

ה'תשפ"א
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ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



THERE IS NO ELEVATOR TO SUCCESS, YOU'LL NEED TO TAKE THE STAIRS
RABBI BINYAMIN BRODMAN

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ALIZA BILLET (21')

ELISHA MARCUS (23')

AVICHAI SHEKHTER (22')

LEANNE MANN (23')

This week's parsha, Mishpatim, contains the follow up to the most spectacular event in Jewish history, Matan Torah. The Jewish people

as a whole witness Hashem giving them the Torah, which was the whole purpose of the Exodus from Egypt. There's no doubt about the incredible inspiration that took place, as we know the famous declaration, *נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע* -- "we shall do and we shall listen" (Shmot 24:7). This raises the question: if we were so inspired by the events of Matan Torah, why is the follow up a parsha filled with very technical damage and monetary laws?! Thinking about this on a deeper level, the

gemara, which is the backbone of the Oral Torah which the Jewish people have been studying for thousands of years, is mostly monetary laws! The answer is based on the gemara's statement (Bava Kama 30a): "If someone wants to be a pious person, let him fulfill the matters of Nizikin (being careful with other people's feelings, money, and bodies)."

True greatness starts with respect of others around us. That's why immediately following inspiration and commitment begins the effort of learning how to live with those around us. That's not going to happen on an elevator, I guess we're going to have to take the stairs. Good Shabbos!

HELPFUL

ALIZA BILLET (21')

Parshat Mishpatim is full of different laws,

many of which involve livestock. There are rules for how to treat borrowed livestock, what to do when an ox hurts a human, what to do when livestock die, and what to do about stolen livestock. In the middle of perek 22, the Torah seems to finish discussing livestock and moves onto other topics, including guidelines for how to treat gerim, widows, and orphans. Perek 23 goes on to discuss rules of the court, including the prohibition against bearing false witness in court, the law to adjudicate fairly and to not discriminate against litigants based on wealth, and the prohibition against accepting bribes. However, in between the laws of the court, there are two more pesukim regarding livestock:

כִּי תִפְגַּע שׁוֹר אֵיבֶךָ אוֹ חֲמֹרוֹ תַעֲהָה הַשֵּׁב תְּשִׁיבֵנּוּ לוֹ: כִּי תִרְאֶה חֲמֹר שֶׁנֶּאֱכָר רֹבֵץ תַּחַת מְשָׁאוֹ וְחִדַּלְתָּ מֵעֲזֹב לוֹ עֲזֹב תַעֲזֹב עִמּוֹ

“When you encounter your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering, you must take it back to him. When you see your enemy’s donkey lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him” (Shmot 23:4-5).

Because they are set apart from the other livestock-related commandments, these pesukim stand out as extra important.

In the previous perek, the Torah rules on livestock belonging to oneself and neighbors, explaining that if those animals damage property, the owner of the animal is liable. These two pesukim, however, address animals belonging to one’s enemy, insisting that those animals must still be treated fairly. Hashem understands the concept of the human grudge, so He tells us that regardless of our interpersonal relationships, animals should not suffer because of humans. A lost animal must be returned and a struggling animal must be relieved of its burden, even if returning or helping the animal will benefit an enemy.

The Torah sets these two pesukim apart

from the other livestock-related laws because they carry a lesson from which we can all learn. We all know the pasuk that says]], וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ — “love your neighbor like yourself” (Vaykira 19:18), but Hashem is making a point here that even those we do *not* like deserve respect. Even if we don’t see eye to eye with someone, if they lose a belonging, we need to give it back if we find it. Even if we don’t see eye to eye with someone, we don’t have a free pass to make fun of them. Even if we don’t see eye to eye with someone, we should still do our best to assist them if they need help. We learn from these pesukim the importance of putting interpersonal issues aside when someone needs help, a skill that will always be relevant in life. Good Shabbos.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

ELISHA MARCUS (23')

וְכִי יִגַח שׁוֹר אֶת אִישׁ אוֹ אֶת אִשָּׁה וַיָּמָת סָקוּל וַיִּסְקַל הַשׁוֹר וְלֹא יֵאָכַל אֶת בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבַעַל הַשׁוֹר נָקִי

“And if a bull gores a man or a woman and (he/she) dies, the bull shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, and the owner of the bull is clear” (Shmot 21:28).

In this week’s parsha, Parshat Mishpatim, the Torah explains that if an ox goes and kills someone, the owner of the ox is not guilty. However, the parsha says later on that if an ox had a habit of killing and the owner was warned about it and didn’t take precautions to prevent it from killing someone then he, the owner, also dies! There’s a major problem with this case. Why do we consider the owner innocent if the ox killed someone only once, but if the ox killed more than one person, the owner has to die? Why isn’t the owner innocent in both cases?

