



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT KI TEITZEI

The parsha contains 74 mitzvot, the most of any parsha in our Torah. It is the last of the 3 parshiot of mitzvot that are the middle section of Sefer Devarim.

In Parshiot Re'eh and Shoftim we were introduced to our Jewish National society; an ethical monotheistic society. Laws of avoiding idol worship, the centrality of what would be Jerusalem, laws of generosity, of sharing with others. And of Nation building; Judges, Kings and war.

Our parsha is personal, not national. A Jew is not only a part of a nation. He is a person living the day-to-day life of people; living a life of holiness, fidelity to G-d, treating people with generosity and dignity, helping each other, living a moral life.

Ki Teitzei is a sister parsha to Kedoshim. Many of the marvelous, unique moral imperatives of our Torah, those principles that became foundational in the moral development of the world are found here. Perhaps to communicate that while we are part of a great nation and ought to give altruistically to nation building, our national pride and place ought not to muscle out the need to be good people, overwhelming our personal lives in the large project of our Jewish Nation. No. We at heart live personal holy lives, believing in One G-d and believing in the Image of G-d of each person. Living elevated and noble lives. The 74 mitzvot of our parsha communicate that rarefied life.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 21:10-21)

Captive Woman: One may not marry a woman captured in war until 30 days have elapsed and the passion subsided. **First born:** The rights of the first born to a double portion shall not be diverted to the first born of a more favored wife. **Ben Sorer Umoreh:** a boy entering adulthood who is brazen and gluttonous shall be judged on the fear of future more egregious behaviour.

The soldier is able to marry the non-Jewish woman captured in war; but only after a month of seeing her daily in an unkempt manner. As if to say – slowww downnn. This slowed down permission to marry the non-Jewish woman in war has a powerful implied ethic: women are not spoils of war. As we know all too well, oh so tragically and painfully, war is accompanied by rape and pillage of women. It is an expression of power, of victory. Women are the spoils of war.

Not in the Jewish army. The permission granted to marry this non-Jewish woman after a month screams out the far more basic war ethic: war should never ever be seen by the Jewish army as license for abuse of women.

But this first mitzvah of the parsha seems to belong in last week's parsha. At the end of Shoftim there were a number of mitzvot related to war: the special Kohen who motivates the troops in war, the war exemptions, try peace first, do not destroy fruit trees in war. Would it not have made more sense to include this mitzvah of the special procedure of marrying a foreign woman in war in last week's

parsha that was speaking of war?

Last week's parsha was national institutions. This week's parsha is personal piety. This mitzvah is an expression of personal piety, piety demanded even of the soldier. It belongs in our parsha of piety.



2ND ALIYA (21:22-22:7)

Burial: Do not allow the body of one sentenced to death to be hung.

He is to be buried immediately. **Returning Lost Property:** Don't look away from lost property; return it to its owner. Help up an overly **burdened animal** who has buckled; don't look away. Do not **cross dress**. **Send** a mother bird away before taking the eggs or chicks.

There is an important ethical principle expressed in the mitzvah of burying the one put to death. A person sentenced to death has committed the most serious of sins. Nonetheless, human beings never lose the right to dignity. Even the sinner, the one sentenced to death, is a human being; their body is not to be left hanging, but to be buried immediately. Human beings may sully their dignity by terrible crimes deserving of death; but they never forfeit their essential human dignity.

A further implied ethic is contained in the return of lost property. Laws of property, Torts, are to protect: property law regulates that I not damage your property. But Jewish ethics mandates that we go much further; I need to jump to help your property. There can be no innocent bystanders; we need to jump to save the lives of others and the property of others.



3RD ALIYA (22:8-23:7)

Build a **fence on your roof** to prevent accidents. **Do not:** plant vines and grain together, **plow** with ox and mules together, **wear** wool and linen

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together. A man shall not: **slander** a new bride claiming her not to be a virgin, nor commit **adultery** with a married woman, nor with a betrothed bride, nor **rape** a single woman. One may **not marry** a mamzer, nor a male from Amon or Moav.

In this aliya we have mitzvot about the most basic of daily life: our homes, our fields or livelihood, our clothes and our relationships with our partners. Each one of these regulates the basic aspects of our lives.

In this lies a sweeping principle of our Torah. We live mundane lives. Homes, livelihood, clothes, and relationships. All these things take on meaning when regulated by mitzvot. The Torah doesn't deal only with the holy, with G-d, with prayer and service. It gets right into our lives, pushes its way into our homes, kitchens, bedrooms.

