

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT SHOFETIM

6-7 SEPTEMBER | 4 ELUL

## Being Peaceful in Angry Times



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Part of this week's parasha speaks about ethics in war and serves as a reminder that no matter the scenario we are expected to behave with respect and honour.

*"When you surround a city for a long time, to wage war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by using an axe against them, for you may eat of them, and you shall not cut them down; is the tree of the field a man that it should enter the siege before you?"*

This paragraph is the source of a prohibition called *Ba'al Tashchit*

– wasting unnecessarily. I want to look at the purpose of this law. Why does it matter? Our enemies are our enemies, why should we care about their plants?

Rabbi Shalom Rosner brings two different approaches to this question.

Firstly, the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893) proposes that we cannot destroy anything which we may gain benefit from. Since everything God has created has a purpose, destroying it would be not using its full potential. The example in the Torah is a tree; as we can eat fruit from it, it should not be destroyed.

Secondly, Rabbi Rosner shares the approach of the *Sefer HaChinuch* (an anonymous work written in the 13th century). It says that being

involved in acts of destruction is bad for us, since "our heart follows our actions." It can make us less sensitive and turn us into cruel people.

Combined, these two ideas are very relevant for our lives. It is a message of peace, both for our environment and within ourselves. Everything around us, even things we wish weren't there, can teach us something. God tells us how to cope in these scenarios. It is not to get angry and call for destruction. Rather, we should distance ourselves from our frustrations, looking for ways to grow and learn instead. In such divided times, this is an aspirational way to live. Not to wish ourselves into a different place, but to be at peace where we are and to use it as an opportunity instead.

## Parasha Wordsearch

Find the words in the puzzle. Words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

- Trees**
- Judges**
- Levites**
- Kohanim**
- Horses**
- Justice**
- Enemies**
- Prophets**
- King**
- Inheritance**
- Chariots**
- Witnesses**

K	D	F	O	C	M	N	O	S	G	V	T
O	S	E	I	M	E	N	E	T	N	H	R
H	J	H	S	V	A	T	H	F	I	A	E
A	U	L	J	T	I	D	F	Z	K	U	E
N	S	W	V	V	O	C	U	S	A	D	S
I	T	I	E	M	Z	I	O	F	P	Z	W
M	I	L	K	R	H	O	R	S	E	S	G
K	C	W	X	L	B	I	I	A	F	R	E
Q	E	C	N	A	T	I	R	E	H	N	I
S	T	E	H	P	O	R	P	E	W	C	I
Q	F	D	W	I	T	N	E	S	S	E	S
Q	S	F	Y	J	S	E	G	D	U	J	K