



Parshas
MISHPATIM

Following the dramatic events at Sinai, Parshas Mishpatim introduces an extensive series of civil interpersonal laws that form the backbone of a moral and ethical religious society.

Someone may think that

“RELIGION”

only involves matters between man and Hashem- such as Davening, learning Torah, Emunah, and Kedusha. But returning a wallet or having empathy for a widow? Maybe it is being a nice person, but it is not religion! Religion is only about Hashem.”

**THE TORAH'S
APPROACH IS
DIFFERENT.**

Just as the “Ten Commandments” are from Sinai, so too these laws of civil behavior are from Sinai. The consequence of my property causing damage is as much the Word of Hashem and Torah as *“Anochi Hashem”*.

The same attention, detail, and meticulousness that you place on selecting an esrog should be given to how you talk and interact with another person.

We have a Mishna Berura with sub-paragraphs and super-commentaries, and people follow the “letter of the law” without slightly deviating from it. Unfortunately, this meticulousness is not always as strong regarding commandments between man and man. However, in reality, it needs to be at least the same level of importance.

// Rav Yitzchak Hutner;
Pachad Yitzchak, Shavuot 41

In his older years,
RAV YISRAEL SALANTER
was unable to go himself
to bake matzah for Pesach.

The students who went
to bake for him inquired,
“What *hidurim & kavanos*,
exceptionally pious
requirements and intentions,
should we employ when
baking the matzah?”

He replied,

**“Make sure to be extra
kind and patient with
the elderly widow
who cleans between
each baking cycle”**

The unimaginable fire of parshas YISRO, reminiscent of tremendous love and yearning toward Hashem, finds expression throughout the parsh. With Matan Torah as its central feature, the spirit of the parsha is one of transcendence – casting away the physical to reach for the spiritual realms beyond, running up the ramp of avodas Hashem and leaping into flight.

Suddenly we move into MISHPATIM, learning about civil disputes, fraud, damages, goring, and thievery. Laws dealing with the base and mundane nature of our humanity, guidelines relating to the most impure desires and lowliest activities of our corporeal condition.

The ability to instantly shift from the most transcendent spiritual heights to the mundanity of our physical reality encapsulates the Torah's way of life.

All of Judaism is an exercise in being able to maintain, at all times, a synthesis of Yisro and Mishpatim, of "Ratzo/ Running & Shov/ Returning". While Hashem desires that we strive to escape the physical bonds that hold our neshama back, He also desires that we fully engage with the perception of a physical reality with which we are endowed, to elevate the intensely human component of our existence in this world.

LIVING LIFE AS A JEW means to possess an unbearable passion for the Divine and yet channel that passion toward expression in the mundane realities of the human experience;

relationships, responsibilities, the heartbeat of daily life- sanctifying the "MISHPATIM" of our lives; our eating, our sleeping, our business dealings, our family time, our relaxation by maintaining a deep connection with the "YISRO" of Hashem's underlying will.

// Rav Yaakov Klien

The first law highlights the process of acquiring an

eved ivri,

someone whom the court has sentenced to servitude as a way to pay back his theft and cover his debt.

Why do the civil laws begin with such a shameful subject of a Jew who steals or commits a crime that undermines the moral fabric of society? Right after the glorious experience at Mount Sinai, in which the Jewish People together were initiated into the greatest Divine revelation in world history?

The law begins with the indentured servant because this represents the weakest sector of our society, and we must ensure that we are

aware of and sensitive to the plight of those who are most vulnerable.