Rav Soloveitchik called this redemption,

or geula; man's mundane life is redeemed from vulgarity and emptiness by mitzvot. Suddenly, the trite and trivial, the banal life we live becomes meaningful, an expression of loyalty to our Creator and His love of us by commanding us. Nary a moment is devoid of some mitzvah or other, transforming our lives into lush, full and meaningful moments. A redeemed existence.



4TH ALIYA (23:8-23:24)

One **may marry** one from Edom or Egypt. **Military encampments** shall be treated with a degree of **cleanliness**; bathroom facilities shall be outside the camp. Since G-d's presence goes with you, your camp has holiness. **Shelter** a runaway slave. Do not engage in **prostitution**, nor accept its gains as offerings. Do not exact **loan interest**. **Do** that which you **vow**; do not delay its fulfillment.

The charging of interest on a loan is not permitted. This is a Torah legislated type of welfare. When a person is in trouble and needs a loan, he is vulnerable to loan sharking. If he needs money and is desperate, what better recipe for milking him for all he is worth. The Torah forbids preying on misfortune. Find another way to profit; not on the backs of the misfortunate.



5TH ALIYA (23:25-24:4)

Harvesters may eat grapes or grains while harvesting. **Divorce**: Divorce need be done through a bill of divorce (a Get). If the woman marries another man, she may subsequently not return to remarry the first husband.

Allowing the worker to eat that which he is harvesting is the introduction of employer ethics. Being an employer comes with responsibility; people's lives are in our hands. Allowing the worker to consume what he is

harvesting is merely an example of sensitivity to the feelings of employees. Worker's rights have their basis in these verses.

Divorce is accomplished through a Get, or a document of divorce. While the creation of a marriage is called kiddushin and has holiness, this holy union may be dissolved through divorce. While we view marriage as holy, it is holiness in the difficult realm of human interactions, which sometimes sour. The Torah's permission to dissolve a marriage is an expression of the recognition of the complexity of life. While marriage is holy, allegiance to the marriage does not require one to live a life of misery.



6TH ALIYA (24:5-13)

First year marriage: Do not go to war in the first year of marriage: bring joy to the new bride. **Kidnapping** is a capital offense. Remember Miriam's **Tzaraat** and keep its laws. **Collateral** may be taken, but only with the owner's cooperation. If the owner needs this collateral, return it to him nightly.

Kidnapping, the taking of hostages, is a capital offense punishable by the death penalty. Knowing how we so value life, we become vulnerable to evil, cynical, and perverse manipulation; the kidnapping of innocent people, demanding ransom or who knows what. The Torah's view is expressed in the punishment; this is a capital offense. Amongst the worst of ethical violations.



7TH ALIYA (24:14-25:16)

Do not withhold **wages**: workers are to be paid before the end of the day. Do not **pervert justice** of the foreigner or widow. When **harvesting** grain, olives or grapes, leave the dropped produce for the needy. No more than 40 **lashes** shall ever be given. **Yibum**: a brother shall marry the

childless widow of his brother and hence maintain his name. Maintain only **accurate weights** and measures. Remember what **Amalek** did to you in attacking the weak when you left Egypt. Erase any memory of him.

In one aliya we have mitzvot of wages, of justice, of kindness, of lashes, of levirate marriage, of honesty in business and of Amalek. The lack of a clear pattern to these mitzvot is itself instructive. Perhaps Moshe is deliberately moving from generosity to justice to business to war. He wants to cover mitzvot in all aspects of our life. Our lives include homes and relationships and work and war and honesty and justice and paying our workers....and on and on. In all aspects of our lives we have mitzvot; ways to do things nobly and with holiness.

It is this richness of behavior in our personal life that is truly the necessary ingredient of nation building. The Jewish nation will be built on ethical monotheism, on national institutions that are kept in check; but ultimately a great nation is built in the homes and in the private lives of its citizens. Our great nation is built on the quiet greatness of its people.

HAFTORAH YESHAYAHU 51:12 - 52:12

This week's *haftorah* is the fourth of a series of seven "*Haftarot* of Consolation."

The recent *haftorahs* have alluded to the fear of the nation of Israel that perhaps they have been abandoned by God. In response, this week's *haftorah* begins with God's response: "I, indeed I, will comfort you. After castigating Israel for forgetting their Creator, the prophet describes the suffering and tribulations which Israel has endured. However,

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the time has come for Israel's oppressors to drink the "cup of suffering."

Yeshayahu announces the good tidings of Redemption. "Burst out in song, sing together; O ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has consoled His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem."

The *haftorah* concludes by spotlighting the difference between the Egyptian Exodus, when the Israelites quickly hurried out of their exile, and the future Redemption: "For not with haste shall you go forth and not in a flurry of flight shall you go, for the Lord goes before you, and your rear guard is the God of Israel." ■

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