

## SHOFTIM

### ABOUT THE STORY OF SHOFTIM

Usually read in the month of Elul, Shoftim is a time when we look back on the year and identify those things which we have done that we need to change. If anything went wrong, however big, or small, during the year, it's because we didn't do our job in the previous Elul—that is, we didn't do the process of teshuvah correctly. Teshuvah allows us to go back, understand what caused us to act badly, admit our mistake, and request that the same situation occur again in the future so that we will have an opportunity to act differently, thus enabling us to make our correction.

### MICHAEL BERG ON SHOFTIM

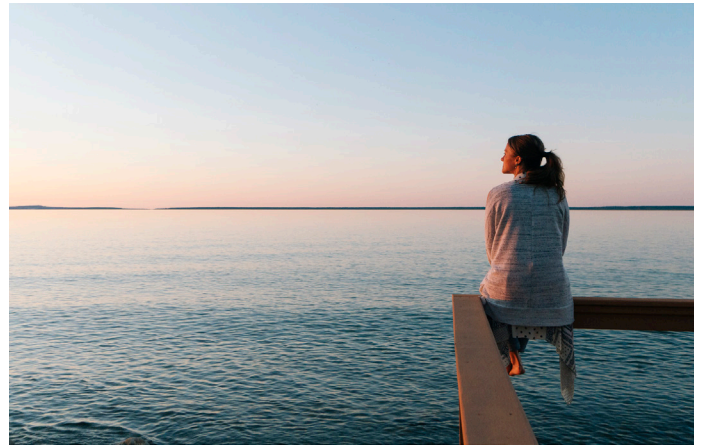
On the Shabbat of Shoftim, in the reading of Shoftim, the Ramban, Nachmanides, reveals a very important secret about this verse, which says, "You have to chase after justice." He gives first, as he often does, a commentary and explanation based on the literal understanding of those words. The Ramban quotes from a book of kabbalistic secrets called the *Bahir*, which Rav Nehunia ben HaKana, the author of the Ana Beko'ach, wrote. He says there is a secret that is explained, based on this verse.

In the *Bahir*, from section 74 and section 75, it explains that when it says *tzedek*, which is literally translated as "justice," it really means "the rule of justice of this world." It's not justice in the physical world; it's referring to the judgment, the *din*, that an individual brings upon himself when he does negative actions, and in so doing, awakens general negativity that the world goes through. Therefore, what the Torah is referring to here is the judgment that exists over the individual or over the world.

Let's assume an individual, just to use a number, has ten aspects of judgment that he has created. Every time he looks into himself when he goes through the process of *teshuvah* (a process of introspection) and

goes deeper and finds more, he remembers more negativity and things he has to transform, he takes from that reservoir of judgment and uses it up. This is one of the reasons the process of judging oneself is not just important to becoming a better person or perfecting our vessel; what it actually does is use up the reservoir of judgment that is meant to come down on the individual.

We now understand why it says, "You run after the judgment of yourself..." Even if we think we cannot find aspects of negativity, we have to force ourselves to run after ways to find negativity within us this month, because every aspect of negativity we find takes away from that reservoir of judgment that is going to manifest in our life. To the degree that we judge ourselves in this month is to the same degree we will draw life, because no force of death, no force of judgment, is left in the Upper Worlds. It's a tremendous secret and one of the gifts of this Shabbat that I hope we don't just understand, but also truly come to feel.



### CONSCIOUSNESS FOR NEXT WEEK

The upcoming portion of Ki Tetze compels us to engage in deep introspection and regret our past negative actions. In feeling the pain our negativity causes others and the world, and truly regretting our actions, we remove the energy of the desire to receive for the self alone from the world.

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## CANDLE LIGHTING

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We light candles at specific times and with pure intentions in order to establish a connection to the energy available. Like flipping the light switch upon entering a dark room, the simple act of lighting candles initiates a flow of energy.

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## EVENING CONNECTION (KABBALAT SHABBAT)

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On Friday nights, we sing songs, recite kabbalistic prayers, and consume blessed wine and bread. These acts invite the energy of Shabbat into our lives and enhance our connection to the Light.

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## SHABBAT DINNER

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The first of three meals, we bless the wine and bread before enjoying our Shabbat dinner. These kabbalistic blessings help us connect with our inner desire to share.

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## BIRKAT HAMAZON (PRAYERS AFTER EATING)

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After eating the first meal, we engage in the Birkat Hamazon prayer. Reciting this prayer shows our appreciation for the food and our connection to the Light.

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## MORNING CONNECTION (SHACHARIT)

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On Saturday mornings, we gather to recite prayers and meditate on our relationship with the Light. The energy awakened by the Morning Connection awakens the spiritual force of mercy, which helps keep chaos and judgment from our lives.

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## CONSCIOUSNESS LECTURE

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In the Consciousness Lecture, we learn about the portion of the week that will be read during the Torah reading. This lecture helps us truly understand the forthcoming teachings and explains in detail the kabbalistic principles behind the stories.

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## TORAH READING

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The Torah is read aloud, in Hebrew, by a Kabbalah Centre teacher. The stories of the Torah are actually codes that, when decoded, transmit energy and repel negativity for the week to come.

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## AFTERNOON CONNECTION

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In the Afternoon Connection, we engage in prayers that strengthen our connection following the reading of the Torah.

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## SHABBAT LUNCH

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During Shabbat Lunch, we sing a number of songs in Aramaic and Hebrew, many of which were written by history's greatest kabbalists. They help us manifest the Desire to Share aspect of the Morning Connection.

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## THIRD MEAL

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The third meal is the highest point of Shabbat, known for its tremendous healing properties. This includes a blessing for hand washing, a connection with bread, and special prayers and meditations for creating positive change within ourselves and all of humanity.

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## EVENING CONNECTION

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The Evening Connection consists of unique kabbalistic prayer and song. These recitations bring Shabbat to a close and help us determine our energy for the new week to come.

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## HAVDALAH

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Havdalah refers to the verbal declaration made at the end of Shabbat that is recited once the sun sets on Saturday night. We say the Havdalah to demonstrate our appreciation for the Light, and to ask it for spiritual sustenance in the upcoming week.