



Zion Will Be Redeemed Through Justice

My daughter is almost finished with her studies for a degree in Economics, with a speciality in SHAMA'UT - property appraisal. She is looking for a part time job where she can use her skills. Actually her skills would be needed for some of the topics mentioned in this week's portion.

People need a property appraiser when they are buying a property and want to know exactly how much the property is worth so they can know how much to offer and how high they are willing to go. They also need an appraiser if any damage has been caused to their property. For example if someone built a new building or added a floor near their home and blocked their air and their view, or someone built a simcha hall in a residential neighborhood right near private houses changing the atmosphere of the neighborhood with increased noise, dirt and traffic. How much do these building projects affect the property value of the houses next to them? How does one evaluate these types of damage?

Our Torah includes laws related to these issues of responsibility and compensation, which are elaborated on in the Talmud in Seder NEZIKIN. The principles of these HALACHOT

are based on verses from our portion, Mishpatim, that bring lively examples from everyday life.

The Torah mentions three "categories of damages - AVOT NEZIKIN": the ox (SHOR), the well (BOR), and the fire (EISH). The ox is subdivided into three types: the horn (KEREN), tooth and leg (SHEN and REGEL). Each category of damage has different rules as to the amount of compensation that must be paid for the damages done to others or their assets. Rabbis know the halachic principles of how to calculate damages. They may also need to get the opinion of an appraiser to know the exact value of a certain type of damage in the current market. Even if the damage was caused with no purposeful intent to harm, or because of neglect, one is liable to pay restitution to the injured party.

The Talmud teaches that one who wants to become a religiously pious person should be careful about the laws of damages (Baba Kama 30a). Most people will not associate these kinds of laws related to calculating monetary reimbursement for damages with anything Divine and Holy. But in actuality in Judaism, "religion" is not confined to prayers and Temple rituals. One who is negligent with someone else's property is as irreligious as someone who is lax in their Shabbat observance, or the laws of Kashrut. Dealing justly with monetary matters is a prerequisite to the national safety of Israel as we learn from the prophet Yeshayahu. He warned about impending catastrophe and exile - but also says that "Zion will be redeemed through justice, and its captives through righteousness - (Yeshayahu 1:27).

Reading this week's portion we should remember to be careful not to cause damage to our fellow Jew or his possessions, and if we do, to recompense him as soon as possible.

SINCE THE PORTION TALKS

about the laws related to a hole left uncovered in a public place, this week's recipe is for a hole cake - not to be confused with a whole cake. This is a regular whole cake that you poke holes in after it is baked. The holes are then filled with a liquid or filling - like pureed fruit, chocolate cream, or pudding - to infuse extra flavor into every bite - just like the laws in the portion of Mishpatim teach us that the Torah infuses holiness into every aspect of our lives..

LEMON HOLE CAKE WITH BLUEBERRY SAUCE

- 4 eggs
- 1 cups sugar
- ½ cup oil
- 2 cups flour
- 4 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ cup water
- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp lemon zest (1 to 2 lemons)
- 1 tsp Vanilla

For the Lemon Blueberry Sauce

- 1½ cup frozen blueberries
- 1 large lemon (zest and juice)
(about 1 tsp zest and 1 Tbsp juice)
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp corn starch
- pinch of salt

½ tsp. vanilla extract

Beat together the eggs and sugar until thick. Gradually beat in the oil until smooth. Add the flour, baking powder and salt, and then the water. Beat just until smooth, and then mix in the lemon juice, zest, and vanilla. Bake for about 40 minutes, at 180°C or until the cake tests done. In the meantime mix lemon juice and cornstarch. Add blueberries, lemon zest, sugar, and salt and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture starts to bubble and thicken (about 12 minutes). Remove from heat and stir in the vanilla. Set aside.

When cake is cool use the handle of a wooden spoon to poke holes into the cake that are about an inch apart. Drizzle the blueberry lemon sauce on top. Spread the sauce into an even layer over the cake allowing some of the sauce and blueberries to get into the holes. Serve like this or you can add a layer of whip cream or your favorite glaze.