

NEWS

LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

*We pray every week for the Jewish Friendship Ministry. I suggest our partners pray from September 1 through 7 for Rogel Tavares and his team in Sao Paulo, This city in Brazil was among the first Jewish Adventist congregation in the world, Pastor Tavares is doing his best to witness about Yeshua in this city of Sao Paulo, but still needs our prayers.*

SHALOM ADVENTURE MAGAZINE (SAM)

Our news for this week is dedicated to the web magazine Shalom Adventure Magazine, hoping that you will visit this website every day, since they post new articles daily.

SAM IS WORKING

Here is a recent comment sent in to SAM: "Your website has been extremely helpful to me. I have learned some incredible things. I was following along with the Daniel lessons. What you taught made complete sense to me. ... I look forward to the rest of Daniel and Revelation. For me, those two books are difficult. You really make them understandable. Your explanation of the old and new covenant has given me relief so huge that I actually felt a boulder lift off of me." This commenter is referring to two recent sermons posted on SAM that you might find interesting, discussing Daniel 8 & 9 in a way that most people will find new and refreshing. Replacement theology is removed and a better understanding of what happened at the end of the 70-week prophecy is revealed.

<https://www.shalomadventure.com/torah/drasha/3613-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary>

SAM CALENDARS

Every year Shalom Adventure Magazine produces wall calendars for your home or office. Jeff Zaremsky sent us some pictures of these calendars. Remember that this year the Jewish New Year begins at the end of September. Each month features a beautiful picture



These pictures are so nice throughout the year that some people cut up their calendars at the end of the year and save the pictures. Sabbath sunset times are listed. Holy Days are highlighted and listed. The parasha reading for the week is given. Each day is large enough to pencil in appointments. This is a calendar you will use and look at weekly and even daily.



Receive a free calendar for any size donation during the month of September (quantity orders are available upon request). Donate [here](#) and in the message box write "free calendar."

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**SHABBAT SHALOM**  
A weekly Journal of information and training  
published by  
the General Conference —  
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World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center  
<https://wjafc.globalmissioncenters.org>

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## PARASHA FOR THIS WEEK

### SHOFTIM

שֹׁפְטִים

#### PARASHA OVERVIEW: DEUTERONOMY 16:18 - 21:9

**M**oshe tells Yisrael to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden.

Trees are not to be planted near Hashem's altar, as was the way of idolaters.

Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed.

The Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions for new situations according to Torah criteria. Anyone who refuses to accept the decisions and laws of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty.

A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two sifrei Torah (scrolls), one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty.

Neither the Cohanim nor the Levites are to inherit land in the land of Yisrael, rather they are to be supported by the community through a system of tithes.

All divination is prohibited.

Hashem promises the Jewish people that He will send prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains

how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one.

Cities of refuge are to be provided so an accidental killer can escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger.

Moshe cautions the children of Yisrael not to move boundary markers to increase their property.

Two witnesses who conspire to "frame" a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party.

A Cohen is to be anointed specifically for when Yisrael goes to war, to inspire trust in Hashem.

Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not yet lived in it, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed.

Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during a siege.

If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

#### SHOFTIM, PARASHA'S TITLE

**T**his week's *parasha*, *Shoftim*, begins with the *mitzvah* of appointing *shoftim* (judges) and officers (police) to ensure a just and honest judicial system. "You shall appoint judges and officials (police) throughout your tribes, in all your gates that the L-rd your G-d is giving you" (Deut. 16:18).

#### DON'T TWIST JUSTICE BY BRIBES

**T**he Torah states: "You are not to twist justice—you must not show partiality or take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts the words of the righteous." (Deuteronomy 16:19). The communal welfare and strength of any society rests squarely on the justice system. If there is no justice there is no peace. If there is no peace, then law and order are in danger of breaking down, resulting in anarchy – then the whole fabric of society unravels. Everything begins with righteous justice—discipline that leads to peace. There is, however, one other key ingredient that is required.

