



SHABBAT ZEST

Parshat Shoftim 7th Elul 5776

Torah Reading / Haftara:

Artscroll – p.1024/1199

Living Torah – p.948//1234

SHABBAT TIMES:

Candle Lighting:
7:09pm

Kabbalat Shabbat
Davening: 7:00pm

Pre Shacharit Parsha
Shiur: 8:45am

Shabbat Morning
Davening: 9:15am

Mincha: 6:00pm

Shabbat Ends 8:16pm

NEXT SHABBAT
KI SEITZEI

CANDLE LIGHTING
@ 6:53 PM

This week the
Haftorah will be
read by David
Viner

Parsha In a Nutshell

Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

Moses instructs the people of Israel to appoint judges and law enforcement officers in every city. "Justice, justice shall you pursue," he commands them, and you must administer it without corruption or favouritism. Crimes must be meticulously investigated and evidence thoroughly examined—a minimum of two credible witnesses is required for conviction and punishment.

In every generation, says Moses, there will be those entrusted with the task of interpreting and applying the laws of the Torah. "According to the law that they will teach you, and the judgment they will instruct you, you shall do; you shall not turn away from the thing that they say to you, to the right nor to the left."

Shoftim also includes the prohibitions against idolatry and sorcery; laws governing the appointment and behaviour of a king; and guidelines for the creation of "cities of refuge" for the inadvertent murderer. Also set forth are many of the rules of war: the exemption from battle for one who has just built a home, planted a vineyard, married, or is "afraid and soft-hearted"; the requirement to offer terms of peace before attacking a city; and the prohibition against wanton destruction of something of value, exemplified by the law that forbids to cut down a fruit tree when laying siege (in this context the Torah makes the famous statement, "For man is a tree of the field").

The Parshah concludes with the law of the eglah arufah—the special procedure to be followed when a person is killed by an unknown murderer and his body is found in a field—which underscores the responsibility of the community and its leaders not only for what they do, but also for what they might have prevented from being done.

Haftorah

Isaiah 51:12-52:12

This week's Haftorah is the fourth of a series of seven "Haftarot of Consolation." These seven Haftarot commence on the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

The Haftorahs of the past two weeks open with Israel's complaint that they have been abandoned by G-d. Israel is not content with consolations offered by the prophets -- instead they demand that G-d alone comfort them. In response, this week's Haftorah begins with G-d's response: "I, indeed I, will comfort you."

After briefly reprimanding Israel for forgetting their Creator for fear of human and finite oppressors, the prophet describes the suffering and tribulations which Israel has endured. However, the time has arrived for the suffering to end. The time has come for Israel's oppressors to drink the "cup of suffering" which they had hitherto forced Israel to drink: "Awaken, awaken, put on your strength, O Zion; put on the garments of your beauty, Jerusalem the Holy City, for no longer shall the uncircumcised or the unclean continue to enter you. Shake yourselves from the dust, arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; free yourself of the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

Isaiah extols the beauty of the messenger who will announce the good tidings of Redemption. "Burst out in song, sing together, O ruins of Jerusalem, for the L-rd has consoled His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem."

The Haftorah ends by highlighting the difference between the Egyptian Exodus, when the Israelites hurried out of their exile and bondage, and the future Redemption: "For not with haste shall you go forth and not in a flurry of flight shall you go, for the L-rd goes before you, and your rear guard is the G-d of Israel."

UPCOMING EVENTS

27th September - Rabbi Dr Rafi Zarum Talk - £5
donation per ticket. Please pay in the Shop on website at www.loughtonsynagogue.com

30th October – Quiz Night - £20 pp. Please pay in the Shop on website at www.loughtonsynagogue.com

12th November - Shabbat UK. Do not miss out!!! This is an extremely popular event so book fast!!! Reserve Seats/Tables with the Office now.

29th January 2017 - The return of Shir. The fabulous klezmer band are coming back for an encore. Reserve Tickets with the Office now.

Recurring Events

Cheder Open

Yahrzeits for the coming week 7th – 13th Elul:

7. Stacey Goodman – Mother

9. Andrew Young – Brother

13. Murray Gilbert – Mother

13. Deborah Jacobs – Father

Stonesetting

22nd Elul – 25th September – Howard Diamond – Daughter – 10:00am
Waltham Abbey

A Little Deeper – Life's Most Important Thing

Every person has one thing that he is living for. Let's call it a "personal bottom line." For some it is money, for others prestige, for others pursuit of pleasure. Now let's imagine that you're faced with a situation where you are about to lose everything – your job, your house, your car, even your health and your family (G-d forbid). But ... you are given the choice to hold onto one thing, only one thing. What would it be?

This week we began the month of Elul. In many respects, this is the most important time of the Jewish year. As the month which immediately precedes the High Holidays, Elul is a crucial period of preparation. To get started, let's first ask the question: What is Rosh Hashana all about anyway? Imagine that you are a scientific researcher who is funded through a philanthropic foundation. Each year, you are required to appear before the Board of Directors and present a summation of your achievements during the past year. How much money the board grants you for the coming year will be based on how well you utilized last year's grant – and how solid is your plan for the coming year. Of course, if you've squandered past resources and are unprepared for the future, your chance of receiving additional grant money is slim.

So, too, on Rosh Hashana. Ever since the creation of Adam and Eve, Rosh Hashana has been the day when every human being (so to speak) is created anew. We stand before our Creator and say: "This is how I have utilized my resources, and this is my plan for the future."

This is indeed serious business. Life is not to be taken for granted. Life is a precious gift from Above. It is delicate and tenuous and can be taken away at any moment. The story is told of a sculptor who was commissioned to design a bronze statue of a horse for the town square. After many months of work, he produced a sculpture with perfect detail – showing every sinew and hair follicle. It was truly a masterpiece! However, when the statue was proudly placed in the town square, everyone walked by and completely ignored it! The sculptor was very disappointed to find all his hard work going unappreciated. Finally, a friend said: "I think the problem is that the horse is so perfect that people think it's real! But if you would make a crack, then people will notice it as a work of art."

The point of this story, explains the Chasan Sofer, is that our lives are full of blessings. Our eyes alone are worth many millions of dollars! But we mustn't take our "funding" for granted! This Rosh Hashana, will we be able to stand before G-d with confidence? Only if we have first done significant soul searching – who we are and where we are headed. Because if we don't have such clarity, then how can we expect G-d (the Board of Directors) to grant us another year of life?!

There are a few special customs that Jews perform during Elul, to help awaken us to the task ahead. One is the daily recitation of Psalm 27. There, King David exclaims:

"One thing I ask ... is to dwell in the house of G-d all the days of my life."

King David tells us a tremendous insight: If I was stripped bare and could only choose one thing, it would be You, G-d. That's the bottom line. A relationship with G-d supersedes all else, for He is the source of everything. No if's, and's, or but's. Coming to this realization is what Elul is all about, let's ensure we're moving in the right direction.

Shabbat Shalom