

# SHOFTIM



## PARSHAT SHOFTIM SHORT SUMMARY

The reading of Shoftim addresses many laws that pertain to leadership within the Jewish people. For example, there is discussion regarding the role of judges, kings and prophets.

The reading opens with the obligation to assign judges in the cities of Israel. There is a need to set up a court system with the Sanhedrin serving as the highest court.

The Torah then highlights the laws regarding appointing kings. The king of

Israel must abide by certain laws such as not amassing an excessive amount of personal wealth. The king is also required to have personal Torah scrolls. One of those Torahs is to remain close to him at all times in order to instill humility and fear of God.

Another example of leadership are the Kohanim who represent the people spiritually before the Holy One. They receive special gifts from the nation on an ongoing basis in order to support their work and worship in the Beit Hamikdash.

The Torah makes a special point that the nation of Israel put their faith solely in the Creator: “Thou shall be whole-hearted with the Lord thy God” (18:13).

The Torah returns to the mitzvah of setting up cities of refuge that are to be used in the case of an inadvertent murder. Along these same lines the Torah relays a number of laws in the domain of capital punishment. For example, two witnesses are required to secure a conviction.

The sedra closes out with laws that relate to battle. These laws have special significance to the nation at this time as they will soon engage in conquering the land of Canaan. A memorable law in this area is the dictum that one is forbidden to cut down fruit-bearing trees while laying siege on a city.

One last *halacha* found in the sedra describes a case where a murder of a Jew has taken place. The corpse is

*Mazal Tov to  
Rabbi Avi & Pnina Berman  
and family*

*on the Bar Mitzva  
of their son*

*Dvir*

*Mazal Tov to grandparents  
Fyvie & Rachel Leah Berman  
and Alex & Daniella Kuflik*

found lying in the open and there are no witnesses to the act of murder. The Torah requires that the elders of the city nearest to the corpse take responsibility. They perform a public ritual in which they declare that they were not negligent nor were they responsible for the murder. They pray for forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish. The theme of leadership and taking responsibility is again emphasized via this fascinating law which closes out the Torah reading this Shabbat.

## STATS

48th of the 54 sedras; 5th of 11 in Devarim, Written on 191.6 lines (rank: 27) 18 Parshiyot; 3 open, 15 closed, 97 pesukim - rank: 36 - 7th in Devarim (tied with Tzav, but larger) 1523 words - rank: 28 - 7th in Devarim 5590 letters - rank: 31 - 7th in D'varim Relatively large p'sukim, like most of Devarim but an average-sized sedra

## MITZVOT

41 mitzvot - 14 positive, 27 prohibitions; ranks 6th among the sedras, in mitzvot. The top 6 mitzva-sedras - contain 55% of the Torah's mitzvot. (31 other sedras have the other 45%; 17 have none)

## HAFTORAH

### ISAIAH 51:12-52:12

The *haftorah* this week is a continuation of the series of seven known as the "*Haftarot of Consolation.*" We will be reading these special selections of hope and salvation from the book of Yeshayahu until Rosh Hashanah.

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The message this week conveys the fundamental and uplifting concept that the long and difficult days of suffering of the Jewish people will finally come to an end. One of the most memorable *pesukim* in this passage reads: "Burst out in song, sing together, O ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has consoled his people; He has redeemed Jerusalem." (52:9)

The theme of the *haftorah* also shares a particular parallelism with the sedra of Shoftim, namely, both relate to judges. The Torah this week speaks of judges that serve the courts of Israel. The *hafotrah* speaks of the one true judge who will ultimately bring justice and redemption: The Holy One Blessed Be He. ■