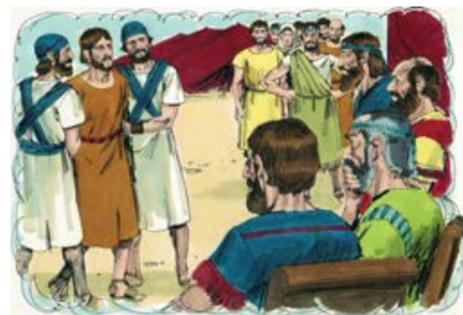
The Mishna in *Pirke Avot* says, "The world is maintained by three things: by justice, by truth, and by peace." But I would add that Yeshua would have added to these three the fourth necessary ingredient: "Love." Since it says three things and I say four, and we can all count to four, we are meant to learn that all four are needed for a stable society. The more these four ingredients prevail, the better is the stability of the community for the good of all, including individuals and families. The less these factors are at play, the less stable, more volatile and at risk is that community. Some communities may have all four. Most have one or two at best, and a few live with almost none, but you can bet not for long.

The question is, "How does this odd *quartet* dance comfortably together?" Sometimes Truth contradicts Peace, and Peace may compromise Justice. But Love cannot compromise Justice, Peace or Truth. Love ameliorates every injustice or lack of peace.

#### WHAT IS A BRIBE?

**P**arashat *Shoftim* cautions the judges of the Jewish people, "Do not take a *shochad* (bribe)" (Deuteronomy 16:19). The Talmud (*Ketuvot* 105b) asks, "What is *shochad*? It means *She'hu CHaD* (that he is alone)."

The commentator Gan Raveh explains this cryptic remark in light of another Talmudic passage (*Shabbat* 10a) that states, "Any judge who issues a true verdict is considered to be a partner with G-d in Creation." In other



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words, a judge who accepts a bribe cannot issue a true verdict, since the bribe will have swayed his perception of truth. Since his ruling will not be just, he can no longer be called G-d's partner in Creation. Therefore, the bribe, *shochad*, has led him to a state where he is alone, *she'hu chad*.

#### JUSTICE AND TZEDAKAH

**T**he Torah commands *Tzedek*: "Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the L-rd your G-d is giving you." (Deuteronomy 16:20). Although "Justice, *Tzedek*, you shall pursue" is an instruction to judges to pass "righteous" judgment, it can also refer to the concept of "charity" – *Tzedakah*– which also comes from the word *Tzedek*. In this context, the Torah commands every believer to pursue the *mitzvah* of giving charity "so that you may live and inherit the land."

#### LEADERS MUST BE QUALIFIED

**T**he Torah states, "You shall not plant an *asherah*, any tree, near the altar of the Almighty" (Deuteronomy 16:21).

The Sages in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 7b) equate appointing an unqualified judge with an *asherah* (a tree that was worshipped for idolatry). What is the connection?

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk explains: "A regular idol is noticeable to all that it is an idol. Whoever sees it will easily be able to recognize that it is an idol and that he must be very careful. However, a tree that has been worshipped as an idol looks to the casual observer as if it is just an ordinary tree and looks harmless. Looks can be deceiving—if it is an idol it is spiritually dangerous."

So, too, a judge who is not qualified is dangerous. Though from the outside he may appear very learned and even righteous, if he is not qualified or has certain character defects, he can be very dangerous.

Rabbi Packouz gives this lesson: "We must learn to be discerning. Even those things that appear to be harmless can be very dangerous. If someone puts poison that is colorless and odorless in a food, although the food does not appear harmful, it can inflict mortal damage. Similarly, there are many things that are detrimental to

"Appoint yourselves judges and police for your tribes in all your settlements that G-d your Lord is giving you, and make sure that they administer honest judgment for the people." (Deuteronomy 16:18)

one's spiritual well-being that at first glance do not seem dangerous."

#### JUDGE YOURSELF FIRST

**T**he Torah states, "Judges and officers you shall appoint for you," (Deut. 16:18). According to our sages, this also has another message. It implies that before a person judges others, they must first judge themselves.

This applies equally to an individual who might be judging others or to a judge passing judgment upon others. They must remember to judge themselves and live by the same standard they would impose on others. Then, and only then, can they "judge the people with righteous judgment."

This is also in accordance with the following directives of our Talmudic sages: "A person should correct their own faults before correcting others." Only then will one be able to properly influence the behavior of others. Our sages also say: "Do not judge others until you have put yourself in their place."

#### SHOFAR AND ELLUL

**W**e have just begun the month of *Ellul*, the last month of the Jewish civil year. *Rosh Hashana* (Jewish New Year) will be on September 25. For Jews, *Ellul* is the month of revival, repentance, and transformation. It was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of *Ellul* that the *shofar* was blown to call Yisrael to a period of repentance.

