

Parasha: Shofetim

Shabbat Info

Hebrew date: 4th Elul, 5784

Gregorian date: 6th – 7th September, 2024

London Shabbat times: 19:21 – 20:22

Special events: n/a

Upcoming events in the week: n/a

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Parasha Thinking



- 1) Imagine you were a judge. What would you do to make sure you weren't swayed incorrectly?
- 2) Do you think that magic card tricks are counted as sorcery?
- 3) How does the word, rule, link to the Parasha?

Key Parasha Information

Summary

Moshe (Moses) tells the Jewish people that they have to have judges and officers of the law in every city, once they reach the land of Israel. He explains that all judgements of law must be made without taking bribes or because of favouritism. If a crime is committed, not one but two witnesses (at least) have to have seen it, in order for it to be punishable and every case has to have the evidence investigated thoroughly.

Moshe told them that there would be Rabbis in every generation, who will be entrusted with applying the Torah's laws and they must follow what the Rabbis say.

In this parasha we also learn that we're not allowed to cast evil spells or use sorcery and we are reminded again, not to serve idols. We are also taught how a Jewish king is appointed and how a Jewish king must behave.

If someone is responsible for another person's death but it is completely not their fault (imagine a window cleaner checked their ladder, saw it was safe to climb, carried up his bucket of water and rested it on the pail shelf. Then a cat on the street being chased by a dog, bumped into the ladder and the bucket of water fell down and knocked someone out who was walking near by. The window cleaner is responsible because it's his bucket that caused the harm but he didn't ever intend to kill the person and even checked to make sure that the ladder was safe), the deceased's family may want to seek revenge. In this case, the person must go and live in an Ir Miklat (city of refuge), where they live until the passing of the Kohen Gadol (High Priest).

We are also taught the laws of war. There are some people who are exempt from being soldiers; if someone has built a home, planted a vineyard, just got married or afraid and lacking courage. If the Jewish people are going to wage war on a city, they must first offer peace. If they do conquer a city, they may not cut down any fruit trees.

If a body is found at the side of a road, the nearest city is held responsible, as they didn't meet his needs, such as providing him with shelter, food and water.

Discovery

Did you know that if a judge is offered a bribe, they must remove themselves from the case?

Did you know that there are some laws today that have to be decided by the Rabbis of the generation because it involves electricity or something that was unknown to mankind, when the Torah was given?

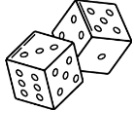
Did you know that the mother of the Kohen Gadol used to bake fine goods and provide clothing for all the people living in the arei miklat (cities of refuge)? This was so that none of them would pray for the Kohen Gadol's passing.



Games

1) Quiz

Ask questions about the Parasha Summary on sheet 1. Let each child choose what noise they will make to answer the question e.g. boing, tweet, etc.



2) Fruit Basket

Link: If the Jewish people capture a city, they may not cut down the fruit trees.

One child is 'it' and stands in the middle. Their chair is removed from the circle. The leader goes round and assigns all the remaining children a fruit; apple, orange, grape. The 'it' child calls out one of the fruits, e.g. grapes and all the grape children have to switch seats amongst themselves and the 'it' has to try to sit in one of their chairs. The last child remaining is the new 'it' and calls out a different fruit and whilst they swap, the 'it' tries to sit down. If the 'it' calls fruit basket, then all the children switch seats.

3) I'm Scared

Link: If a soldier was afraid of fighting, he was exempt from battle.

One person says something that people are commonly scared of, e.g. spiders, the dark etc. Each person round the circle says, "I'm scared" or "I'm not scared." The person who started the conversation has to guess if each person was telling the truth or pretending.

Story (One of the children can read this out loud – encourage them to use expression.)



"I'm regretting agreeing to this, Mum!" fretted Aleeza. "I actually think you're the perfect person for this. You have been really honest your whole life – even when you were a toddler, you didn't tell fibs. You'll be such a fair judge." said Mum, trying to calm Aleeza. "I don't know! What if I'm swayed by an external factor? What if someone threatens me or bribes me? What would I do?" Aleeza kept panicking. "My darling, you'll know that if someone threatens you or if they bribe you, it's not your true thoughts when you come to judge. They can be removed from the contest because they don't deserve to be there. I can't think of anything that would allow you to favour someone and make them win. Really!" reassured Mum, as she cuddled Aleeza.

They got in the car and Mum could tell that Aleeza was nervous, so she tried to distract her with music on the radio. When they got to the Hall, it was so hectic – sound checks, light checks, stage positioning, vocal warmups, putting out snacks and water; Aleeza didn't have a moment to think.

A couple of hours later, the talent contest was about to start and Aleeza and her two fellow judges; Oscar and Cami sat down at the desk in front of the stage. They had note paper to write on and ice water for hydration.

The contest started really strongly and after each act had finished, the three of them huddled together to share their notes and discuss the score that they would each be awarding.

The ninth contestant came on stage and the whole audience collectively said, "Aww". They felt sorry for the performer because he was on crutches. Everyone knew the story – he'd taken a huge tumble at the skating park and had been in terrible pain. An ambulance came and took him to the hospital and it was a couple of weeks before he could return to school. But here he was, tonight, strong and ready to participate. Despite his injuries, he was still fighting hard and putting in tons of effort. Respectfully, everyone waited for him to hobble to the microphone - he took a deep breath and started to sing...and he was truly awful. He sang completely out of key and some of the words were even wrong. He'd prepared some moves but they were completely out of time and everyone was cringing, just waiting for it to end.

When it finally finished, the three judges huddled together as usual and Oscar whispered, "I think we should give him top points, seeing as he's been through a huge ordeal!" "We can't!" argued Cami. "The audience will know it's fixed – he really doesn't deserve to win and think of the actual deserving winners – we can't do that, Oscar." Aleeza chose her words very carefully, "I agree, we can't be swayed by any matter – we have to judge the competition on talent but what we can do is recognise his efforts by giving him a separate award for resilience, right at the end of the show." The other two judges agreed ... and that's exactly what they did. When he didn't win, he was slightly disappointed but when he got the award for his amazing resilience, he was overjoyed. The judges were happy that they'd done the right thing.

1) What can we learn from this story and how does it connect to the Parasha?

2) Have you ever had to judge something impartially?

3) Do you think that it was right to give that contestant a resilience award?