



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Shoftim

August 13, 2021

A Taste of Torah

Fit for a King

by Rabbi Dov Holczer

A famous politician once said, “Democracy is the worst form of government – except for all the others that have been tried.” This week’s parsha provides some insight into the ideal form of government.

The Torah discusses the mitzvah of appointing a king. The Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 497 and mitzvah 71) explains the importance of having a king. He explains that a king is an integral part of keeping the world orderly. A society with many different views, says the Sefer Hachinuch, will have a hard time getting things done, as people will disagree with each other, and not much will get done. Therefore, it is important to have a ruler or king on top whom everybody must obey, as this will allow things to proceed and be implemented. Although the king may make some bad decisions, the gain of the good things that get done outweigh them, for the arguments that occur when many people hold power result in many lost opportunities.

Additionally, authority is necessary to maintain peace and order. If nobody has any fear of a central authority, people will be at each other’s throats. Indeed, the Sefer Hachinuch notes that it is evident from Navi (Books of the Prophets; see Softim Ch. 9) that a society that has many rulers is a curse, as it is difficult to maintain peace.

It goes without saying that to meet these expectations, this authoritarian ruler must be worthy of the position, someone of sterling character who can be trusted to make smart and responsible decisions. However,

history shows us that there are many less-than-ideal monarchs. It is important to realize that ultimately, Hashem decides who will rule over a country, and He decides what type of ruler the people of a country deserve to have.

The ideas discussed thus far relate to both Jewish and non-Jewish kings alike. However, a Jewish king is held to a much higher standard. The initial founder of a dynasty is chosen by Hashem from among the Jewish People. There are numerous rules the king must follow, such as the limitations on wives, money and horses that he may have. He must keep a Torah scroll with him at all times. These mitzvos are intended to keep the king from becoming corrupted. A king, with his nearly unlimited power, must remember Hashem at all times, and not fall prey to the pitfalls his position may present him with. Indeed, the stories related in the Books of Navi are replete with kings who did, indeed, fail in their role as leaders of the Jewish People. Though many of them began as righteous individuals, they were unable to maintain their refined stature as they let their power affect their decision-making.

Most countries do not have a true monarch today. History tells us that many nations deposed their monarchs because they felt that unlimited power was not a successful way to govern people. Indeed, as noted earlier, if the king does not fear Hashem, the results can be disastrous. But the truth is that these ideas are not just for kings alone. Any position of stature

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Stories for the Soul

Whom Do You Fear

story from Rabbiwein.com

Yosef Mendelevitch, the famous Prisoner of Zion who helped bring down the “Evil Empire” of Soviet communism and atheism, relates that he decided to wear a kippah while in prison. He cut out a piece of cloth from his flimsy prison garb and placed the cloth on his head.

Though the prisoner warden ordered him to remove the cloth from his head, it being a violation of prisoner clothing regulations, Mendelevitch was hauled before the KGB commander of the prison. That worthy also ordered him to remove the kippah from his head and Mendelevitch again refused.

The KGB captain drew his revolver from its holster and pointed it at Mendelevitch and again gave him the order. Mendelevitch persisted in his refusal. The KGB captain now thought that perhaps his superiors in Moscow would not approve of his shooting a notoriously well-known prisoner for refusing to uncover his head.

Confused and embarrassed, he reholstered his pistol and placed his head down on the desk. Distraught, he asked Mendelevitch: “Are you not afraid of death?”

Mendelevitch responded: “I want to live and leave here. I don’t want you to shoot me, but there is a fundamental difference between you and me regarding the fear of death. I believe that death comes from the same hand that has given me life and therefore I do not allow it to overly terrify me.

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Kollel Happenings

THIS SUNDAY! DEDICATION EVENT/ CHANUKAS HABAYIS ON AUG. 15

The Kollel will hold a Celebration of Torah with a Kollel Torah Center Dedication Event/Chanukas Habayis on Sunday, August 15. Harav Malkiel Kotler shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, will grace the event and present the keynote address. Musical inspiration by Eitan Katz. Visit www.denverkollel.org for more details.

CORONA & VACCINATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 1 T4T

What does the Torah say about the COVID vaccine? Is one obligated to get vaccinated? How wary must one be of concerns of this fast-tracked miracle of medicine? Join this fascinating discussion and take a shot at pinpointing the proper approach on September 1. Visit www.denverkollel.org for further details.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: When would recitation of *al hamichya* on a beverage fulfill the *bracha acharona* obligation?

Answer: If one recited *al hamichya* after consuming wine or grape juice, whose proper *bracha acharona* is *al hagefen*, one's obligation has been fulfilled. Although, in most cases, reciting the wrong *bracha acharona* does not fulfill one's obligation and the correct *bracha* must subsequently be recited, in this case, the *bracha* is sufficient (*Be'er Haitiv* 208:23). (Reciting *Birkas Hamazon* would suffice; even the first blessing of

Birkas Hamazon suffices, and one who catches his error in middle should not recite more than that [Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 208:17.] This is because wine/grape juice is *maizin* (it sustains a person) in a similar fashion to products of the Five Grains (wheat, barley, spelt, rye, oats) upon which one recites *al hamichya* (Mishna Berura 208:76).

This week's question: When would recitation of *al ha'eitz* (normally recited on fruits of the Seven Species) on a beverage fulfill the *bracha acharona* obligation?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XII

Yet other Torah leaders, while not outright opposing the creation of the Agudah, did not actively participate or join in the organization.

Regardless, those who supported the Agudah believed that while there

were real concerns and drawbacks, it was more important for an umbrella organization to exist and represent the needs of the non-Zionist Orthodox communities in Europe.

A Taste of Torah

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and power presents these challenges. It is therefore imperative even in our times, when we are not privileged to have a Jewish king, to internalize the mitzvah of appointing a king, as well as the rules that accompany such a king. We must internalize the importance of having a leader whom we look to for guidance, to whom we report and who is responsible to keep us in line. This leader should be a decision maker whose words are followed, even though some may disagree, because it

is vitally important to have a person who is making a clear, final decision, rather than having the chaos of everyone doing as they see fit.

At the same time, the leaders themselves must regularly check in with themselves to ensure they are not getting carried away. They must monitor themselves and see that they are not succumbing to the perils and pitfalls in which an individual in power can become ensnared.

Stories for the Soul

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You think that death comes from the hand of Comrade Brezhnev and therefore you are terrorized by its very contemplation."

In this week's parsha, the Torah

describes that Jewish soldiers going to war must realize that their success in battle and, by extension, their survival, is dependent upon Hashem.

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