This is, therefore, a good opportunity for our ministry to use this month to lead our members and Jewish friends to a real revival of their spirituality with G-d. The new year is always a good time for important decisions and resolutions, but if we want these decisions to last, we must plan and prepare for them.

"When [the king] is established on his royal throne, he must write a copy of this Torah as a scroll edited by the Levitical priests. [This scroll] must always be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life. He will then learn to be in awe of G-d his L-rd, and carefully keep every word of this Torah and these rules." (Deuteronomy 17:18,19)

The name of the month of *Ellul* comprises an acronym in Hebrew— *Alef, Lamed, Vav, Lamed* or "*ani ledodi vedodi li*" – "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." The romance between G-d and His people is the very backbone of this month. Our revival and spiritual experience will help us to be close to G-d to the point that we will belong to G-d and G-d will belong to us, recalling the image of Ruth who chose the G-d of Naomi as her G-d.

Let's remember that this is also a period when the *shofar* (Ram's horn), which is very important for the Jewish people, is heard in the synagogues. Jews blow the *shofar* on the feast of *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, but in fact during the month before *Rosh Hashana*, the month of *Ellul*, they blow the *shofar* every morning after the prayer service (except on *Shabbat*) to call the people of Yisrael to this spiritual revival.

According to the Jewish tradition, the second tablets of the Ten Commandments were given to Moshe on *Yom Kippur*, to expiate the Golden Calf sin. However, Moshe stayed on Mount Sinai 40 days and came back on the day after *Yom Kippur*, on *Tishri* 11. The first day of these 40 days is the 1<sup>st</sup> of *Ellul* (the sixth month of the Biblical calendar). *Ellul* is a month of 29 days, and by adding 11 days we have the complete period of Moshe on Mount Sinai.

When Moshe started his ascent of Mount Sinai to ask G-d to forgive Yisrael for the Golden Calf and for the breaking of the first tablets of the Ten Commandments, he also asked Yisrael to repent and revive spiritually during the time he would meet with G-d on the top of the mountain. During the entire month of *Ellul* and the first days of *Tishri* he was on Mount Sinai (1<sup>st</sup> of *Ellul* to 11<sup>th</sup> of *Tishri*). That is why, according to the Jewish tradition, the first time the *shofar* was sounded was when Moshe started his ascent of Mount Sinai on the first day of the sixth month. Then to remind Yisrael that they must repent from the Golden Calf experience, the *shofar* was blown every day as a call to repentance until Moshe came back down the mountain, and as a reminder not to repeat the same mistake of worshipping an idol.



## APOSTOLIC WRITINGS

### MARK 7:9-23

In our *parasha* we discover that it is more important to follow God's commandments than the various traditions established by the Sages of Yisrael. (Deuteronomy 19:9).

In this week's *Besorah*, Yeshua shows his *talmidim* how easy it is to deviate from God's law even though we think we are on a good spiritual path. Yeshua confirms what Moshe said and insists the commandments are more important than the traditions. Yisrael must follow the commandments of God as a higher priority than following the traditions: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions" (Mark 7:9). While Yisrael doesn't reject the law of God, in their goal of achieving perfection they add many traditions which are intended to become barriers against breaking the law of God. While the law of God says: "Do not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19), the Sages, in order to help Jews not to transgress the commandment, added, "Don't boil any meat with milk" and then "Don't cut meat with the knife you use to cut butter or cheese" then "Don't eat meat on the same plate that has ever touched milk foods" and then "Don't wash your 'meat' dishes or cooking utensils in the same sink used to wash your 'milk' dishes or cooking utensils" etc. etc... It is good to try to help our people not to transgress God's laws, but we have to be careful not to put extreme and unnecessary burdens on the shoulders of God's people. While we say it is good to help God's people, we find Yeshua did something similar as the Sages of Yisrael: he added to the commandments of God. We recall what Yeshua taught in the Sermon on the Mount he quoted one of the Ten Commandments, saying: "You have heard it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever commits murder shall be subject to judgment'" (5:21). Then immediately afterward he added something that is not in the *Torah* of the *Tanach*: "But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be subject to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be subject to fiery *Gehenna*." (5:22). Here Yeshua added to the commandment, "don't murder," by teaching "don't be angry with your brother" and "don't say *Raca*." While these are not written in the *Torah*, Yeshua knew that before killing someone we have to be upset and angry with them. Yeshua's "don't be angry" is a barrier to keep us from breaking God's law. If I never become angry with my brother, I will never kill him. Thus Yeshua did exactly the same thing as the Pharisees. We see, therefore, that it is not wrong to protect ourselves from breaking God's law, but the danger is when these traditions, after a few generations, are not seen any more as traditions but are considered as God's laws and then they ultimately replace the commandments of God.

