kohen talking to the people? If Rashi tells us that with this choice of words there is a subtle message to Hashem, can we not also presume that there is perhaps, an important, if only subtle message to His nation as well?

Refusenik Yosef Mendelevitch, imprisoned in a work camp by Soviet authorities refused to give up his religious convictions. He made a kipah, which he wore proudly in the work camp.

Once the KGB colonel in charge of the camp heard of Mendelevitch's behavior, he summoned him to his office and threatened him.

"Take that off your head or I will kill you!" he demanded.

Mendelevitch was not moved. "You can kill me, but I will not take it off." The officer was shocked by Yosef's calm attitude. In desperation he grilled him. "Are you not afraid to die?"

Mendelevitch just smiled softly. "Those who will die by the commands of Brezhnev are afraid of death. However those who believe that our death will be by the command of G-d are not afraid of His command."

Perhaps the symbolism of using the words of the Sh'ma Yisrael, which connect to our sincere faith in the oneness and unity of the Almighty is profoundly significant.

The kohen is commanding the Jews to enter the battlefield without fear. There is no better familiar declaration than that of Sh'ma Yisrael. Those words kept our faith and calm-headedness throughout every death-defying and death-submissive moment throughout our history. During the Spanish inquisition, it was on our lips. During the Crusades it was shouted in synagogues about to be torched. And during the Holocaust Sh'ma Yisrael was recited by those who walked calmly to meet the Author of those hallowed words that captured the faith of Jewish souls more resolutely than the fetters that held the frail bodies.

The Chofetz Chaim would urge soldiers to constantly repeat the paragraph of the Sh'ma Yisrael during battle. It would sustain their faith as it would calm their fears. And the words Sh'ma Yisrael remain the battle cry of the simple Jew who maneuvers through a world filled with land-mines of heresy and temptation.

It is the battle-cry of our faith and in encouraging a nation to be strong and remembering that Hashem is with us. And no matter what the message is, there is no better introduction than, Sh'ma Yisrael. And there are no better words during the battle either.

A Judge in YOUR Gate **Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)**

Who doesn't feel Rosh Hashanah breathing down their neck? I certainly do. But then again, I felt this way the moment Tisha B'Av ended and the "Seven Weeks of Comfort" began.

These parshios help as well. Moshe Rabbeinu's days are numbered, and all the parshios are his final presentation of Torah to the Jewish people. He is preparing them for a life WITHOUT him, to prevent them from quickly undoing after he dies what he worked so hard to build up while he lived.

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת שפטים

1st Mincha / Candle Lighting	6.25pm / not before 6.47pm
2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.10pm / 7.19pm - 7.35pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.39am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.01pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	9.06pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon Bank Holiday	7.10am / 8.10am
Tue / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thur	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

As such, these parshios are devoted to pointing out spiritual flaws, and teaching about spiritual solutions. Even laws that seem purely technical and communal can be learned in this vein. They too can have a personal, mussar-like application.

A mitzvah at the beginning of this week's parsha is a good example: You shall set up judges and law enforcement officials for yourself in all your gates . . . (Devarim 16:18)

It is the role of a judge to listen to the facts of a case, deliberate over them, and then render a definitive course of action to remedy the situation. A judge is called a "Elohim," as the Sforno points out, because the name denotes an intelligent, discerning being, which man, made b'tzelem Elokim—in the image of G-d—is supposed to be.

A police officer, as Rashi explains in this week's parsha, is supposed to implement the decisions of the shoftim—judges. People have yetzer haras, and sometimes find themselves skirting the law, to the say the least. Until Yemos HaMoshiach, the average person cannot be trusted to keep every letter of the law on his own.

The wisest man of all, Shlomo HaMelech, said it this way, "Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins" (Koheles 7:20). The Talmud put it like this: Do not trust yourself until the day you die (Shabbos 153a).

The latter statement makes the point. The police of any city are only effective inasmuch as they can catch people violating the law. Even when they can, they don't always have the will to. Sometimes trying to involve the police to catch a violator of the law can be a frustrating, discouraging, and fruitless endeavor.

The Talmud advises a person to join his own police force. This means taking responsibility to police your own actions. Just as you are afraid to be caught violating a law of society by the police, you have to fear being caught by yourself violating a law of your own.

A law of your own? No, this does not mean make up your own set of rules. It means adopt Torah law as if it is your own. It means, don't just keep the law because you are afraid of being caught by others. Keep the law because you are afraid of being caught by yourself! Be your own Torah law enforcer.

