



Parshat HaShavuah

משפטים

MISHPATIM

FEBRUARY 9, 2013

כ"ט שבט תשע"ג

A PUBLICATION OF

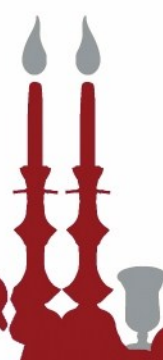


Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting
5:51
S"Z Kriat Shema
9:47

Sunset
6:10
Motzei
Shabbat
6:46



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

MRS. AMY HOROWITZ 1-2

GIVING NOT GETTING MRS. AMY HOROWITZ

ELYSE TRIPP ('14)

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Parshat Mishpatim is chock full of mitzvot, one of which is the obligation to lend money to someone in need. The Sefer HaChinuch,

SOFIA PEIMANI ('09)

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whose entire purpose is to identify and explain the reasons for each mitzvah, suggests that this mitzvah is very similar to that of giving

RALPH BETESH ('13)

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tzedaka to the poor.

Although accepting a loan may be slightly less embarrassing to the recipient than accepting tzedaka, the Chinuch ascribes the same purpose to both: to ingrain in us feelings of charity and loving-kindness.

This seems very strange. Why would we need two mitzvot that share one purpose? Furthermore, if that purpose is to teach us how to give to others, is tzedaka not the better choice because it entails us giving up something completely? Lending someone money is not really such a great sacrifice, considering we can expect to eventually get our money back!

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, the author of the *Sichot Mussar*, explains that, in fact, the opposite is true! When we give tzedaka we get something in return, whereas when we loan money we get absolutely nothing back. How does this work?

When we give tzedaka, we give away our money, but in return we get the satisfaction of knowing that we are beneficent, we are generous, we are praiseworthy. When we give someone a loan, we are not making such a huge sacrifice because we expect to get the money back. A loan is merely a business deal! Nobody considers a banker "generous" or "benevolent" when they sign the terms of their mortgage. Therefore, when loaning money, we cannot feel praiseworthy or beneficent. We literally get nothing in return.

Continued page 2





Mrs. Horowitz continued

This is why, says Rav Shmulevitz, we need both mitzvot—tzedaka and lending money. While the purpose of both may be to teach us to give to others the obligation to lend money contains a unique lesson: the perfect mitzvah is the one that is done completely for its own sake, with no expectation of getting anything in return.

May we all merit having more than we need so that we can share it with others!

DETAILS IN THE FABRIC

ELYSE TRIPP ('14)

After last week's parsha, Yitro, in which Bnei Yisrael receive the Ten Commandments, we are expecting an equally thrilling and revolutionizing parsha to follow. Rather, we are met with the nitty-gritty details of Jewish life, which pales in comparison to the exhilaration felt last week. How can we go from last week's parsha of Yitro to the much less awe-inspiring parsha of Mishpatim?


Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks brings a story of Arne Jacobson, the architect of Oxford University. Not content with the final product, he continued to insure perfection of every minute detail—designing the cutlery, creating the crockery used in the kitchen, and supervising the planting of every shrub in the garden. Many were confused by his obsession over these details. It would seem much simpler to allow one of his assistants to be bothered with the final, seemingly unimportant details. When asked about this perplexing situation, Jacobson responded: "God is in the details."

This is a major tenant in Judaism. Judaism is not only holy in its broad vision, but also in the details in which the vision is carried out. At Har Sinai the Jewish people are granted access into the bigger picture, but are also commanded the way in which to fulfill that picture. The greatness of Judaism is not only in the vision of freedom and compassion, but also in the delineated form in which it is brought down. Freedom is more than just an idea. It means giving the slaves the seventh day of the week for rest. It means letting a slave go after six years. These laws do not abolish slavery, but they do create conditions in which people learn to abolish it. Slavery is not a social status; rather, it is a condition that happens through mistakes or suffering, and one day will be ended. These laws achieve freedom, not only in its theory, but also in living practice.

At the highest levels of spirituality, Hashem is found in the innermost depths of the human soul: but He is equally found in classrooms, shopping centers, and grocery stores. Hashem is wherever you let Him be. Hashem is where you put the effort and focus on the minutiae in life. Hashem understands that without the details, there would be no Judaism. Judaism would be only a philosophical idea, with Ten Commandments.

In Mishpatim we are privileged to learn the ways in which we can concretize our beliefs into daily practices and rituals where Hashem is let in. Without the details, the vision floats in heaven. The details are the mediums in which Hashem's presence is brought down from a lofty philosophy to an actual way of life. Yes, the general principles in Judaism are divine, but so are the details. Yitro contains the vision, but Mishpatim contains the details.





