

THE WEISS EDITION

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעלוי נשמה
הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא
ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם
נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב
תנצב"ה

משפטים

Mishpatim

כא:ב | 21:2

כִּי תִּקְנֹה אָבֶד עָבֵד עָבֵרִי שְׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבְשְׁבָעָת יִצְאָ לְחַפְשִׁי חָנָם

If you buy a Jewish slave, he shall work for six years; in the seventh, he shall go out to freedom without charge.

Free to Steal

Parshas Mishpatim immediately follows the account of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and begins with the laws regarding a thief who was sold into slavery in order to repay the money he stole.¹

With the law of the thief, the Torah sets the tone for the reality Bnei Yisrael faced after Sinai.

The bedrock of Torah observance is *kabbolas ol*—submitting ourselves to G-d's kingship and authority. Once we choose to be His subjects, we serve Him by obeying His commands.

At Sinai, however, Bnei Yisrael were *shown* that “G-d, He is the L-rd: there is none else beside Him,”² and as a result,

1. See Rashi, Shemos 21:2.

2. Devarim 4:35.

a foundation of *free-willed* acceptance of G-d's sovereignty could not be cemented. Under the influence of that awesome G-dly revelation, devotion to G-d was only natural. Genuine, willing submission to His authority became possible only *after* the revelation was over, when G-d's presence was no longer apparent.

But with the freedom to submit to G-d's authority came the freedom to ignore or reject it. The portion immediately following the giving of the Torah therefore begins by warning us about the fate of a thief. The Talmud³ teaches that a thief, who steals covertly, is worse than a robber, who steals openly. The robber is ashamed of neither man nor G-d. The thief, on the other hand, recognizes his wrongdoing and fears being caught. Nevertheless, he disregards the watchful eye of G-d, whose will he is knowingly transgressing. The thief thus epitomizes the inherent "risk" of the post-Sinai freedom of choice: a person can recognize G-d's existence, yet freely choose not to submit to His authority.

By warning us about the consequences of thievery immediately after the revelation at Sinai, the Torah seeks to make us aware of the post-Sinai reality: the truth is out in the open, but you don't automatically feel compelled to live by it. The downside of this freedom? You can end up as disturbingly low as a thief. The upside? You can truly and internally accept G-d's kingship over you, and commit yourself to His service by your own volition and desire.

—*Toras Menachem*, vol. 39, pp. 109–112

3. Bava Kamma 79b.

כא:ה-ו | 21:5-6

וְאִם אָמַר יְהוָה קָרְבָּנִי אֶת אֲדֹנִי
 אֶת אִשָּׁתִי וְאֶת בָּנִי לֹא אֵצֵא קָרְבָּנִי...
 וְרִצְעָנִי אֶת אַיִלָּנוּ בְּמִרְצָעָנִי וְעַבְדוּ לְעַלְמָן

But if the servant says, “I am fond of my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go free”... his master shall pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall then serve him forever.

Are You All Ears?

If a Jewish servant does not wish to go free after six years of servitude, his master brings him before the court and pierces his ear in the presence of the judges. The servant may then remain with his master until the Yovel, the Jubilee year.

Why does the Torah single out the servant's ear for piercing, out of all the other limbs of the body? The Talmud explains:

For the Almighty says: This ear, which heard My voice on Mount Sinai when I proclaimed, ‘For Bnei Yisrael are slaves to Me’⁴—they are My servants, and not servants of servants, and yet went and acquired a master for himself, let it be pierced!⁵

But was the revelation at Sinai only heard, not seen? Doesn't the Torah say, “And the entire nation *saw* the sounds”?⁶ If the servant's ears are guilty for not abiding by what they

4. Vayikra 25:55.

5. Kiddushin 22b.

6. Shemos 20:15.

heard, why aren't his eyes held accountable for not living up to what they witnessed?

In truth, however, the Torah's "disappointment" with the servant is not that he is less spiritually sensitive than he was at Sinai, when he *heard and saw* the voice of G-d. The disappointment is that he is not living up to his current potential, *based on* what he experienced at Sinai. And therein lies the difference between what he saw and what he heard.

After the sounding of the Ten Commandments, the awesome G-dly revelation at Sinai ceased. Hence, a Jew can no longer be expected to relate to G-d on the level of "seeing," with the clarity of purpose that Bnei Yisrael had during the revelation at Sinai.