// Rebbe Avraham Ibn Ezra



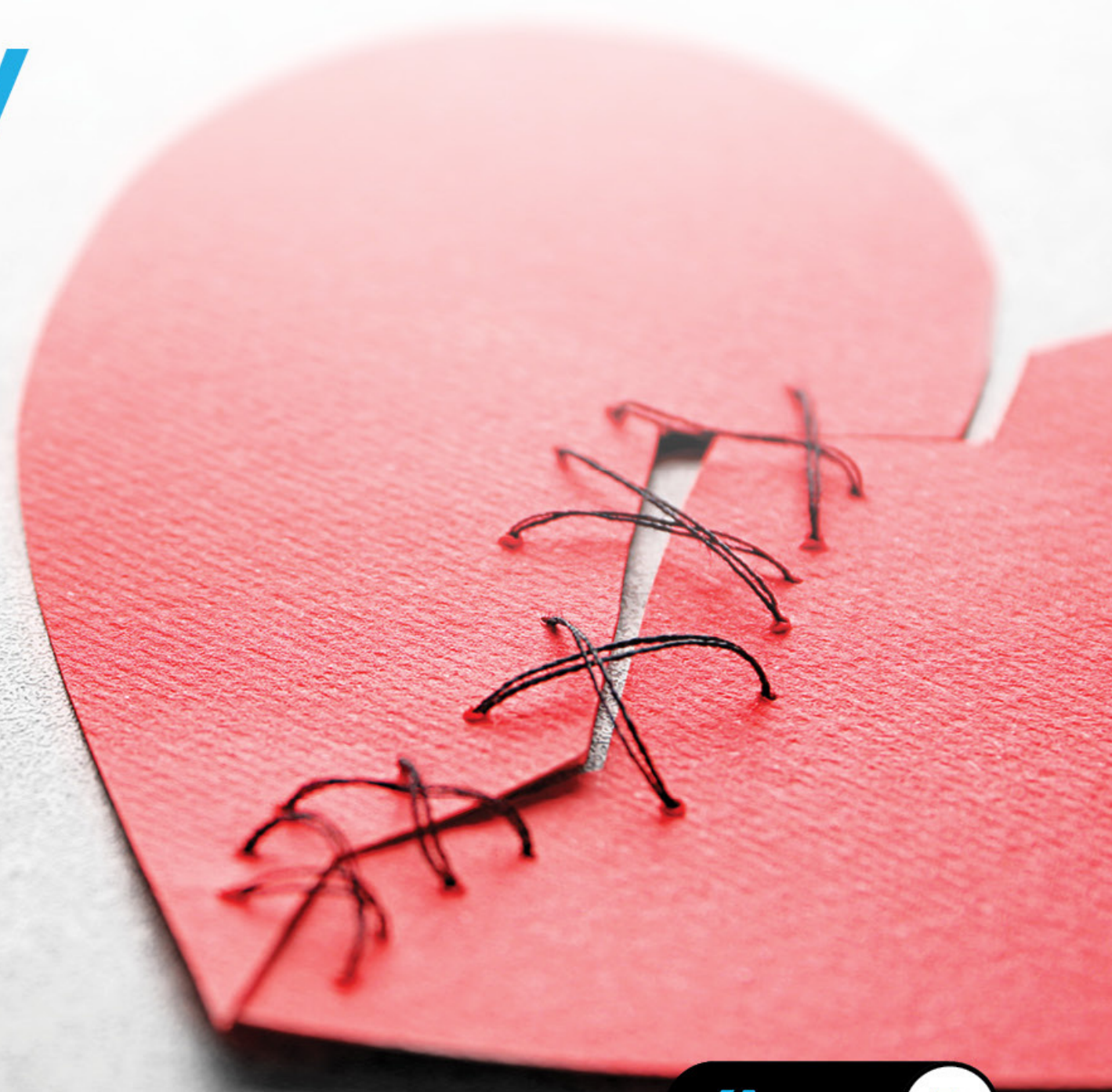
Mitzvos and Aveiros go beyond a list of 'do's and don'ts'; crimes and punishments. Hashem communicates with each of us through Torah. When a beloved child falls into mistakes and steals something or damages the property of another, Hashem sees a Jew who is struggling, who has a serious debt to repay and needs assistance.

Therefore, His Torah reveals processes of rehabilitation and reconciliation into community life. A dire personal challenge demands immediate action, even if it is unpleasant.

After the awe-inspiring 'fireworks' of Mount Sinai, the Torah guides us to where the **RUBBER hits the ROAD**, and where 'spiritual initiation' meets the tests of life in this world:

▼
**taking
responsibility
to do
whatever is
necessary to
ensure the
wellbeing
of each of
Hashem's
children.**

// The Alter of Kelm



“IF YOU SEE THE DONKEY OF SOMEONE YOU HATE
CROUCHING UNDER ITS BURDEN, AND YOU MIGHT REFRAIN
FROM HELPING HIM—YOU SHALL SURELY HELP HIM”

Why is it necessary to discuss the possible thought
that you may not wish to help your enemy?

The Torah is recognizing the instinct to refrain from helping one's
enemy's donkey as legitimate and human. It is perfectly normal to feel
that you care not to assist the person you loathe.

The fact that our emotions are not always in sync with our ideals and
values does not reduce us to moral failures.

**One of the problems unique to our
age is that for many of us emotions
have become the sole barometers
that determine right from wrong.**

There is a critical distinction that must be made
**between acknowledging your
emotions, versus allowing
them to dictate your behavior.**

As valuable as emotions are, the moral sense of right
and wrong must be given precedence over “I do
not feel up to it.” Hashem calls on us to challenge our
instinct and assist our enemy regardless.

// Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson





Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook

was often unfairly attacked by the Neturei Karta. On one occasion, the daughter of a Neturei Karta leader, a man who made the most extreme attacks on Rav Kook, fell ill with a rare disease.

This man learned that a doctor in another country was perhaps the only person who could treat her. However, there was little chance the exceptionally busy physician would have availability to treat the daughter; plus his fees were far beyond anything the father could pay.

BUT the father learned the doctor was a great admirer of Rav Kook: If the rabbi asked the doctor to treat the girl, he would likely do so. The Neturei Karta leader was in a quandary. How could he, who publicly slandered Rav Kook, now ask him to intervene? In desperation, the man sought out Rabbi Aryeh Levine, a well-known friend of Rav Kook, and asked him to speak to the rabbi.

Rabbi Levine did so, and Rabbi Kook responded:

“Of course I will write a letter to the doctor. What does this have to do with the difference of opinion between the girl’s father and me? I will let no personal bias influence me as I write this”.

He not only wrote the letter, but depicted the father in favorable terms. Rav Kook even wrote a letter to a director of a shipping line, asking him to offer the man and his daughter a substantial discount on their passage.

The Torah instructs us to help out someone struggling to load or to unload their package.

There are times that you'll encounter a Jew who feels disconnected & empty.

There's a mitzvah of

טעינה ▶ TO 'UPLOAD'

the beauty of Torah to him.

And there are times that you'll see a Jew that's overwhelmed by Yiddishkeit as they understand it or have experienced it.

There's a mitzvah of

פריקה ▶ TO UNBURDEN

relieve & ,allow her to feel good about who & where she is

// Rebbe Yaakov of Ishbitz;
Beis Yaakov Al Hatorah





Parsha Points to Ponder



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