



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Ki Teitzei (כִּי תֵצֵא, “When you go out”)**
- **Chapters: Deut. 21:10-25:19**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

In last week’s Torah reading (Shoftim), Moses defined an extensive system of justice for the Israelites and pointed to the coming Messiah who would be the rightful King of Israel. In this week’s portion, Moses returns to the immediate concern of life in the promised land by providing further laws to be enforced regarding civil life in Israel. In fact, Jewish tradition identifies no less than 74 of the Torah’s 613 commandments in this portion (more than any other), covering a wide assortment of rules related to ethical warfare, family life, burial of the deceased, property laws, the humane treatment of animals, fair labor practices, and honest economic transactions.

Of particular interest to us is the statement that a man who was executed and “hanged on a tree” (עַל־עֵץ) is under the curse of God (Deut. 21:22-23). According to the Talmud (Nezachim: Sanhedrin 6:4:3), the Great Sanhedrin decided that “a man must be hanged with his face towards the spectators” upon a wooden stake, with his arms slung over a horizontal beam. It should be noted that while this is technically not the same thing as the gruesome practice of Roman crucifixion, the reasoning based on this verse was apparently used to justify the execution of Yeshua (Mark 15:9-15; John 19:5-7; 15). The exposed body was required to be buried before sundown to keep the land from being defiled. Besides the shame and degradation of this manner of death, the one so executed would be unable to fall to their knees as a final act of repentance before God, thereby implying that they were under the irrevocable curse of God.

In this connection, we should note that Yeshua was falsely charged with blasphemy before the corrupt Sanhedrin of His day (Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:64; John 10:33) – an offence that was punishable by stoning (Lev. 24:11-16). However, since the Imperial Roman government then exercised legal hegemony over the region of Palestine, all capital cases were required to be submitted to the Roman proconsul for adjudication, and therefore we understand why the Jewish court remanded Yeshua and brought him to be interrogated by Pontius Pilate. Because Roman law was indifferent to cases concerning Jewish religious practices (i.e., charges of blasphemy), however, the priests further slandered Yeshua by illegitimately switching the original charge of blasphemy to that of sedition against Rome.



The Sanhedrin undoubtedly rationalized their duplicity because the Torah allowed for an offender to be impaled or “hung on a tree” (Num. 25:4), and since they were unable to carry out this judgment because of Roman rule in the area, they needed Pilate to condemn him to death by crucifixion (Matt. 27:31; Mark 15:13-4; Luke 23:21; John 19:6,15). Note that crucifixion is mentioned elsewhere in the Talmud (Nashim: Yevamot 120b) regarding whether a widow can remarry if her husband had been crucified, as well as by the Jewish historian Josephus. The Talmud furthermore alludes to the death of Yeshua where Yeshua is said to have been crucified on “eve of Passover” (Nezeikin: Sanhedrin 43a).

Haftarah for Ki Teitzei

The haftarah for parashat Ki Teitzei (i.e., Isa. 54:1-10) is the fifth of seven readings from the prophets that are consecutively read before Rosh Hashanah. These “haftarot of comfort” foretell of the restoration of the Jewish people and of the coming of the Messianic Era. In this week’s reading, the LORD compares the children of Israel to a wife who has long been barren. According to the sages, God tells the “Wife of His youth” to sing out with joy, for soon she will have a hard time keeping track of all her children! Many will return by means of a mighty wave of repentance that will sweep over the world when Jerusalem is finally redeemed and the Messiah Yeshua reigns in Israel.

Though the LORD hardened Israel for a season (Rom. 11:25-29), His love for her is constant and sure, and all His promises will be established. In the End of Days all Israel will be saved, in times “like the days of Noah.” But just as I God swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so He has sworn that Israel will be regathered and restored.



Parashah Questions

1. What does the phrase *ki teitzei* (כִּי יֵצֵא) mean (Deut. 21:10)? ¹
2. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house? (Deut. 21:13-14) ²
3. What percentage of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers? (Deut. 21:16-17) ³
4. *To be continued, IY”H...*



¹ *Ki teitzei* means “when you (singular) go out,” from the imperfect form of the verb *yatza* (יָצָא), “to go out.” This implies that the immediately following instructions concerning the taking of women captives (Deut. 21:10-14) were restricted to the soldiers who would be engaged in battle.

² So her captor will find her unattractive and decide not to marry a foreigner (because doing so might lead to marital strife and problems later on).

³ Two thirds and one half, respectively...



Discussion Topics

1. Honoring parents and sending away the mother bird are two commandments which the LORD issues a specific reward: “In order that He will bestow good upon you, and long life....” (Deut. 22:7) Why should sending away a bird, a simple act, share the status of a more significant commandment, namely, honoring your parents? What is the connection between these two mitzvot? ⁴
2. The Torah this week gives laws for returning lost property. Have you ever found a valuable object? What steps (if any) did you take to return it to its owner?
3. In our Torah portion we read: “Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16). This verse states the principle of individual responsibility. How do we understand this, however, in light of other verses in Torah that state that the LORD will “visit the guilt of the fathers upon the children, until the third and fourth generations” (Deut. 5:9)?
4. According to Maimonides, this portion of Torah contains 72 positive and negative commandments. What is a positive commandment? What is a negative commandment?
5. “If you come across a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. You shall let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long” (Deut. 22:6-7). According to the sages, this commandment exemplifies the Jewish value of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*: “the suffering of living beings,” and laws about preventing animal cruelty. Do you eat kosher? Do you eat meat produced by large, “Confined Animal Feeding Operations” (CAFOs)? What do you think is our responsibility to ensure that animals are not abused or mistreated?
6. Amalek is singled out in this Torah portion as the “eternal enemy” of the Jewish people (Deut. 25:17-19). Who were the “Amalekites” and why are we commanded to obliterate their memory?

For Next Week:

- Read Parashat **Ki Tavo** (Deut. 26:1-29:9)
- Read the Haftarah (Isaiah 60:1-20)
- Read the New Testament (Eph. 1:3-6; Rev. 21:10-27)

⁴ The *Oznaim L'Torah* says that when a person approaches a bird's nest to take the young, the mother bird could easily fly to safety. But instead, she stays by the nest in order to protect her young, putting herself in danger. To capture her in this position would be to take advantage of her self-sacrifice for her young, and the Torah forbids this. Surely, then, we must honor our parents, who sacrifice so much for us.