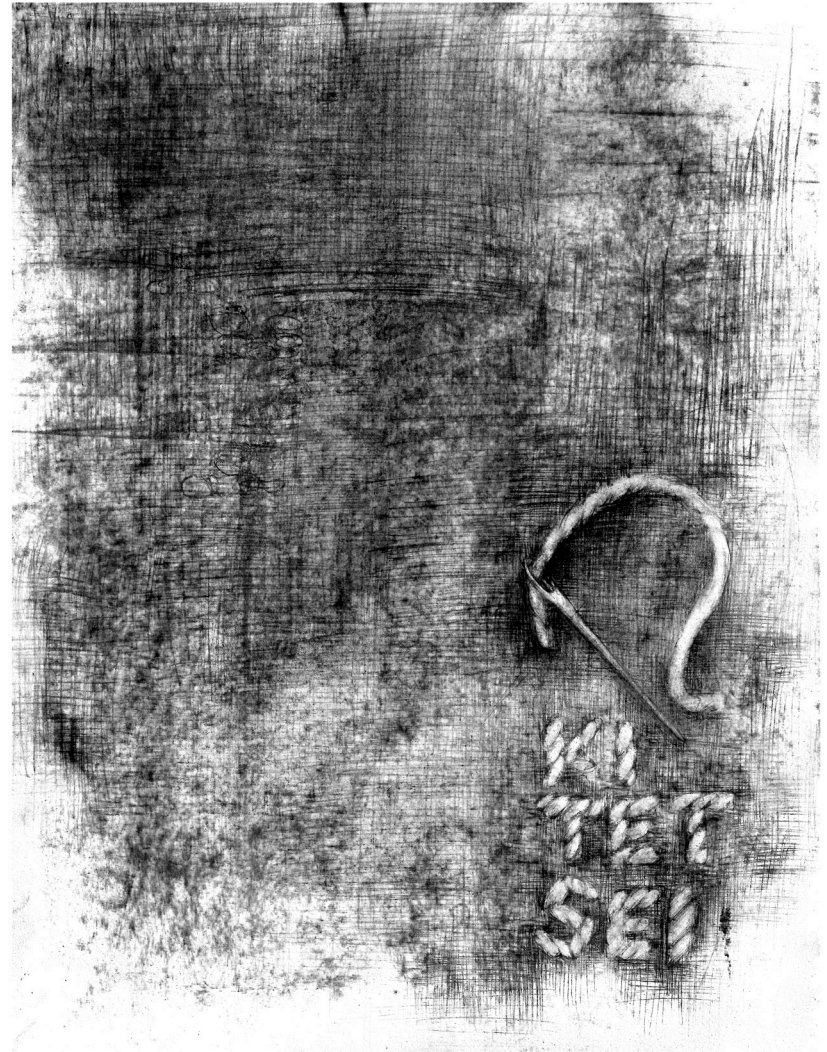


B"H

THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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Q1: What does it mean for laws to have eternal significance in a changing world?

Q2: How do these laws anticipate social change (if at all)? Do they imply an imperative to maintain a certain form of society - so the laws can still apply?

Q3: How could a law evolve to address changing circumstances, or marginal cases, while remaining in some sense the same law?

Q4: How do you recognize the central thrust of a law, and isolate it from circumstantial or secondary details?

Q5: What can we tell about the world these laws are responding to, and how do they aim to shape it?

Q6: How do you explain laws that apply to very specific cases (e.g. a woman who grabs a man's testicles during a fight)? Do they emerge from common scenarios of the time? Or uncommon, but very prominent ones? Are they meant to apply more broadly in some way, and if so why is the paradigm expressed by one case?

Q7: How many echoes of stories from narrative portions of the Bible can you find in these laws?

Q8: What do you think is more important: What the laws are, or who is in charge of applying them? The content of legislation, or the form of government?

Q9: Do you think any of these laws are designed to discourage the behavior they prescribe? If so, why not just forbid them outright?

Q10: Tell a story! Pick out any of these laws and make up a case where it might be applied. Supply motivations for the characters, and try to imagine how the law affects them.

Q11: What would these laws look like if they were rephrased to be written like the ten commandments (Do...don't) instead of as they are (in the case of...do/don't...)?

Q12: Imagine doing what the Torah is doing: Take existing social norms and apply new rules to them to shape them differently. What would you come up with?