



August 15, 2026

Shoftim

2 Elul, 5786

Elul: the Month of Accounting

Earlier this week, I was under a great deal of pressure in the office and decided to retreat from it all for a short while. I chose to visit Great Falls Park, a stunning natural setting, which I had not seen in quite a few years. What a delight it was, even if only for a few hours, to sit and behold just a smidgen of G-d's wondrous handiwork.

The weather was perfect. A blue, almost cloudless sky was framed by lush trees, and a broad display of marvelous fauna stretched as far as I could see. Right in the center, the mighty Potomac River roared its way through the rocky terrain of Great Falls. My cellphone mercifully remained silent, so I relaxed under the shade of a towering oak and began to pen these thoughts on my phone.

The summer is winding down, schools are opening, and the world (and especially Washington) once again begins its intense and relentless rush forward.

But to where, and for what? Are our actions so much different than the churning waters of the Potomac River or the flock of geese parading about on its banks?

Such thoughts are not merely born out of my temporary frustration. They are indeed entirely appropriate and necessary during Elul, the preparatory month before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The month of Elul is also called "Chodesh Hacheshbon - The Month of Accounting," similar to the periodic inventory taking at a place of business.

We find in the Torah that after the eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, G-d confronted Adam with the expression "Ayeka - Where are you?" The commentators explain that G-d was saying: Adam, I created you for a mission on earth. At what stage of its completion do you find yourself?!

G-d's question to Adam is His question to all of us during this month.

We were not created to merely "exist" and get through life by following the dictates of our natural condition and self-sustaining impulses like all other creatures. Rather, we humans have been empowered to invest every action during the course of our daily living with meaning and purpose.

The river flows and drains and irrigates land, thereby achieving its purpose; the trees grow tall and provide shade, fruit and lumber, thereby achieving their purpose. The geese waddle and squawk, and that is sufficient for them as an aim in life.

But for us, merely "existing" is not good enough! Only we have been given tools to elevate and sanctify everything we come in contact with, and it is for this purpose that we were created.

There is no better time than now-before the dawn of a new year-to reflect on concrete steps we can take in our own lives to live up to this great task.

(by Rabbi Shmuel Kaplan from Eclectic Thoughts of Meaning)

Parsha Summary for Parshas Shoftim

1st and 2nd Aliyot: Moshe details the most important characteristics of a Judge: the ability to remain objective and the strength to refuse bribery. The singular focus of the Shofet must be to carry out the will of G-d as detailed in the Halacha. Nothing must deter him in carrying out his mission of justice.

Idolrous practices must be eradicated and punished. Idol worship represents the greatest perversion of justice by replacing divine justice with human failings and desires.

The Sanhedrin is our direct link with divine intent, and as stated in Pasuk 17:11, we view the rulings and interpretations of the Supreme Court as G-dly directives.

Our Monarch must be selected for his unyielding commitment to G-d, Torah, and the people. This is why he must write his own Sefer Torah and carry it with him at all times. He must be first and foremost a Shofet, a Judge.

3rd and 4th Aliyot: Moshe again addressed the place of the tribe of Levi, reemphasizing the care and attention due to them by the rest of the nation. They are our teachers. Without their instruction we will neither understand or be able to properly apply justice.

(continued on the other side)

5th Aliya: For justice to exist, it must be accepted as a divine ruling. Only G-d's justice can be trusted to take into account all variables and possibilities. Moshe instructed his nation regarding the true Navi – prophet and the false prophet. No other forms of divination can be used to ascertain G-d's justice, and all false prophets and methods of divination must be destroyed. The value of human life is determined by our system of justice, and Moshe reviewed the laws of the unintentional killing in contrast with the intentional murder.

6th and 7th Aliyot: The end of Parshas Shoftim discusses both proper and false witnesses, as well as the Torah's approach to warfare. It may be that the judicial quality of a nation can be ultimately assessed by its behavior during war, more so than during times of peace.

The Parsha concludes with the unique mitzvah of the Eglah Arufa and the process through which the community takes responsibility for the unsolved murders. This ceremony, which reflects the priceless value of life, might be the most eloquent expression of G-d's judicial system.

(by Rabbi Aron Tendler from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)



Sponsorship for the two flower displays on the Bima during Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Succot are available at \$250 each Yom Tov. Consider sponsoring the flowers in honor or in memory of someone. Please contact the Allan Genut at agenut@gmail.com or 443-722-1377 to make arrangements.

We happily wish Mazel Tov to
Rabbi Eli and Mrs. Sara Rivkah Itzkowitz and Family
 on the **Birth of their Granddaughter, Chaya Miriam,**
 born to their children **Tzvi Hirsh and Adina Shapiro.**
 Mazel Tov also to the great-grandparents
Mr. Marvin and Mrs. Sarah Itzkowitz.



Yahrzeits This Week:

Yehudah Buchwalter 6 Elul - Tuesday night / Wednesday for mother Faiga Leba bas Chaim HaCohen

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday — Rosh Chodesh Elul, 8 / 14 — 1 Elul
 Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8 / 15 — 2 Elul
 Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:43 a.m.
 Minchah — 7:35 p.m.
 Shiur — after Minchah
 Shkiah — 8:02 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:45 p.m.

Sunday, 8 / 16 — 3 Elul
 Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Monday, 8 / 17 — 4 Elul
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Tuesday, 8 / 18 — 5 Elul
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Wednesday, 8 / 19 — 6 Elul
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Thursday, 8 / 20 — 7 Elul
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Friday, 8 / 21 — 8 Elul
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Shabbat Candles — 7:35 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.