

Parasha of the Week

Parashat Shoftim: Summary

Moses continues his last speech to the Israelites before he dies saying: “Judges shall be appointed to judge the people with justice. You shall not twist judgment by recognizing a face or accepting bribery, because both blind the eyes of the wise and cause the words of the righteous to falter. Justice, justice shall you pursue, so that you may live and take possession of the land which God, your God, is giving you.

“Do not make a memorial stone for God, nor offer to God a blemished animal for sacrifice.

“If you find an individual who does evil in the eyes of God and transgresses God’s covenant, then you shall make careful inquiry. If it turns out to be true according to the word of two or three witnesses, then that person shall die. No one shall be put to death on the basis of the word of only one witness.

“If the matter is too difficult for you to decide, between blood and blood, between right and right, between damage and damage, then you shall come to the priests for judgment.”

Moses then says: “When you come to the land that God is giving you, and dwell in it, you will want a king. You shall then set a king over yourself who God will choose. This king shall not be a foreigner but one of your brethren. This king must not have many horses, nor many wives, nor amass silver and gold for himself in excess, so that his heart may not go astray. Rather, when he sits upon the throne, he shall write for himself a duplicate of this Teaching in a book. He shall read from it as long as he shall live, so that he may learn to fear God and not lift himself above his brethren nor turn aside from the commandments.

“The priests, the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance. They shall eat the fire offerings to God, the first of your grain and oil, and drink your new wine because God chose this tribe to serve in the Name of God forever.

“When you are in the land that God is giving you, do not learn their evil ways. You shall have no one among you pass your son or daughter through fire, nor listen to soothsayers, interpreters of omens, sorcerers or charmers. These are abominations to God.”

Moses continues saying, “A prophet from among your brethren, like myself, will God raise up for you. To him you shall hearken. Then God will put words into this prophet’s mouth so that he may speak them to the people. But if the prophet speaks wantonly in God’s Name or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you ask, ‘How can we recognize the word that God has not spoken.’ If it is spoken in the name of God and does not come true, then God has not spoken that word and the prophet has spoken it wantonly. You shall not be afraid of him.

“When you dwell in the promised land, you shall separate out three cities and they shall serve as a refuge for murderers. These cities are only for the murderer who kills his neighbor unintentionally and without hate. For in the heat of the moment, this murderer could be killed even though the initial crime was an accident. This will prevent innocent blood from being shed in the promised land.



"Do not move your boundary marker of your neighbor from those set by inheritance.

"The testimony of one witness shall not stand against a person with regard to any crime or offense or sin that may have been committed. Only through a testimony of two or three witnesses may a case be established. If a pair of witnesses misuse their power and are false witnesses, then you shall cause to happen what was planned for the sinner. In this way you clear away the evil from your midst. Your eye must not have pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

"When you go forth in battle against a stronger enemy, do not be afraid, for God who brought you out of Egypt, is with you. The officers shall speak to the people, saying, 'If there is a man that has a new home, a new wife or a new vineyard, let him return home.' Let him who is afraid and fainthearted go home too, so as not to inspire cowardliness in other soldiers.

"When you approach a city to wage war, you must first offer peace. If the answer is peace, then the entire population shall serve you. If peace is rejected, then you shall battle against them, and God will deliver them to you. Then you shall kill all the males, but the women and children and animals and all the booty shall be your spoils. However, of the cities that God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not allow a soul to remain alive so that they will not teach you abominations practiced for their gods.

Do not destroy the food trees in the cities captured. Eat of them but do not cut them down. You may cut down non-food trees.

If a slain person is found fallen in the field, you must find the city closest to the slain man, and the elders of that city shall sacrifice a young calf and blessings by the priests shall be made over it. The elders shall then say prayers for atonement. You must put away the innocent blood from your midst by doing that which is right in the eyes of God.

[http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Weekly Torah Portion.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Weekly_Torah_Portion.shtml)

<http://www.torah.org/learning/torahportion.php3>