“מזור לדור”

TORAH FROM OUR ALUMNI

SENSITIVITY TO THE SLAVES

SOFIA PEIMANI ('09)

In the previous parsha Bnei Yisrael had just experienced the most amazing occurrence of receiving the Torah. This week's parsha is a continuation of the halachot of the Torah. As it states, "And these are the laws that you should place in front of the Jewish people" (Shmot 21:1).

One would think the first mitzvah after the Ten Commandments would be something so fundamental to our faith such as Shabbat, or perhaps "ve'ahavta ler'ekha lamokha," loving your fellow like you love yourself. However, the first mitzvah is "When you buy a Jewish slave..." and goes on to explain the laws of ownership over slaves.

In *Oznayim L'Torah* it is mentioned that when Bnei Yisrael stand before Hashem at Har Sinaï, they still feel the pain and the abuse of slavery. They know how it feels to be persecuted. Therefore, why would parshat Mishpatim start with a mitzvah about slavery that would be so obvious to them?

In Sefer Mishlei, perek 30 Shlomo Ha' Melech writes that there are three things that cause the earth to tremble. One of those three is when a slave is promoted to the position of king. When this happens, the earth shakes out of fear of the consequences. Why? What is so terrible about a slave that ascends to power?

One would think that from his years of slavery, a slave could identify and sympathize with the needs of the common person. However, human nature seems to show otherwise. Often when a person comes to power he forgets the life he used to live. He loses his sensitivity and understanding. From here we see that the timing for this commandment is perfect!

Hashem wants the Jews to remember where they come from as a way to remind them to keep their sensitivity towards slaves. The Torah is urging us to overcome the biases that we might have as a result of our past experiences, and to look upon others with a fair, honest, and objective outlook.

Even if we can relate to others' hardships, we must never compare our situation to theirs. We must give that person our sympathy and assistance, regardless of how we ourselves fared in similar situations.

Be'ezrat Hashem we should have the sensitivity to sympathize, understand, and care for not only those around us but all of Bnei Yisrael. When asked for help, we should provide the proper assistance out of love. Be'ezrat Hashem, HaKadosh Baruch Hu should always put the right words in our mouths when we are trying to help others. In this *zechut*, we should merit to bring Moshiach *bimhera byamenu!*

Based on the teachings of: Rabbi Meyer Yedid and Rabbi Eli Mansour



STAY AWAY RALPH BETESH ('13)

Some might consider Parshat Mishpatim “boring.” However, a deeper investigation reveals that Mishpatim contains some very interesting laws.

For instance, not many people know that this week’s parsha is where we are told not to eat meat and milk together—however the Torah does not exactly say this. The actual law in the Torah is not to cook a calf in its mother’s milk. This means that technically we should be able to cook animals with milk that is not from their mother, to eat milk and meat together and also be able to benefit from the mixture. Furthermore, there is no prohibition from the Torah that the Jewish people cannot eat chicken and milk together, the prohibition is very specific and deals with meat (poultry is not considered to be meat). So, why do we not do any of these things?

This law is called a “Hok”—given that there is no logical reason for the mitzvah. Hashem wants us to follow laws even without providing us with a clear explanation that sometimes makes the mitzvah easier to follow. There is no loophole in not following the mitzvah because there is no reason to go around. Still, our sages have attempted to provide a brief explanation for the mitzvah.

Rav Hirsch suggests that the reason we cannot mix the two is because meat represents an animal in its flesh and the milk represents the reproductive side of an animal. These two parts of life are combined in animals, but being humans, we are supposed to act like humans and not animals—in that vein, we separate the two. Similarly, before the Jews are told of the laws regarding which animals they are able to eat there were two stages: the ability to eat no animals and the ability to eat all animals. Some say the reason the Jews are not allowed to eat all animals is because they would start to act like animals and Hashem realizes He must limit what Jews may eat.

Yet, despite these proofs, I also think part of the reason of the prohibition of meat and milk is that Hashem wants to see how much we value the words of the Torah. Even though the decree is very specific to an animal in its mother’s milk, our rabbis went above and beyond so we would not even come close to disobeying Hashem’s law. The rabbis enacted three different levels of rabbinic prohibitions: no cooking, no eating and no benefiting from such a mixture. We are also forbidden to eat milk with chicken for the very same reason; this is considered placing a boundary upon a boundary. Clearly, these “boundaries” placed by the rabbis show that we take Hashem’s mitzvot seriously and display our desire to fulfill Hashem’s word.

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