

whY I Matter

בשבילי נברא העולם (סנהדרין לז)

Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

א' - ז' אלול ה'תשע"ח

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Young Israel of Midwood

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Shoftim

שפטים

זמנים

Weekdays

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Shachris | |
| Sunday | 6:50, 8 & 8:30 |
| Weekdays | 5:50, 6:50, 7:30 & 8:30 |
| Weekday Rosh Chodesh | 5:40, 6:40, 7:30 & 8:30 |
| Sunday Rosh Chodesh | 6:30, 8:00 & 8:30 |
| Mincha | 7:40 |
| Maariv | after mincha |

שבת שפטים

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Candle Lighting | 7:32 PM |
| Mincha | 7 & 7:42 PM |
| Shachris | 7:30, 8:50 & 9:00 AM |
| Mincha | 1:45, 6:30 & 7:25 PM |
| Maariv | 8:35 PM |
| Shabbos ends | 8:39 PM |

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for all other zmanim

THESE ZMANIM ARE DETERMINED BY THE GABBOIM AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THEIR DISCRETION

Elul's Wake-Up Call Rambam z"l (1135-1204; Egypt) writes: Although blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a decree of the Torah [which we would observe even without a reason], it does contain an allusion. It says to us, "Awaken sleeping ones from your sleep, and slumbering ones arise from your slumbers! Search your deeds and return! Remember your Creator, who who forget the truth because of the mundane pursuits [that occupy] your time. . . Look into your souls and improve your ways and your actions. . ." (Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4) **R' Yaakov Moellin z"l** (Maharil; Germany; 1365-1427—his writings and personal practices are the source of a significant percentage of Ashkenazic customs) writes: "When Elul enters, we increase our Teshuvah. Therefore we blow the Shofar [every day during Elul]—to awaken people's hearts and

to encourage the people to repent."

(Sefer Maharil: Hil. Yamim Nora'im

No.5) **R' Yitzchak Yerucham**

Borodiansky (Mashgiach Ruchani in

Yeshivat Kol Torah, Yerushalayim)

asks: Who are the sleeping people Rambam is addressing? Who are they who forget the truth because of mundane pursuits, who wile away their time in nothingness? Are these people not us?! Yes, we who study Torah and perform Mitzvot! The way of a student of Torah and Mussar is to point the accusing finger at himself, not at anyone else. Why must we conclude that we are "asleep"? Because Hashem desires our hearts. Though we may be studying Torah and praying, our hearts are occupied at that very moment with everything else under the heavens. R' Borodiansky continues: If one does not work hard on himself, he has no Elul! One of the curses spoken regarding the period before the "End of Days" is (Devarim 28:28), "Hashem will strike you with madness and with blindness, and with confounding of the heart." This is the curse of being unable to see the truth, being unable to understand, of having a heart that is "blocked." Elul, on the other hand, is all about opening one's heart! (Siach Yitzchak: Elul-Tishrei)

The king of Justice

"שופטים ושופטים תתן לך - ושפטו את העם משפט צדק" - אמר ר' אחא: בא וראה, שש מעלות היו לכסא של שלמה המלך - ובפרשה זו כתובים ששה דברים "בלא תעשה", ואלו הם: "לא תטה משפט, לא תכיר פנים, ולא תקח שוחד, לא תטע לך אשרה, ולא תקים לך מצבה, ולא תזבח לדי' אלהיך שור ושה אשר יהיה בו מום" - הרי ששה לאוין. והיה הכרוז עומד לפני כסאו של שלמה. כיון שהיה המלך עולה מעלה הראשונה - היה מכריז "לא תטה משפט", במעלה השניה היה מכריז "לא תכיר פנים", בשלישית היה מכריז "לא תקח שוחד", ברביעית - "לא תטע לך אשרה", בחמישית - "לא תקים לך מצבה", בששית - "לא תזבח לדי' אלהיך וכו'".