This is not only a Jewish tendency: each religion has built its own customs, rules, and traditions. Even in our own local *kehillah*, social circle, or family, in our personal and religious life we have established some rules, what to eat, what not to eat, that from time to time go further than what is written in the Bible, how

to keep *Shabbat*, what to do and what not to do, etc. We have to be careful not to impose these local or personal traditions on others as if they are God's laws from His Word. We must not replace the *Torah* by these traditions to the point that they become more important than God's commandments. Yeshua gives an example of this trap: "For Moshe said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother" (Mark 7:10-12). We notice in this example that the motivation is a religious one. Religious leaders never deliberately say, "Let's change the law of God." Most of the time they have good intentions, but the result is not good because they are imposing their own rules and traditions on the entire people of God, putting their traditions above God's law. A good example of this principle in Christianity is the change of *Shabbat* to Sunday. Keeping Sunday comes from a nice tradition at the beginning (to honor the resurrection of Yeshua), but after a few generations it became more important than the 4th commandment which says that the seventh-day *Shabbat* is the day of rest. And in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Constantine the Roman emperor, under the influence of the Roman church leaders, decided to impose this tradition on everyone, requiring everyone to keep Sunday as the day of rest and punishing anyone who wanted to continue to keep the original *Shabbat* of the Bible.

Another parallel between the *parasha* and *Besorah*, is that the *parasha* speaks about establishing judges who will give justice, emphasizing the importance of righteousness and justice: "Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue, so that you will live and possess the Land that the Almighty your God gives you" (Deuteronomy 16:20). In the *Besorah*, Yeshua knows that righteousness and justice should come from the heart of man, something that happens only in hearts that have been cleansed by God: "Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'" (Mark 7:15-16). Yeshua's *talmidim* did not understand this saying of Yeshua, and he exclaimed: "Then, are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him?" (7:18).

To conclude this portion of the *Besorah*, Yeshua states a most important principle for our lives, for religion is not only spirituality but also includes our daily actions: "And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'" (Mark 7:20-23). How many people give the appearance of spirituality and religiosity, but in fact in their hearts they are worse than murderers.

## HAFTARAH

### ISAIAH 51:12-52:12

In this Haftarah portion, God continues to comfort Yisrael and answers Isaiah's unspoken cry of distress. In verse 12 the use of the pronoun "you" means that God addresses this word directly to the prophet who is feeling fearful: "I, [only] I am the One who comforts you. Who are you that you should fear man, who dies, or a son of man, who is given up like grass?" (Isaiah 51:12). Who are you to be afraid of man? I am with you! is the response of God to the frightened prophet. The prophet is invited to put his faith and trust in Hashem: "But you forgot Hashem your Maker" (51:13a).

Isaiah 51 shows that Hashem is aware of the situation of His people and of each one of us. Is the oppressor more powerful than the One who made the heavens and the earth? "who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. Are you in constant dread all day because of the fury of the oppressor as he makes ready to destroy? But where is the fury of the oppressor?" (51:13b). According to Radak, this oppressor is Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians. This oppressor will disappear, and Hashem will deliver the one who is oppressed: "Soon one bowed down will be released. He will not die and go to the Pit, nor will his bread be lacking." (51:14).

What God's people need is trust in Hashem, the One who has the power to deliver them from anyone and from Exile: "For I am Hashem your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—Hashem-Tzva'ot is His Name." (51:15). Hashem is in control of everything, even nature, and He is the Lord of the army of heaven. He has the power to stir up the nations who oppress Judah and to deliver Judah from any exile. Hashem continues to love His people and reminds them of what He has done for them in the past: "I have put My words in your mouth, and covered you with the shadow of My hand—I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, 'You are My people.'" (51:16). It is very possible that here God speaks directly to the prophet: "I have put My words in your mouth." Isaiah has a mission to fulfill, and as long as this mission is not finished God is protecting him: "I covered you with the shadow of My hand." This mission is not only given to the prophet, but also to His people, here called, "Zion," to whom God says: "You are My people." His people are to proclaim and to witness about the greatness of their God, Hashem. It is also clear that this "word in your mouth" is an invitation to study His word, for without studying there is no possibility to share it properly.

