

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT MISHPATIM

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**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## MONEY

There is a joke told about a thief who decided to rob a house one night. He broke in stealthily and after much effort found some expensive jewellery which he managed to pack into his bag. Just then he heard a voice, "Yossi is watching you, Yossi is watching you!"

The thief froze scared out of his mind. He pointed his flashlight into the direction he heard the voice and saw a parrot.

"Yossi is watching you, Yossi is watching you!" The thief, with a relief started to laugh and asked the parrot "So **who** are you?" The Parrot responded "Moshe Moshe".

"And who's the fool that named you Moshe anyway?" asked the thief.

"The same fool that named the Rottweiler standing behind you Yossi!"

Times are tough across the globe and theft has increased worldwide. What drives a thief's lust? Why does he take the risk? How does the Torah view a thief and what is his punishment?

The Kohelet Rabah (1:13) states Ein Haadam Niftar Min Haolam Vechetsi Ta'avato Biyado – No one in this world achieves even half of that which he desires before passing away. Yesh Beyado Maneh Taavato Matayim – If he has 100 Maneh (currency), he wants 200 Maneh. We never seem to be happy with what we achieve.

Rabbi Yonatan Eibshitz z'l notes, that on closer inspection the (above mentioned) sayings about human nature seem to have a percentage point contradiction between them.

One aphorism states, "No person dies having fulfilled half of his desires."

The other claims, "If you have 100 you want 200."

One implies that a person may approach but never reaches 50% of his or her ambitions. The second places the dividing point at exactly 50% implying you can achieve exactly half. So which is it?

R Eibshitz reconciles the two with a fascinating insight into our nature.

King Solomon wrote, "Like a bird that strays from her nest so is a man that wanders from his place" (Mishlei 27:8). To the baby bird planted securely in her nest, the forest floor is a lure. Similarly the big city calls to the country youth. With one step too many the little fellow is out there. Once down on the ground though, the proportions of the lurking dangers swell back to size. Suddenly, that defenceless creature with underdeveloped wings is in constant risk of being swallowed whole. Eventually she longs for the nurturing nest.

R' Eibshitz explains that people's lusts take on the same fate and in the above case; "The half that he **doesn't have** is more-dear to him than the half that he **does** have."

Thus even though he has achieved 50% of his ambition, nevertheless in his eyes it is less than 50%. Now that he has achieved

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it, he turns to the 50% he has not achieved and gives greater value to that. A person who constantly pursues wealth will never truly feel fulfilled. Even when achieving his desired wealth, the lure for more will always provide a greater pull.

Our Parasha teaches that a thief who is caught must pay double the amount he has stolen. The Torah seems adamant to stamp out this vile sin, but why punish him by enforcing double payment?

The Kli Yakar (21:12) explains that the thief personifies lust. He is always chasing after money and wealth. He wasn't satisfied with what he had, he **craved** to **double** his money – therefore as a punishment (Mida Kneged Mida – like for like) he is obliged to pay **double**.

This is also hinted via the word used for money – Mamon. The word Mamon is spelt with the letters **Mem, Vav, Nun**. When you spell these letters out they all begin and end with the same letter.

Thus one who steals Mamon (made up of double letters and implying never ending lust,) pays double.

In the times of Noach when Hashem decided to destroy the world, one of the determining factors was their rampant theft. The epicentre of this sin lies in the haughtiness of the individual, placing his interest and lust above that of society.

Money might make the world go around, but we shouldn't make it the focus of our world.

Shabbat Shalom.



**RABBI DAVID BAADANI**  
*Director - TAL Chazanut Program*

## THE COMMITMENT TO TRUTH

One of the commandments in our Parasha states: "You shall not join hands with the guilty to act as a malicious witness" (Exodus 23:1). This prohibition against bearing false witnesses highlights the importance the Torah places on truthfulness. Halacha teaches that witnesses must be warned before testifying, reminded of the severe consequences they will face if found lying, both in this world and the next. If witnesses are caught conspiring to give false testimony, the Dayanim (judges)

must publicise their deceit throughout all cities. This approach is unique in Jewish law, even in cases of serious transgressions.

