

***Shoftim***  
Jacob Kerzner

Shabbat Shalom!

This week's torah portion is Shoftim; Shoftim is a very unique part of the Torah, which includes the rules that the ancient Israelites had to follow to fight a war properly in the eyes of God. The Torah lists several categories of men who **cannot** fight in a war; these categories include: being engaged, but not yet married; just finished building a new house, but haven't had a chance to live in it yet; recently planting a vineyard, but haven't harvested it yet; and being scared.

I feel that God has created these rules, to give men the freedom of choice. If a man just built a new house or planted a vineyard, do you think that he would want to immediately go into battle, putting his life at risk? Personally, I feel that this man would want to take a couple years of leisure to enjoy his newly founded accomplishment. The same thing goes with the engaged man. God would want this man to enjoy his wife. I think that the last thing that God would want to do is force someone who is terrified of fighting, to go to war. One reason is: if the soldier really didn't want to fight, he wouldn't give it his all. This would mean that this man is putting his life on the line for something he never wanted to do in the first place. As a reluctant soldier in battle, he might try to run away, putting both himself and the entire army at risk. I also think that God was trying to be fair to these men; giving them some time to cherish the magnificent things life has to offer.

One crucial element to living a happy life is relaxation, and you won't find that while fighting a war. That's why he created a rule for all these types of men. I feel very strongly about this topic, because I can relate this to the present. Today, there are many soldiers in the world who left their family, houses, and other things behind to protect their country. In my opinion, these people deserve a few years to enjoy these things. Inspired by this set of laws in Shoftim, I have decided to aid families in Israel; mainly wives with children, who have a husband away in combat or who had died in war. The association that I will be funding is the All 4 Israel foundation. I decided to raise money to help the lives of some of the families who face many hardships every day. Luckily, my fundraiser was a success; standing outside Crown with my brother, I managed to raise money toward the All 4 Israel charity. By doing this, I think it will give everyone a better understanding of what God is trying to bring about in the world, as it is said in my portion, Shoftim.

Concluding my D'var Torah, I want to take the time to thank: Rhonda Holtman for my bar mitzvah studies, Mrs. Fox for helping me write this D'var torah, Rabbi Small for leading this service and helping me finish this d'var torah, my parents who have been always there for me, and inspiring me to keep faith in my Jewish religion, my brother, David for assisting me on my bar mitzvah project, and Cantor Cohn for tutoring me on being a bar mitzvah. Now please turn to page 1088 in the big red book.