



Project: Sermon Resource for Shluchim
 Distribution Date: August 22, 2006/ כ"ח אב תשס"ו
 Parsha: Shoftim / שופטים

בי"ה

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1. Is individual responsible for own wellbeing? Or, is obligation on society to protect citizens, particularly those who can't care for themselves?



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2. Examine custom of washing hands after funeral.

- *One reason: Remove the impure spirit by being in the presence of corpse. Therefore, we wash hands, so that no impurity enters house.*



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3. Another reason: "Eglah Arufah," literally, "the Calf of the Broken Neck."

- *"Someone slain is found lying in the open and the identity of the slayer is not known."*
- *Five elders from the great Bais Din in Yerushalayim travel to the field where the corpse had been found.*
- *Measure its distance between the two nearest cities, identifying the one that is closer.*
- *They bury the corpse precisely where it lay and return to Yerushalayim.*
- *ALL the elders of the city closer to the corpse (literally ALL) bring a calf to a river, where it's sacrificed.*
- *They all wash their hands while reciting, "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done."*



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4. *Rambam: "Just as our hands have been made clean by this water, so our hands are clean from the murder of this corpse."*



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5. Ramban: Eglah Arufah is origin of washing hands upon leaving cemetery, meaning, I wash my hands of his blood. I have no responsibility toward his death."



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6. Talmud: "Could we imagine that rabbis, would be obliged to announce that their hands had not shed innocent blood, that they had been suspect?"

- *We don't suspect that they are responsible in any way, as they say: "he did NOT come to us and we let him depart without provisions, nor did we see him and let him leave without a proper escort."*
- *Yerushalmi even stronger: elders announce, "We did not have the criminal in custody and then let him go free, enabling this murder."*
- *Their comments just show the high level of responsibility that leaders must take. They say that HAD THEY NOT made those provisions, they WOULD HAVE been responsible for the murder.*

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7. Torah: Responsibility that leadership of community must take.

- *Must care for public, to say that they have not spilled innocent blood.*
- *If they did not provide such basic provisions for the travelers. Then entire community guilty.*



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8. What does this section of today's Parsha teach us of Avodas Hashem?

- *Thousands of children lost to Jewish people because parents provide with excellent secular education, but no Jewish education.*
- *Such a child, the Rebbe says, is like a fish in an aquarium. This fish may appear beautiful and well-tended, but not in natural habitat.*
- *Jewish child's natural habitat is in the living waters, the great ocean, of life, Torah.*



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9. Aquarium fish requires special care or dies.

- *When fish lives in living water, one need not care about welfare, because it's in its natural habitat.*



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10. Our responsibility: Identify Jewish children who live in aquarium and immerse them in natural habitat. This is not solely parents' responsibility. It is on all of us, for we are obliged to do everything toward the day that we might say, "Look at the great generation that we have raised!"

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