We have another, more familiar name for this. It is called "Yiras HaShamayim"—fear of Heaven. It is? Doesn't fear of Heaven mean, whether you buy into the law or not, do the right thing because G-d is watching you and will punish you if you don't? It doesn't make you into a law enforcer. It just makes you scared to sin!

That's why you have to be your own shofet—judge as well. You have to make a point of constantly doing a Cheshbon HaNefesh—Soul Accounting. In judge mode, you have to research the matter, assemble the facts about what counts the most in life, and then render the most spiritually productive decision you can for yourself.

The point of a Cheshbon HaNefesh is twofold. Firstly, it forces a person to work on seeing life from G-d's perspective. This means a person learns enough to realize what the Torah wants for him is, ultimately, what he wants for himself. On such a level, violation of the Torah becomes a violation of self.

The verse says that a fundamental difference between a righteous person and an evil one is not whether or not he or she sins. It is their respective responses to sin that determines to which category they belong. An evil person sins once and does not "get up." A righteous person, when he sins, tries better next time, and next time, and next time, etc., as many times as necessary to recover from a sin.

What gives the righteous person the personal strength to keep trying to improve? The very thing that the evil person lacks—the understanding of why G-d's way ought to be HIS way too. For the evil person, Torah is an imposition. For the righteous person, SIN is the imposition.

Perhaps this is why the mitzvah to appoint judges in this week's parsha is mentioned before the mitzvah to appoint police officers. In society the police usually come first. They are the ones patrolling the

streets looking for offenders, whom they bring before a judge once they catch them.

When it comes to individuals however, it is the other way around. If you don't first accept Torah as the "law of the land," you cannot become a police officer to enforce it. First you have to learn Torah and gain an appreciation of its imperative, and then you can find the will to protect and implement it.

What does "gate" mean in this context? In general, a gate was the opening to a city, and often where people congregated, especially to do business. Therefore, it was also a place where courts were set up. This is why the angels sent to save Lot, who was a judge in Sdom, found him at the gate of the city.

It is also a city's point of entry and exit. Since it is a person's senses that connect him to this world, supplying him information about what life has to offer, they too act as points of entry to the person. Information comes to a person through his eyes, ears, nose, etc., often influencing a person to go in one direction or the other. As the Talmud points out, the eyes are the spies for the heart (Sotah 8a).

Applying the entire verse to an individual, it would mean that a person has to watch over all points of entry on his or her body. After knowing what counts most in life, and developing a commitment to live accordingly, a person has to develop a system to control the flow of information from the outside world to the "inside one."

In other words, sin in life may be inevitable, even for righteous people. But, it is also often avoidable, if a person thinks ahead and the proper caution is taken. As the Talmud states:

A wise person can see what is being born. (Tamid 32a)

In other words, a wise person learns which situations give rise to which temptations, and protects himself from them. That's how he merits the "key" to the city—control over his or her own life—and the "key" to the World-to-Come.

The Significance of Peace

Mordechai Lewis (Torah.org)

In this week's parsha we are told, "When you draw near to a city to wage war against it, you shall call out to it for peace."

Just how important is peace? Peace is the vessel for blessing. To which Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai states, "... He [G-d] is peace, His Name is peace and everything is bound in peace. The Sifra emphasizes: "Peace is the seal of all blessings because, without peace, prosperity, health, food and drink are WORTHLESS." In addition, "The whole purpose of the Torah is peace." Yet, Mishlei goes to the extreme, "A slice of dry bread in a home with peace is better than a wealthy house filled with strife."

The name shin stands for Sholom, which denotes peace and perfection. As the essence of all harmony and perfection, Hashem is called the oseh sholom, Maker of Peace. G-d is descriptive Names do not imply only descriptions of His Attributes but serve as examples for man to emulate. For man to thrive spiritually, he must copy the attributes of his Maker. This is especially the case with regard to sholom since it is essential for man's survival that he harmonizes the diverse elements of the worlds. Its three heads symbolize two opponents standing on the extreme sides of controversy and the Divine mediator in the middle.

The Sages teach that one of the three aims that Eliyahu HaNavi will achieve before Mashiach comes is that he will make peace in the world. A feat which no world leader has been able to accomplish!

If Jews are worshipping idols, but they live in peace, then in Heaven, the Accuser is not able to indict them. One may deviate from the truth in order to preserve peace. If a person keeps to himself, he is not pursuing peace. Rather, he should go out and actively look for ways to make peace wherever he can. A person who brings peace into his house is considered by G-d as if he brought peace to the entire Jewish people. When the nation [Israel] is united and there is peace among them, the Satan has absolutely no domain whatsoever over them.