SUMMARY OF KI TETSE

This weekly section, KI TETSE, contains the largest number of precepts in the entire Tora: a total of 74 Mitzvot. We will now see some of these commandments.

Continuing with the topic of the previous Parasha, the laws of war, the Tora forbids a Jewish soldier to abuse a woman who is a prisoner of war (let’s say in passing that there is no precedent for such humane laws towards the enemy such as those indicated in the Torah). If a soldier desired a captive woman he had to formally marry her (after her conversion) and he could not mistreat her or discriminate against her in the future. She should become part of his family and the husband can not deny her rights or her children’s rights. All of these regulations were intended in the first place to discourage the soldier from cohabiting with the captive woman.

The Tora then explains the case of a son who is rebellious and extremely violent towards his parents and the theoretical possibility that he will be executed for his crimes against society.

The Tora discusses the laws of execution and the respect that must be given to a lifeless human body -even that of a criminal- that should be buried immediately. It was usual among other peoples and civilizations to expose the bodies of criminals in public, even for several days, so that the rest of the population could learn a lesson.

The laws of the return of lost property and the assistance that must be provided when an animal collapses under its load are described.

Cross-dressing is prohibited.

The Tora explains what to do when one finds a bird’s nest with eggs or chicks.

The laws regarding the safety fences and railings that must be built in places of risk, such as a roof, are detailed.

The law of tzitzit, the fringes on the corners of garments, is described.

The subject of adultery and rape is discussed. The Tora mentions the prohibition of incest and the case of Mamzer, or illegitimate child: that is particularly when a married woman (even if she has separated herself from her husband, but did not receive yet the Get, i.e., the official religious document of divorce) has a child with another man.
Some laws relating to marriage with other nations are described, specifying in which cases conversions are allowed and in which cases they are not.

The Tora explains the case of divorce. And the case of a newly married man who is exempt from serving in the army for the first year.
Some of the laws of loans and collateral are mentioned.
The Tora teaches the lender to be sensitive and compassionate towards the debtor.
The Tora also mentions the laws regarding wages and the right of the worker to receive his salary on time.
The Tora indicates that preferential treatment should be given to widows and orphans. In other civilizations, this preferential treatment was reserved for the nobles and the aristocracy. But the God of Israel cares for and protects the weakest.
The Tora teaches us to be honest in our business dealings and to make sure that the weights and measures that we use, as well as all our business practices, are fair and honest.
Finally, the Tora exhorts us to be aware of Amaleq, the archetype of the anti-Semite, and never forget that Amaleq’s intention is to eliminate us, as he tried to do when we left Egypt. Ignoring Amaleq’s anti-Semitic vocation, and its irrational hatred can be lethal for the individual Jew and for the Jewish people.