The Torah is teaching us a very important lesson. In the Sefer Torah Lights written by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Rabbi Riskin

explains the truth about why the owner of the ox dies only if the ox kills someone again. He explains that the owner had to be **responsible** for his possessions and he was not. He assumed that he had no control over the animal and that the animal was solely to blame!

Rabbi Riskin continues by saying that the first time the ox gored a person it was a domesticated animal and it was unnatural for the ox to kill. However, by the second time that same ox gored someone else, the owner should have watched and taken necessary precautions to make sure that no one would get hurt. Only if he was **responsible** for his possessions and his actions could he have saved himself from his punishment. May we learn from this halacha to always be responsible for ourselves, our possessions, and our actions and be role models for others. Have a good Shabbos!

CHAG HA'ASIF

AVICHAJ SHEKHTER (22')

וְחַג הַקְצִיר בְּכוֹרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע בַּשָּׂדֶה וְחַג הָאָסֶף
בְּצֵאת הַשָּׂנָה בְּאֶסְפָּךָ אֶת מַעֲשֵׂיךָ מִן הַשָּׂדֶה

“And the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field” (Shmot 23:16).

The Meshech Chochmah asks why Sukkot is not referenced by name in this pasuk and is instead referred to as Chag Ha'Asif -- “The Festival of Gathering”? The Tur writes that the reason we celebrate Sukkot in Tishrei instead of Nissan is that we want it to be clearly recognizable that we're sitting in the sukkah because we were commanded to do so, and not for pleasure. If we celebrated Sukkot in the spring, people would think that we keep the Yom Tov because it's beautiful outside. In the fall, however, it's cold out (maybe not in Florida), and yet we move outside for a week. This way, people

recognize that it's *l'shem mitzvah* and not for our personal pleasure.

The Vilna Gaon offers a different explanation. He explains, in his commentary on Shir HaShirim, that Moshe remained on Har Sinai for 120 days, which is three sets of forty days. The first time Moshe went up was the seventh day of Sivan, and he came down on the seventeenth of Tammuz, at which point he broke the *luchot*. Then, he went back up on the eighteenth of Tammuz and returned on Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul and told Bnei Yisroel that they had been forgiven. The final time he went up was on Rosh Chodesh Elul, and he returned on Yom Kippur with the second set of *luchot*.

At that point, on the following day, Moshe announced the building of the Mishkan and requested that people bring in donations. On the twelfth and thirteenth of the month, they collected donations from the people. On the fourteenth day of Tishrei, they began to build the Mishkan, and on the fifteenth day, the *Ananei HaKavod* returned. The clouds that had disappeared at the time of the sin of the Golden Calf returned with the building of the Mishkan, and that is why we celebrate Sukkot on the fifteenth of Tishrei. It is not that we moved the celebration of Sukkot from the spring to the fall. The actual Clouds of Glory that surrounded us in the desert returned beginning on the fifteenth of Tishrei -- which is why we celebrate Sukkot specifically on that day!

Based on this idea, the Meshech Chochmah adds an unbelievable suggestion: maybe the Yom Tov of Sukkot actually didn't even exist before the sin of the Golden Calf! There was a *Chag Ha'Asif*, but there may not have been the mitzvah of sukkah, and that is why the Torah only refers to the *Chag Ha'Asif* in Parshat Mishpatim, before the sin! Have a great Shabbos!

WRITTEN IN STONE

LEANNE MANN (23')

In this weeks parsha, Parshat Mishpatim, the Torah discusses laws regarding stealing, slavery, and financial situations. Moshe talks about these laws at Har Sinai and the Jewish people respond with **נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע** -- “we shall do and we shall listen” (Shmot 24:7). Moshe writes down these laws in a scroll and reads it again. The people add to their earlier statement, saying: **נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע** -- “we shall do and we shall listen” (Shmot 24:7). But why does Moshe write these laws down if everyone from Bnei Yisrael was there and acknowledged hearing them? One idea is that Moshe wanted future generations to hold the Torah as a sacred value. We see in many areas of everyday life that writing something down gives it value and meaning, like a *ketubah*, a lease contract, etc. Generally the most sacred things are written on paper.

From this we learn that just as Moshe put so much thought and care into writing all the laws down even though Bnei Yisrael had already heard and accepted them, we should be thoughtful and careful about the things we consider sacred and important. Good Shabbos!



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