

Parshas Shoftim

August 17, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Right on the Money

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Is there a mandate in the Torah for taxes? I'm not referring to the required giving of tithes and charity. I'm talking about good ole government-imposed taxation to provide funds for, well, good ole government. Let's have a look.

The Torah, when discussing the rules and regulations of a Jewish monarch, places three limitations upon the king. One, a king cannot have too many horses, only enough to provide for his personal chariot. Two, the king cannot take too many wives - eighteen is the limit! - so that they not sway his heart away from G-d. Lastly, a monarch may not accumulate too much money, only enough to provide for those in the employ of the government.

At first glance, it seems like the Torah provides the king with a limited ability to levy taxes - enough to pay his workers and soldiers. If you dig a bit deeper, though, you will find that a king can be a lot more taxing upon his subjects.

I'm sure you noticed that a reason was mentioned for the first two royal restrictions, but none was provided for the prohibition against amassing too much money. Seemingly, the Torah does not give one. However, the Meshech Chochma (Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk; 1843-1926), posits that a closer look will, indeed, yield a reason. After listing the three restrictions, the Torah obligates the king to write two copies of the Torah, one to store away and one to have with him at all times. The purpose of this, says the Torah (Shoftim 17:19), is "so that he will learn to fear Hashem, his

G-d, to observe all the words of this Torah and these decrees, to perform them." The next verse continues, "So that his heart not become haughty over his brethren and not turn from the commandment left or right."

This final verse, says the Meshech Chochma, is not explaining only the need for the Torah scroll, but is also providing the reason for limiting the amount of money the king may accumulate. He may not amass too much wealth so that "his heart not become haughty over his brethren," while the Torah scroll will ensure that he "not turn from the commandment left or right." The words "over his brethren" can also be interpreted, based on the Hebrew wording of the verse, as "from his brethren." The Meshech Chochma explains the verse as saying that the king must not become haughty from his brethren, that is, from money collected from his subjects.

The Sifri further expounds enigmatically, "from his brethren" - but not for that of *hekdesh* (consecrated property for Temple use)." The Meshech Chochma explains this strange passage based on the above approach. While the king may not collect excessively from the citizenry to enrich himself, he may collect as much as he wishes for the purpose of providing funds for consecrated use, and, in fact, the Rambam (Laws of Kings 3:4) states that it is a mitzvah to collect money to fill the stores of the House of Hashem!

This approach provides a fascinating window into where the true responsibilities of a king lay. A king

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Stories for the Soul

Rush to Judgment

Based on a story on revach.net

Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik (1820-1892), known as the Bais Halevi, once met with a Russian judge. The judge said to Rabbi Soloveitchik, "Our laws are superior to the laws of your Torah. For example, we have a law against bribery. According to this law, if a judge is caught accepting a bribe, the judge is punished, as is the person who bribed him. According to the laws of your Torah, however, it is forbidden only to accept a bribe; the one who offers the bribe does not transgress any laws!"

"On the contrary," replied the Bais Halevi, "this law proves that the Torah is, in fact, superior in ensuring justice. According to your laws, the judge will not hesitate at all to accept a bribe, because he is confident that the one who offered him the bribe will not reveal this to anyone. He knows that if the matter is revealed, he will also be punished.

"However," concluded Rabbi Soloveitchik, "according to the laws of the Torah, a judge is wary of accepting a bribe lest the one who offered it reveal what he did!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses the importance of appointing judges of integrity and the many rules and regulations they must adhere to so as to ensure a fair system of justice. Integrity of the courts is a vital part of Torah Judaism, and the Torah goes to great lengths in setting up a system that will create that.

Kollel Happenings

POLICE BRUTALITY AT SEPT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Daniel Waitz, former law officer, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore they investigate this difficult subject. September 5th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at EDOS, 198 S. Holly St., at 12 pm. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: *Min haTorah* (Biblically), one is forbidden to consume meat from a kosher *beheima* (domestic mammal) which was cooked with milk. The Sages expanded this prohibition to include poultry as well. What halachic leniencies exist regarding poultry vis-à-vis meat in this regard?

A: 1. If poultry which was cooked with milk, it is *muttar bihana'ah*, one is permitted to derive benefit from the mixture. This is unlike meat, where benefit would be prohibited. 2. Since

the prohibition of poultry and milk is of Rabbinic origin, we may apply the rule of *sefeika likula*, ruling leniently in certain cases of legitimate doubt. (A competent halachic authority must, of course, be consulted.)

Sources: 1. Rema, Yoreh De'ah 87:1. 2. See Shach, Yoreh De'ah 98:7 and Pischei Teshuva 98:6.

This week's question: What category of food is permitted to be eaten, but refrained from by many on Shabbos?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part VII

Initially, Rabbi Sofer did not want a position in the Rabbinate, as he preferred not to make a living from his Torah knowledge and study. However, financial needs forced him to take a position, and, in 1794, he became the rabbi of the small town of Dressnitz (Strálnice).

In 1798, Rabbi Sofer was appointed to a much more prestigious position as the rabbi of Mattersdorf (currently Mattersburg), one of the seven Jewish communities, known as the Siebengemeinden or, in Hebrew, Sheva Kehillos. These seven communities were located in an area known as Burgenland, and

were, at the time, under the rule of the Esterhazy princes in Hungary.

Rabbi Sofer's reputation quickly grew in Mattersdorf, and he received offers from prestigious communities such as Prossnitz and Neustadt an der Waag. However, Rabbi Sofer remained in Mattersdorf until 1806, establishing a yeshiva there which attracted many students. In 1806, Rabbi Sofer received an invitation to become the rabbi of Pressburg (Pozsony; today known as Bratislava). Pressburg had been seeking a suitable rabbi for some time, and Rabbi Sofer was from among a short list of candidates by lots.

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may collect as much money as he wishes - and it is even a mitzvah! - for the needs of G-d. A king's role is to help his subjects set their priorities in order. To see that they are growing spiritually, and that their possessions are not being wasted frivolously, but are directed toward G-dly pursuits. By extension, those who are placed in a position of leadership - and who

doesn't find himself with some degree of leadership, where others are looking to him for guidance and inspiration? - would do well to learn this lesson. A major responsibility of a leader is to ensure that those under him are using their talents, abilities, and assets in a spiritually positive, growth-oriented fashion.