[דברים רבה ה', ה']

R' Yisrael Salanter z"l (1810-1883;

founder of the mussar movement)

writes: When it comes to the steps man takes to fulfill his physical needs—making money, attaining honor, etc.—the first cause (at least to man's eyes, though really everything comes from the true "First Cause") is a desire for that thing. From there flow intermediate causes, which lead to other intermediate causes, until

לכבוד האי גברא וב'ב' הרוצים בעילום שמם על הסיוע שמושיטים לי בעין יפה להמשיך את הגליון עוד הפעם בשנה זו שיהיה לזכותם ולזכות כל משפחתם הקב"ה יברך אותם בכל מילי דמיטב מיט יידישע נחת בעושר ואושר ואריכות ימים בבריאות בזה ובבא ענגצב"ב

man's desire is realized. Or, the first cause (again, to man's eyes) may be pressure or persuasion applied by another person. R' Salanter continues: What is the "first cause" that leads man to examine his deeds and to focus on mussar during the month of Elul (and all year long)? There is no natural desire for this, as there is with physical needs! Our early Sages were worried by this question. Therefore, based on a midrash, they established the blowing of the shofar during Elul. That is the "first cause" that awakens a person from his slumber and from his busy routine to inspect his deeds, as the verse says (Amos 3:6): "Is the shofar ever sounded in a city and the people do not tremble?" (Ohr Yisrael no.7) **R' Meir Chodosh z"l** (mashgiach ruchani in several Israeli yeshivot; 1898-1989) elaborates: R' Yisrael Salanter is teaching that everything is acquired in its own unique way. And, there is a prerequisite to finding that way, which is the desire to acquire that thing. When the "thing" to be acquired is yirat Shamayim / fear and awe of G-d, there is no natural desire to acquire it. The road is long, and man is mired in his routine, which causes his heart to move farther and farther away [from desiring yirat Shamayim]. The walls between man and his Creator are high, and on every occasion when a person becomes aware of his obligation in this world [which is to attain closeness to Hashem], it seems distant and unattainable. And, man has an unlimited number of excuses to justify himself. Moreover, even the yirat Shamayim that a person acquired in his youth becomes routine. These concerns should be on a person's mind all year long as they affect his Divine service, but even more so in Elul, when a person prepares to stand in judgment before his Creator. (Meir Netivot: Mo'adim)

"שפטים ושופטים תתן לך בכל שעריך אשר ה' איתן לך לשבטיך ושפטו את העם משפט צדק" **"You shall observe the festival of Sukkos...Judges and officers you**

shall appoint..." (16:13,18)

Although Ezra the Scribe divided the Torah into the weekly portions as we know them, there is another system which is used to divide the Torah, that of "pesuchos" and "stumos", literally "open" and "closed". A pesucha is roughly translated as a new chapter and a stumah as a new paragraph. A pesucha begins as a new line, while a stumah begins on the same line. The section of the laws of judges is a parsha stumah, a new paragraph, but not a new chapter. [Yad Hilchos Sefer Torah 8:1,2] Therefore, there must be a significant connection between these laws and the laws of Sukkos, which concludes last week's parsha [16:13-17]. The judicial system in Israel requires that every city contain a minor Sanhedrin consisting of twenty-three judges. The Talmud teaches that a city must be populated with a minimum of one hundred twenty people to warrant a judicial system. Each judge has two understudies. [Yad Hilchos Sanhedrin 1:2] What is the rationale for requiring a city of one hundred twenty people to have sixty-nine judges? Why the need for so many courts throughout the land? The function of the Jewish court system is not only to dispense justice and restore order; a judge is the conduit for the word of Hashem and must create a society where Hashem's presence is felt. A Jewish law-abiding citizen must observe the law, not due to a fear of retribution, but a fear of sin. A system which is predicated upon the notion that people will not violate the law due to their fear of the consequences cannot succeed. The reason for this is as follows: If a person perceives the rewards for violating the law to be worth the risk of being caught, he will violate the law. The only effective system is one where a person perceives that it is intrinsically wrong to violate the law. This can only be achieved if people feel the presence of Hashem in their midst. The function of the judge is to create this atmosphere. If the purpose of the judicial system were to create fear of punishment, there would be no need for so many judges. Bolstering the police force would be more effective. Since the purpose of the judge is to create a society where Hashem's presence is tangible, we understand the need for such a large number of

judges. A major theme pertaining to the festival of Sukkos is that we leave our houses in order to go into the "shadow of Hashem". [See Bnei Yissoschor Maamer Chodesh Tishrei #9] The Sukkah is a place where Hashem's presence manifests itself. Therefore, the connection between the festival of Sukkos and the judicial system is clear. The judicial system serves to create the same atmosphere throughout society, which is found in the Sukkah. (Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha)

Double Vision

"על פי שנים עדים או שלשה עדים - יומת המת" - תניא, אמר ר' שמעון בן שטח: אראה בנחמה, אם לא ראיתי אחד שרץ אחר חברו לחורבה ורצתי אחריו, וראיתי סייף בידו ודם מטפטף והרוג מפרפר, ואמרת לו: רשע! מי הרגו לזה אני או אתה? אבל מה אעשה, שאין דמך מסור בידי, שהרי אמרה תורה: "על פי שנים עדים יומת המת", היודע מחשבות יפרע מאותו האיש שהרג את חברו. אמרו: לא זו משע עד שבא נחש והכישו ומת.