Why does the Torah emphasise the prohibition of false testimony? The answer lies in the essence of the Jewish people and their unique role in the world. As the prophet Isaiah says, "You are My witnesses... and I am G-d" (Isaiah 43:12). The Jewish people are tasked with bearing witness to G-d's reality in the world. This witness is not merely verbal but is lived out through their actions, reflecting G-d's mercy, justice, and grace. Through their conduct, Jews demonstrate G-d's presence and act as proof of His involvement in the world. Testimony is a powerful tool that

shapes justice, and when someone lies, they undermine the very foundation of truth. False testimony not only harms individuals but also distorts the divine truth that Jews are meant to represent. The severity of this sin lies in its spiritual impact. A Jew is called to be a loyal witness to G-d's truth, and lying in this regard damages both the individual's integrity and the sanctity of the Jewish mission.

Therefore, the Torah goes to great lengths to warn witnesses of the consequences of bearing false testimony. Publicising their deceit serves as both a deterrent and a reminder that distorting the truth undermines the very essence of being a Jew—a living, faithful witness to G-d's glory in the world.



**RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program**  
*Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 7 - שגיון לדוד אשר שר לדי'*

## LIFE SAVING ADVICE - FOCUS ON YOURSELF

### Part 1 – Help with a Difficult Relationship

Can you imagine if you had a sure way to emerge from any disagreement or dispute

successfully? What if this was possible on a national level as well as on a personal level? We all feel wronged from time to time. Perhaps a friend or work colleague has decided to apply for the same job as you when you are the one who told them the position in the first place and your interest in it! Perhaps a family member has suddenly started treating you in a lukewarm fashion without explanation or maybe someone who you thought was your friend has caused a

shidduch suggestion to derail because of a comment they made about you. Sometimes, a compassionate understanding of the other person may be the key to reconciliation. Whilst we certainly need to protect ourselves from harm, we also need to recognize that our friends are human like us and can occasionally be guilty of poor behaviour, just as we can be. The fact that they have wronged us on one occasion does not mean they need to be removed from the

wedding or barmitzvah invitation list forever. On the other hand, in some cases a dispute cannot be solved immediately. Indeed it might look as though there is nothing you can do about the situation other than hope that you emerge intact.

In this chapter of Tehillim we discover a brilliant and novel option available even to someone who finds themselves in position as challenging as this.

King David is being chased by his enemies, possibly in connection with his treatment of King Saul. Without hesitation, he considers his tormentors as agents of Hashem sent to punish him for wrongdoing. However he does not simply resign to his fate. The king implores Hashem

"Arise in your anger and be exalted over the fury of my enemies" (7;7)

What is the difference between anger and fury in this context? The Malbim writes that "anger" describes a measured feeling of resentment which one will express through proportionate punishment, appropriate to the seriousness of the wrongdoing. Fury, on the other hand, relates to the uncontrolled emotion of rage which can be detected in a case where one party delivers a punishment considerably greater than that which was deserved.

King David here calls on Hashem to deal with

him with "anger" - in a measured manner. Furthermore he suggests Hashem will be elevated through the way in which he deals with the ambitions of his enemies who wish to deliver punishment over and above that which he deserves. He proceeds to explain how this might be;

"Hashem - please judge me according to my righteousness and my sincerity" (7;9)

According to the Malbim "righteousness" refers primarily to one's external behaviours, visible to others. "Sincerity" on the other hand relates to the duties of the heart, the works of one's inner thoughts and feelings. King David is asking to be judged on both of these fronts. When judged on his level of "righteousness" he asks to be compared with the behaviour of those sent to attack him. Surely a comparison of his conduct with that of his enemies will provide enough reason for his desired victory over them! With regard to the level of his sincerity, King David concedes that this characteristic cannot be judged by reference to others. Only the one who "analyses hearts and innards" (7;10) can really know what one really thinks and feels.

King David's approach here is quite remarkable. He concedes that his enemies have been justifiably unleashed on him by Hashem as punishment for his sins.

