

HASHKAMA WEEKLY

פרשת משפטים
כו' שבט תשפ"ו
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חכמה ב-אI תאמין?

By Reb Gemini

Consider the following "Torah" thought, generated by Gemini: Did the AI get it right? Do you find it to be accurate? Or did the technology miss the boat?

Rabosai, let's be honest. We have a bit of a "spiritual hangover" this week. Last Shabbos, in Parshas Yisro, we were standing at Har Sinai. There was thunder, lightning, smoke, and the booming voice of the Ribono Shel Olam. We felt like malachim (angels). We were ready to float straight up to Shamayim. And then? We turn the page to Parshas Mishpatim, and suddenly we are talking about an ox goring a cow, a man falling into a pit, and the exciting legal intricacies of borrowing a donkey. It feels like going from Neilah on Yom Kippur straight to a chaotic hearing at small claims court. It feels, dare I say, boring. But Rashi (Shemos 21:1) hits us with one letter that changes everything: the vav in "Ve'eileh hamishpatim" ("And these are the ordinances"). He teaches: "Just as the former were from Sinai, so too are these from Sinai." The Alter of Kelm explains that Yiddishkeit isn't proved by how high you jump during Kedushah; it is proved by how you handle a dispute with a neighbor who scratched your minivan. G-d is found in the details of damages just as much as in the celestial heights. This realization forces us to confront a terrifying pasuk later in the parsha: "Midvar sheker tirschak"—"Distance yourself from a false word" (Shemos 23:7). Note that the Torah does not merely say "do not lie." It says distance yourself. The Chofetz Chaim explains that sheker (falsehood) is like a contagious disease or a fire; you don't just avoid touching it, you cross the street to get away from it. Why is this warning placed here, amidst the dry laws of loans and courts? Because if we truly believe that business law is "from Sinai," then "fudging the numbers" is not just a savvy business move; it is a desecration of the Torah. We are often very machmir (strict) about checking our lettuce for bugs, yet we are sometimes lenient about checking our invoices for accuracy. The Mesillas Yesharim reminds us that a person who is scrupulous with kashrus but loose with the truth has missed the point entirely. If the law is Divine, then honesty is the highest form of worship.

Practical Takeaway: This week, let's try to bring the "thunder" of Sinai into our wallets. Before you engage in any monetary transaction—whether it's paying a cleaner, returning an item to a store, or discussing a shidduch—pause for three seconds. Ask yourself: "Am I distancing myself from falsehood, or am I just technically not lying?" If we can bring the same yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven) to our business dealings that we bring to our davening, we will show that we truly accepted the Torah—oxen, donkeys, and all.

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Shabbus Zmanim

Chestnut Ridge, NY

1:30 pm	מנחה
5:10 pm	הדלקה
--- pm	מנחה - קבלת שבת
5:28 pm	שקיעה
5:29/5:39 am	עלות השחר (16.1/72)
6:51:52 am	נץ החמה
7:15 am	שחרית
Hot kiddush & Shiur after davening	
8:55/9:31 am	סי' קריאת שמע
10:00/10:24 am	סי' תפילה
12:10:21 pm	חצות היום
12:40:21 pm	מנחה גדולה (30)
3:16:32 pm	מנחה קטנה (גר"א)
4:22:56 pm	פלג המנחה (גר"א)
--- pm	מנחה
5:29 pm	שקיעה
6:11/6:19 pm	צה"כ ר' משה (8.5/50)
6:21 pm	מעריב (52)
6:29/6:41 pm	צה"כ (60/72)



Next Week's Zmanim

Chestnut Ridge, NY

1:30 pm	מנחה
5:18 pm	הדלקה
5:36 pm	שקיעה
7:15 am	שחרית
5:37 pm	שקיעה
6:29 pm	מעריב (52)

This Week's Riddle

Riddle: Which insect appears in this parsha?

(Shemos 23:28)

Answer: The Torah states that the hornet (tzireh) will be sent before the Jews to drive away the enemy.



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משל ונמשל ב-א תאמין?

By Reb Gemini

Mashal: Imagine, if you will, a young man named Dovid who has spent six months planning the perfect surprise party for his wife. He has hired the Neginah Orchestra, he has catered the finest fleishigs from the expensive place across town—you know, the one where the waiter looks at you with pity when you ask for a refill on water—and he has even flown in his mother-in-law (a feat of spiritual heroism in itself). The night arrives, the music swells, the guests shout "Surprise!" and the atmosphere is electric with joy and emotion. Then, just as the tears of happiness begin to flow, the band stops abruptly. The singer taps the microphone and says, "Thank you, everyone. Now, before we cut the cake, Dovid and the caterer need to sit down for forty-five minutes to discuss a dispute over the price of the napkins and whether the coleslaw was fresh enough." The mood, as you can imagine, deflates faster than a cheap air mattress. This, rabosai, is exactly how we might feel arriving at Parshas Mishpatim. Last week, in Yisro, we had thunder, lightning, and the Kol Hashem splitting the heavens. We achieved the pinnacle of dveikus. And this week? We are talking about oxen goring cows, open pits, and the thrilling legal intricacies of unpaid guardians. It feels like going from Ne'ilah on Yom Kippur directly to small claims court.

Nimshal: Yet, the Ba'al HaTurim points out a critical juxtaposition: the verse regarding the altar involves the prohibition of using iron tools (which shorten life), immediately followed by "And these are the ordinances (mishpatim) that you shall set before them" (Shemos 21:1). Why link the holy altar with civil torts? The Alter of Kelm teaches us a fundamental "Litvish" principle here: Yiddishkeit is not defined by the spiritual high of the mountain; it is defined by how you conduct business in the valley. It is easy to feel holy when the shofar is blowing and you are trembling at the foot of Har Sinai. It is much harder to feel holy when you are arguing with a contractor about a leaky pipe or deciding if you truly owe your employee for that extra fifteen minutes. The Torah places Mishpatim right after Matan Torah to teach us that the same G-d who said "I am the Lord your G-d" also said "Do not accept a bribe." If a person claims to be pious because his Shemoneh Esrei takes forty-five minutes, but he is careless with other people's money, he hasn't built an altar; he has just built a stage for himself. True holiness is found in the grit of honesty, not just the glamour of transcendence.

Practical Takeaway: We must refrain from bifurcating our lives into "religious" and "secular" activities. This week, let us focus on one specific area of Choshen Mishpat (civil law). Before you sit down to learn or daven, take ten seconds to think about your monetary interactions. Do you owe a worker wages that are due today? Did you borrow a pen from a chavrusa and "forget" to return it, essentially keeping it as a permanent souvenir? We tend to be very strict about kashrus—checking every lettuce leaf for a microscopic bug—yet we often swallow whole camels when it comes to business ethics. Let us try to look at a monetary dispute not as a headache, but as a sh'aila as serious as mixing milk and meat. If we can bring the fear of Heaven into our checkbooks, then perhaps we can prove that we truly heard the message at Sinai.

GOOD SHABBUS!