[סנהדרין ל"ז, ב']

"Judges and officers you shall appoint in all your cities — which Hashem, your Elokim, gives you — for your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment." (16:18) Why must the Torah tell us that judges should judge with "righteous judgment"? Even absent this verse, would we have expected any less? **R' Elazar Fleckles** z"l (1754-1826; rabbi of Prague) answers: As is well known, a Bet Din for monetary disputes consists of three judges. However, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 3a) cites an opinion that, according to Torah law, one judge is sufficient, as we read (Vayikra 19:15), **"With righteousness you (singular) shall judge your fellow."** According to that opinion, the Sages decreed that there be three judges because of a concern that an unqualified person might sit in judgment alone if one judge were sufficient. If three people sit in judgment, the Gemara states, there surely will be one among them who has heard the relevant laws from scholars. (The Gemara continues: Since the bottom line is that three judges are required, what difference does it make if they are required by Torah law or merely because it is a good idea? The Gemara answers: If a Bet Din of two members did sit in judgment, its judgment would not be

valid if the Torah requires three, but it would be valid if the Torah requires only one judge.) [Until here from the Gemara] R' Fleckles continues: Our verse hints at the Rabbinic requirement for three judges.

"Judges" is plural, which implies two judges (since no greater number is stated). But, a court cannot have an even number of judges, so a third judge is required. Lest you say: This contradicts the verse in Vayikra that requires only one judge! Therefore the Torah explains: "They shall judge the people with righteous judgment." Even though only one judge is required, when there are three judges, we can be confident that a proper judgment will be issued. (Chazon La'mo'ed: Chizayon 4)

ולא-תקים לך מצבה אשר שנה ה' אלקיך
Neither shall you set up for yourself any pillar (matzeiva), which the L-rd your G-d hates (16:22) The word "matzeiva" comes from the Hebrew root meaning constant, steady and permanent. Do not look at this world as an end unto itself, the Torah counsels. Regard it merely as a passageway to be navigated and a preparation for the World to Come. (Kedushat Levi)

על פי שנים עדים או שלשה עדים יומת המת
לא יומת על פי עד אחד
By the testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses shall the condemned person die; he shall not die according to one witness (17:6), **Rav Chaim Avraham of Michelov z"l** explains homiletically: The midrash relates that Hashem asked Wisdom what should be the fate of a sinner. Wisdom responded, "Let him suffer." Prophecy was asked the same question, and it responded, "Let him die." When the Torah was asked, it said, "Let him bring a korban." Then Hashem Himself said, "Let him repent." This, said Rav Chaim Avraham, is the meaning of the above verse, "By the testimony of two witnesses - Wisdom and Prophecy - or three witnesses - Wisdom, Prophecy and the Torah - shall the condemned person die." (Even according to the Torah, a sinner would die if he did not bring a korban; however because the Torah's answer was milder, the verse groups the other "two witnesses" separately.) On the other hand, the sinner "shall not die according to one witness," i.e., Hashem. **Rav**

Avraham Stern z"l adds that another verse in this parashah can be interpreted similarly. Verse 19:15 states: "A single witness shall not stand up against any man for any iniquity or for any error, regarding any sin that he may commit; according to two witnesses or according to three witnesses shall a matter be confirmed." The gemara teaches that "A single witness shall not stand up against any man for any iniquity or for any error" means that the testimony of a lone witness cannot cause another person to be found liable, but it can force a litigant to take an oath. Interpreted homiletically: When will the single witness, i.e., Hashem, not bring about punishment? When the sinner takes an oath to repent and returns to upholding the oath which the Jewish people took at Har Sinai. (Melizei Esh)

כי יפלא ממך דבר למשפט בין דם לדם בין דיין לדין ובין נגע לנגע דברי ריבת בשעריך וקמת ועלית אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו

"You shall arise and ascend to the place that Hashem, your G-d, shall choose." (17:8) Rashi quotes a midrash: "This [the word 'ascend'] teaches that the Temple was situated higher than all other places." **R' Elya Meir Bloch z"l** (1894-1955; founder and rosh yeshiva of Telshe in Cleveland) observes: Of course we know that there are taller mountains than Har Ha'moriah, where the Temple stood. What the midrash means is that because the earth is a sphere, any point can be designated as "the highest point." Har Ha'moriah deserves that designation because it is the holiest point in the world, and it is the place to which all people ascend to experience spiritual growth. (Peninei Da'at)

שום תשים עליך מלך אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו מקרב אחיך תשים עליך מלך לא תוכל לתת עליך איש נכרי אשר לא אחיך הוא

This week's Parashah includes the Mitzvah of appointing a king. We read, **"You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your Elokim, shall choose. From among your brethren shall you set a king over yourself; you cannot place over yourself a stranger, who is not your brother.** (17:15) "**R' Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l** (rabbi and chassidic rebbe of Radomsko, Poland; died 1866) asks: Would we have thought to appoint a stranger, a foreigner, as king? He

explains: We read (Shmot 28:30), "Aharon shall bear the judgment of Bnei Yisrael on his heart constantly before Hashem." Someone who is considered the Tzaddik of a generation must have this quality of Aharon's—that he carries the burdens of his brethren on his heart and sacrifices himself for their good. This, too, is the meaning of our verse—the king must be someone who sees each Jew as his brother and is willing to sacrifice himself accordingly—not someone who behaves as a foreigner. (Tiferet Shlomo) **R' Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg** (Tolner Rebbe in Yerushalayim) adds: The explanation offered by the Tiferet Shlomo is the foundation of all leadership. And, every person should realize that he or she is in a leadership position. Every parent is a leader to his or her children. Every older sibling is a leader to his or her younger siblings, even if the "older" sibling has just barely reached Bar or Bat Mitzvah age. Every person must act towards the people under his influence as a "brother" who is willing to sacrifice for the other, not as a foreigner or stranger. (Chamin B'Motzai Shabbat)

לא יהיה לכהנים הלויים כל שבט לוי חלק ונחלה עם ישראל אשר ה' ונחלתו יאכלון

The Kohanim Leviim, the whole tribe of Levi shall not have part and inheritance with the rest of Israel (18:1) The Levi'im were a "crown jewel" of Israel. Their loyalty prompted Hashem to appoint them guardians of His Sanctuary; they were considered princes of the people and models of holiness. Yet, they weren't granted their own land in Israel, but rather had to rely on the donations and offerings of the rest of the populace. Why? Hashem knew they were worthy of special duties and tasks. However, He was concerned that if they were to cultivate their own land and raise their own crops, they would become increasingly self-centered. If they prayed for assistance, they might have only their needs in mind, and devote their service to improving their own lot. To ensure that they would continue to pray for the welfare of the entire Jewish nation, Hashem made it so their sustenance depended on the well-being of the rest of the Jews. Even princes must be aware that they can't separate their fate from the

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rest of the people's fate. (Lil'mode U'lilamed)

זהו יהיה משפט הכהנים מאת העם מאת זבחי הזבח אם שור אם שה ונתן לכהן הזרע והלחיים והקבה

And he shall give to the priest the foreleg, the jaw, and the stomach (18:3) When the **Malbim** was installed as Rabbi in Bucharest, which was a large city with numerous Jews estranged from Torah, he held the following sermon: The Torah commanded giving the priest the foreleg (Zeroa), the jaw, and the stomach. Now, in modern times the Rabbi serves as a substitute for the priest. Consequently, I request from you the following three gifts: the arm (Zeroa) – that you should all be

Careful to observe the precept of Tefillin, the jaw – that you should be meticulous not to shave your beards with a razor, and the stomach – that you be scrupulous to abide by the dietary laws. (Chiyuchah Shel Torah)

ראשית דגנך תירשך ויצהרך וראשית גז צאנך
תתן לו

The first fruits of your grain... shall you give him (18:4) As Rashi explains, "This refers to the teruma contribution set aside for the priests. [The Torah] does not specify any amount, but our Rabbis said that a person of good will gives one in forty." Symbolically, "one in forty" is an allusion to Yom Kippur. Moses ascended Mount Sinai on the 1st of Elul, where he remained for 40 days, until Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is thus the most auspicious time of this 40-day period. (Ohr HaTorah)