At the end of this Haftarah comes a beautiful text about proclamation: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces *shalom*, who brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (52:7). Jewish tradition has seen in this verse the "beautiful feet" of the one who announces the coming of the Messiah, meaning Elijah. But this messenger announces much more than just the coming of Messiah. This includes: 1) the Good News, which has been translated in the Greek as "Gospel" or the *Besorah*; 2) *Shalom*, that is peace with God and with his fellow man, and only this peace will bring "happiness"; 3) Salvation to the people of God who will then reign in the kingdom of God. These three aspects of the future redemption are all applied to the Messiah Himself who brings the Good News (Gospel) of *Shalom*, happiness and salvation.

## STORIES AND TRADITIONS

### GREATER LOVE THAN EVER

The *midrash* gives this following parable: A king once got angry at his queen and expelled her from his palace. Subsequently, he invited her to return. She said, "Let the king double my dowry and I will come back." Similarly, *Hashem* said: "My children, at Sinai I began the Ten Commandments by saying *Anochi*, I, just once. In the future, when I bring you back to Jerusalem, I will say it twice, I, I, am Who comforts you." (Isaiah 51:12). The Message is that when God ends the exile, His love for Israel will be greater than ever.

### JUDGE YOURSELF FIRST

This talmudic story illustrates an important rule: The Talmudic sage Rabbi Chanina ben Elazar had a tree whose branches were bending over into someone else's field. Since his neighbor didn't complain, Rabbi Chanina didn't cut the branches.

One day, a man came before Rabbi Chanina and complained that the branches of his neighbor's tree were entering his field. He wanted Rabbi Chanina to order the neighbor to cut the branches.

"Come back tomorrow," Rabbi Chanina told him, "and I will judge your case."

"Why does Rabbi Chanina want me to return tomorrow?" the man wondered.

After the person left, Rabbi Chanina hired workers to cut down the branches of his own tree which were leaning over into the other field. The next day, the man came back to complain about his neighbor's branches. Rabbi Chanina sent for the neighbor and ordered him to remove the branches.

**"When you approach [the place of] battle, the priest shall step forward and speak to the people. He shall say to them, 'Listen, Israel, today you are about to wage war against your enemies. Do not be faint-hearted, do not be afraid, do not panic, and do not break ranks before them. G-d your L-rd is the One who is going with you. He will fight for you against your enemies, and He will deliver you.'"**  
(Deuteronomy 20:2-4)

"But, Rabbi, doesn't your tree also lean over into your neighbor's field?" the man protested. Rabbi Chanina told him to see for himself that the branches were cut. Thus, even though his own neighbor didn't mind, Rabbi Chanina knew that before correcting others one must first abide by these rules himself."

### POSITIVE THINKING

Two friends were sitting together at the funeral of a prominent community member. A long procession of distinguished personages and family members delivered warm eulogies, bringing tears to many eyes. After the funeral, the two friends walked home in a contemplative mood. "You know something," one of them commented. "He was a very fine fellow. I'm going to miss him."

"I know you're not supposed to speak ill of the dead, but you couldn't stand the guy. You always had something nasty to say about him."

"Yeah. But let's be honest. Whenever he was honored, I always wished I was receiving those honors. But now that he's passed on, I can think about him more objectively. And you know what? He really was a fine fellow!"

In our own lives, regrettably, we all too often see the tendency to denigrate our leaders as a means of self-aggrandizement. Sometimes, we are even guilty ourselves. But if we can condition ourselves to recognize these criticisms for what they are, we will find it easier to focus on the many positive qualities of our devoted community leaders and rabbis. Not only will we then be able to give them their due respect, we will also discover greater inner satisfaction and a higher sense of self-worth for ourselves.



## Inspirational Corner

The righteousness of *Mashiach* will not cover one cherished sin. A man may be a law-breaker in heart;

yet if he commits no outward act of transgression, he may be regarded by the world as

possessing great integrity. But God's law looks into the secrets of the heart. Every act is judged by the motives

that prompt it. Only that which is in accord with the principles of God's law will stand in the judgment.  
(COL 316)