The purpose of this post-Sinai concealment, however, was to allow Bnei Yisrael to arrive at accepting the yoke of G-d on their own accord. Meaning, that our ability to "hear," i.e., to choose to be G-d's subjects even when His presence is concealed, is still intact. Accordingly, we are held accountable, even post-Sinai, if we fail to *hear* and recognize that "Bnei Yisrael are slaves to Me," and not "servants to servants."

—*Toras Menachem, vol. 39, pp. 110-113*

כִּי יִגְּחֶשׁ שׂוֹר
21:28 | כה

וְכִי יִגְּחֶשׁ שׂוֹר
If an ox gores...

Speaking of Nature

The Torah teaches the laws of liability for damages caused by one's animals using the scenario of one person's ox damaging another person's property. As Rashi explains, "Scripture speaks of the ordinary," and barring any specific reason for an exception, the same laws apply in all similar instances. In the case of property damage, for example, the same laws apply whether the damage was done by an ox or any other animal or bird.

Rashi's expression, "Scripture speaks of the ordinary," also conveys an important message about how we must view everything that transpires in the world.

It is easy to recognize and acknowledge G-d's influence over the world when we observe an unlikely turn of events or unnatural phenomena. Conversely, when things follow their regular patterns and everything seems predictable, we can easily make the mistake of thinking that the ordinary happenings are simply "natural" and automatic.

By saying "Scripture speaks of the ordinary," Rashi points out the fallacy in this way of thinking. Even the "ordinary," the most normal and predictable aspects of life, says Rashi, are brought about by "Scripture speaking"—by the words written in the Torah. As Chassidus teaches,⁷ all of existence

7. See Tanya, Shaar Hayichud Veha'eminah.

is constantly recreated and animated by the words that G-d uttered to bring the world into existence, as described in the first chapter of Bereishis.

Rashi's words thus teach us that nothing is natural. "Scripture speaks of the ordinary": Because Scripture speaks, the ordinary happens.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 6, p. 141

כג:כח-כו | 23:25-26

וְעַבְדָתֶם אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים ... לֹא תִהְיָה מַשְׁבֵּת
וְעַקְרָה בָּאָרֶץ אֲתָּה מַסְפֵּר יְמֵיכָךְ אֲמַלָּא

You shall worship Hashem, your G-d... There will be no bereaved or barren woman in your land; I will fill the number of your days.

It's Not All About You

The struggles people face in the worship of G-d, and the method with which they can overcome them, are alluded to in the Torah's blessing, "There will be no bereaved or barren woman in your land; I will fill the number of your days."

There will be no bereaved or barren woman:

We all strive to worship G-d with inner passion and devotion. It can happen, however, that we find ourselves *bereaved* or *barren*, meaning that the inspiration and passion we cultivate are short-lived, or that our efforts to develop genuine love and fear of G-d do not bear fruit at all.

In your land:

The next word in the verse, **בָּאָרֶץ**—“in your land,” hints to the reason for this “barrenness.” The word **בָּאָרֶץ** alludes to the Hebrew word **רֵצִין**, which means “wish” or “desire.”⁸ **בָּאָרֶץ**

8. See Bereishis Rabbah 5:8.

can thus be interpreted as “due to your wishes,” i.e., due to the personal satisfaction that you derive from your worship of G-d.

The sense of fulfillment a person derives from his Divine service can ultimately hinder his inner devotion to G-d from flourishing. His feelings of satisfaction lead his Divine service to become contingent upon the degree to which it makes him feel happy and content. Eventually, instead of decisively fulfilling G-d’s will and desire, he picks and chooses between the aspects of Divine service he relates to and those he does not. Understandably, genuine love and unconditional commitment to G-d cannot thrive in such an environment.

I will fill the number of your days:

The key to overcoming this pitfall is to internalize the message found at the end of the verse: “I will *fill* the number of your days.” The days that G-d allots a person in this world are numbered: we are each given precisely enough time to achieve the goal for which we were born. Any moment that you do not properly utilize in the service of G-d, you are sabotaging the mission He intends for you to fulfill in this lifetime! One who contemplates this painful truth will quickly abandon any search for feelings of achievement, and devote his every living moment to realizing the potential for which G-d created him. And then, with no time to harp on his feelings and moods, his internal relationship with G-d will thrive.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 273-274*



לעלוי נשמה
מרת חנה דבורה בת ר' משה ע"ה
לונגער

נפטרה ל' שבט תשפ"ב
נדפס ע"י בנה הרה"ת יוסף
וזוגתו מרת היינדא יהודית שיחיו
לונגער



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