לא תסיג גבול רעהו אשר גבולו ראשונים בנחלתך
אשר נתחל בארץ אשר ה' א' נתן לך לרשתה
"You shall not move a boundary of your fellow, which the early ones marked out, in your inheritance that you shall inherit, in the Land that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you to possess it." (19:14) Rashi z"l comments: This refers to moving a boundary marker into a neighbor's field in order to enlarge one's own field. Rashi continues: Does it not already say (Vayikra 19:13), **"You shall not steal"**? What does this verse add? It teaches that one who moves his neighbor's boundary line transgresses two negative commands (stealing and moving the boundary). One might think that this is true even outside the Land of Israel. The verse therefore says: "In your inheritance that you shall inherit [in the Land]" – in Eretz Yisrael one who does this transgresses two negative commands, while outside the Land he transgresses only the command of "You shall not steal." [Until here from Rashi] **R' Chaim Zaitchik** z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buczacz, Ukraine; later in Israel) asks: Why is a second prohibition needed regarding moving boundaries in Eretz Yisrael? He answers: In Eretz Yisrael, people feel a great yearning to own land; after all, this is our land, our home! Moreover, one might rationalize that he is motivated by the holiness of the Land. In contrast, in the diaspora, every Jew feels, on some level, that

he is a stranger, not at home. (Ohr Chadash: Bein Ha'metzarim)

לא יקום עד אחד באיש לכל עון ולכל חטאת
בכל חטאת אשר יחטא על פי שני עדים או על פי
שלשה עדים יקום דבר

According to two witnesses... shall a case be established (19:15) The word which the Torah uses here for "case" is "davar," which alludes to the "dibbur" (speech) of prayer. The "two witnesses" likewise stand for our love and awe of the Alm-ghty. The Torah teaches that our prayers must be uttered with this love and awe in order for them to be worthy and contain substance. (Ohr-Hatorah)

R' Yitzchak of Volozhin z"l R' Yitzchak was the son of, and successor to, R' Chaim of Volozhin, founder and head of the yeshiva of Volozhin. He was born in 5540 (1879/80) and died in 5609 (1848/9). In addition to his duties as rabbi and rosh yeshiva, R' Yitzchak was a leading spokesman for Jewish causes. It is said that he won the respect of the Russian Czar through the following discussion: The Czar asked R' Yitzchak, "I know that the Jews pray for my welfare on every Shabbat, and I even asked a Jew to translate the prayer for me. However, now I have learned that the Jews in every country recite the identical prayer for their own ruler. If the Jews in my kingdom pray for my success and the Jews in my rival's kingdom pray for his success, what will be the outcome?" R' Yitzchak replied with a smile, "Since your majesty had the prayer translated, you certainly noticed that it refers to G-d as 'The One Who makes a path in the sea and a lane in the fierce waters.' Why? "The answer is as follows: A ship that wishes to travel westward needs an east wind to blow. On the other hand, a ship which must travel eastward needs a west wind. How can both ships be satisfied? "Hashem's greatness is that He can satisfy both! So, too, we pray for your success while our brothers in other lands pray for the success of their king, and Hashem's greatness is such that He can answer both prayers." On another occasion, R' Yitzchak presented himself to a Russian official wearing his Shabbat clothes. The official taunted him, "Doesn't Mishlei (25:6) say, 'Do not beautify yourself before the king'? Furthermore, doesn't the

Talmud (Chagigah 9b) say, 'Poverty looks nice on Jews'?" R' Yitzchak responded, "One of your questions answers the other. Poverty looks nice on the Jews, but when I come before the king I may not beautify myself. Therefore, I have removed my poverty and dressed up in fine clothes." R' Yitzchak was known for avoiding lashon hara and never speaking ill of another person. Once, when he had no choice but to say that someone had lied, he refused to say it directly. He said, "This person has a phenomenal memory. Some people remember things that happened ten years ago. Others can remember things that happened fifty years ago. This man's memory is so phenomenal that he can remember things that never happened." R' Yitzchak's works include Mili D'Avot on Pirkei Avot and a Torah commentary entitled Peh Kadosh. Among his sons in law was **R' Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin** (the "Netziv"). (Gedolei Hadorot 585-586)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי
שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לחולים
אליהו זאב בן בריינדל
הרב משה יהודה בן שרה
אברהם פנחס בן שרה עטל
ישראל יוסף בן יוכבד
דוד בן טובשין
חיים משה בן שרה
אלטע שרה גיטל בת חי
בתי בת שרה
בריינדל בת פעשא לאה
תמר אהובה בת גוטקע רייזל
משה שלמה בן גאלדע רעכל
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