



Kinder Torah®

For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table

Parshas Shoftim



Citizen's Patrol

In Biblical times the system of enforcing the *halacha* (Torah law) was different from nowadays. *Shoftim* (judges) made the legal decisions, and *shotrim* (watchmen) enforced them. The Sefer HaChinuch explains that there were *shotrim* (watchmen) everywhere, even in the marketplaces, to make sure that the Jewish people conducted their lives in accordance with the Torah. Even their business practices had to be *al pi halacha* (according to Torah law). In our days we do not have *shoftim* and *shotrim*. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l says that a person must be his own *shofet* and *shoter*. He should judge himself to see if his deeds are correct. And he must watch over himself to see that he indeed does what the judge said to do.

Kinderlach . . .

We have to do what is right all of the time. Even if no one is watching. Sometimes it seems like everyone is doing the wrong thing. We are tempted to go along with the crowd. Remember, our watchman is always on the lookout, watching over us.

Always Watching

Once the Chofetz Chaim zt"l was traveling with another man. The other man wanted to pick fruits from other people's orchards and fields. He asked the Chofetz Chaim to keep an eye out for him, and shout out if someone came along. The man started to pick the fruits and the Chofetz Chaim started to shout. Naturally, the man stopped picking. They continued traveling. After a while the man asked the Chofetz Chaim again to keep an eye out while he picked fruit. Again, as soon as the man started to pick the Chofetz Chaim started shouting. This scenario repeated itself a few more times. Finally, the man asked the Chofetz Chaim, "Why is it that wherever that we stop, as soon as I begin to pick fruit, someone begins to watch?" The Chofetz Chaim said, "That Someone is

Hashem and He is always watching us." Kinderlach, we can never forget that Hashem is constantly watching us.

Consistency

The Torah says in Devarim 18:13, "You shall behave simply with your God". Do not try to make tricks with Him, or compromises. Rav Ahron Kotler zt"l says that the Torah is teaching us work out the inconsistencies in ourselves. Behaving simply means being consistent all of the time. Our actions cannot show contradictions. We may not behave one way inside the home, another way outside of the home, and a third way in shul. We can not speak one way to close friends and neighbors, and differently to strangers. How often does it happen that we are in the midst of an argument speaking harshly to a family member? Then the telephone rings and we answer sweetly, "Hello. How are you? So good to hear from you!"

Kinderlach . . .

Consistent behavior is the week's goal. To whom do we behave the nicest? Is it Imma? Or, perhaps our teacher? Maybe the storekeeper? How about grandma? Is it our neighbor's Imma? Make a note of whom you behave the nicest towards, and how you behave towards them. Then try to behave that way to everyone.

Appreciate, Do Not Waste

The Torah writes in Devarim 20:19, "When you besiege a city . . . do not destroy its trees." The Sefer HaChinuch explains the mitzvah as follows. Hashem created a beautiful world for us to live in. It is forbidden to destroy anything in this world for no reason. Destruction, vandalism, and waste show a lack of appreciation of the gifts that Hashem has bestowed upon us in this world.

Kinderlach . . .

The flowers, plants and trees in our neighborhood are some of Hashem's most beautiful creations. Let us take extra special care of them. No one benefits when public property is destroyed.

A Strong Foundation

Kinderlach, did you ever watch the workers build a big building? Do you know what the first step is? The tractors dig a deep hole in the ground. Then the workers lay down a strong foundation. Without the foundation, the building could not stand. The year begins on Rosh Hashanah, the first of Tishrei. The beginning of the year serves as the foundation for the entire twelve months. With a strong start, it is much easier for the year to go well. If the year begins on a weak note, then we are always trying to catch up. In order to have that strong foundation in Tishrei, the first month, we must begin preparing in Elul, the last month of the previous year. We cannot hope to make a strong start in Tishrei, without preparing ourselves in Elul.

Kinderlach . . .

Last week we began our tshuva (mistake correction) process by making small changes in our schedules. We said that we would report back this week. How are you doing? Are you maintaining your improvements? If you are not, do not get discouraged. As Shlomo Hamelech writes in Mishley (24:16), "Though the tsaddik may fall seven times, he will arise." Pick yourself up and try again this week. You can succeed.

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