Points to Ponder

Shoftim 5779

**שֹֽׁפְטִ֣ים וְשֹֽׁטְרִ֗ים Judges and police (16:18)** - Why are the police mentioned together with the judges? **Rav Leib Chasman ztl.** explains that justice is not achieved merely by KNOWING what the right thing to do is,  it is achieved when justice is carried out. What is true on a communal level is true within each and every human as well. It is not enough for a person to KNOW what the right thing to do is, each of us must also have the leaders inside ourselves to push ourselves to “just do it.”

**וְלֹֽא־תִקַּ֣ח שֹׁ֔חַד  And do not take bribery (16:19) - Rashi** explains that even if one only takes the bribe to be honest, the bribe will sway him from truth. **Rav Meir Chodosh ztl.** commented that it is impossible for a person not to surrender himself and his well placed logic when swayed by taking bribes. In fact the word for bribe -- Shochad -- is a contraction of the words  “they are one”. Those taking bribes are indeed combined into one with the one who bribes ad surrender their own minds and senses of self in the process.

**דָּ֨ם | לְדָ֜ם בֵּֽין־דִּ֣ין לְדִ֗ין וּבֵ֥ין נֶ֨גַע֙ לָנֶ֔גַע  Between Blood and blood, justice and justice (17:8) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us of the comment of the  Vilna Gaon that this possuk highlights the three subsections of the Torah that one does not derive rules from one to the other. They are -- Issur V’Heter, Tumah V’Tahara and Choshen Mishpat. Sometimes, these issues seem to align (Kohein becoming Tamai -- is that based on Issur or on Tumah; Issues concerning Niddah -- is that Tumah or Issur) but indeed the rules are different based on the classification of the question which can have major ramifications as to what one would do in the cases of Safeik.

**וּבִֽעַרְתָּ֥ הָרָ֖ע מִיִּשְׂרָאֵֽל And you will destroy the evil from Yisrael (17:12)** - In 5 locations in the Torah, the Torah refers to the capital punishment as destroying the evil. **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl.** explains that this is done to highlight that the punishment is not vindictive -- it is a means of cleansing. This also highlights the message of Biur Hara one needs to have inside himself and the cleansing power of Teshuva.

**וְלֹ֤א יַרְבֶּה־לּוֹ֙ נָשִׁ֔ים And he should not have so many wives (17:17)** - The Midrash notes that the letter Yud from the word Yarbeh came to Hashem to complain when Shlomo HaMelech violated the word. He argued that if Shlomo has the ability to be mivatel him what will happen in the future? Hashem promised him that Shlomo and thousands like him will disappear before a small piece of Yud will. Why was it the letter Yud that jumped first to complain? **Rav Hutner ztl.** explained that Yud speaks to the future (it literally takes the present and makes it future tense). When Yud spoke up, it was worried about the Jewish future -- that even if Shlomo were to be justified in his actions, what kind of effect would his actions have on the future generations. Hashem promised him that his future would be secure in the Torah.

**פֶּן־יָמוּת֙ בַּמִּלְחָמָ֔ה וְאִ֥ישׁ אַחֵ֖ר יַחְנְכֶֽנּוּ: And another person will inhabit it (20:5)** - It seems petty to send someone home for not dedicating the home. **Rashi** comments that it causes him distress. **Rav Gifter ztl.** explained that the Torah is trying to have us understand each person’s nature. When a person works hard at something and senses his efforts going to personal waste -- and more -- to someone else, it causes him distress. This is not a middos issue but rather of pain to the soul.

**מִֽי־הָאִ֤ישׁ הַיָּרֵא֙ וְרַ֣ךְ הַלֵּבָ֔ב Who is afraid and faint hearted (20:8)** - The Talmud (Sotah 44a) comments that the person who is afraid must be afraid of his own sins. Why do we send such a person home? Why not  just have him do Teshuva? **Rav Yisrael Grossman Shlita** explains that when the Gemara notes that the Avairos are in his HANDS it is a hint to the sins of theft. Teshuva for that cannot be achieved until the item is returned and sometimes we cannot figure out when it can be returned and to whom. Rather than let him freak out, we send the person home.

Haftara: **מִי־אַ֚תְּ וַתִּֽירְאִי֙ מֵֽאֱנ֣וֹשׁ יָמ֔וּת Who are you that you fear man (Yeshaya 51:12) - Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl** noted that Yirah is not something that exists only during war but also during peace. In fact, he notes, much of our motivation in life comes from fear of the future. The Torah teaches us not to fear man or man’s issues. Rather, when it comes to Torah life, a commitment of royalty is the commitment to standards above fear -- and above anyone else. The Torah wants us to commit to Hashem -- just as the king in the Parsha does, by studying Torah L’Maan Tilmad L’Yirah.