Nevertheless, he seeks salvation precisely through those enemies themselves! He argues that he deserves to be rescued from danger because relative to the degenerate behaviour of his attackers he should be considered righteous and therefore deserving of victory.

This is nothing other than a quite brilliant last ditch attempt on the part of King David to save himself from quite serious suffering.

Returning now to that case now where you feel you are being unfairly treated or victimised by another person with no apparent explanation. There may be nothing you can do to change their perspective. However you can change yourself. You can analyse your own deeds and make sure that your life is set on a righteous path. Do I deserve to be rescued from this feud? Does the other party have more merits than I do? Are they generally a more pious person than I? It may not be advisable to directly request that Hashem compares the behaviour of your opposite number to your own and certainly not to wish them harm. But if you hold strong and focus on your own spiritual growth you are putting yourself in the best possible position you can to experience your own redemption from an unwanted entanglement.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### The Recitation of Birkat Ha'mazon

The Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 182) writes that Birkat Ha'mazon is Halachically equivalent to the Amida prayer, the only difference being that the Amida is reciting standing, and Birkat Ha'mazon is recited sitting. And thus, as the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) rules, one should not interrupt Birkat Ha'mazon to answer "Amen" to a Beracha, or even to respond to Kaddish, Kedusha or Barechu. However, the Ben Ish Hai adds that if one hears a congregation reciting "Modim" as he recites Birkat Ha'mazon, he should silently nod his head as the congregation bows. If he hears Kaddish, he may silently listen, but he should not answer.

The Ben Ish Hai writes that these laws apply from the beginning of Birkat Ha'mazon through the end of the fourth Beracha. After the four Beracha, during the "Ha'rahan" section, one should remain seated and recite the text with proper concentration through the very end of Birkat Ha'mazon, but one may answer "Amen" and respond to Kaddish, Kedusha

and Barechu while reciting the "Ha'rahan" section. (Technically speaking, one may converse in Torah matters during the "Ha'rahan" section, but this should not be done in front of ignorant people who might then conclude that speaking is allowed during Birkat Ha'mazon.)

The Arizal (Rav Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572) taught that ideally, one should recite Birkat Ha'mazon with his eyes closed, and with his right hand over his left hand with the thumbs tucked in the hands. Of course, if one does not know Birkat Ha'mazon by heart, then he should read it from a Siddur, and hold the Siddur if necessary. And, if one recites Birkat Ha'mazon over a cup of wine, he should hold the cup and look at it during Birkat Ha'mazon.

One must sit during Birkat Ha'mazon; it should not be recited while standing or while reclining. The Shulhan Aruch brings opinions that the Beracha of Me'en Shalosh should likewise be recited while sitting, and this is also the opinion of the Ben Ish Hai and of Hacham Ovadia Yosef, in Yabia Omer (vol. 1, Orah Haim 11:14).

Numerous books emphasize the great importance of reciting Birkat Ha'mazon with concentration. The Kav Ha'yashar (Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kaidanover, 1648-1712) writes that one who recites Birkat Ha'mazon with concentration will earn the privilege of hearing King David recite Birkat Ha'mazon at the meal of the Sadikim. And the Arizal, in Sha'ar Ha'misvot (listen to audio recording for precise citation), writes that one who recites Birkat Ha'mazon with concentration receives his livelihood joyfully and comfortably.

#### Summary:

While reciting the four Berachot of Birkat Ha'mazon, one may not make any interruptions, even to answer "Amen" or to respond to Kaddish, Kedusha or Barechu. During the "Ha'rahan" section, one may interrupt for these responses. Birkat Ha'mazon should be recited sitting and with concentration, and one who does not need a Siddur and is not holding a cup of wine during Birkat Ha'mazon should recite the text with his eyes closed and with his right hand over his left hand, and the thumbs tucked into the hands.



# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Mishpatim

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of Jewish servants; a husband's obligations to his wife; penalties for hitting people and for cursing parents, judges, and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by one's animate or inanimate property, or by pitfalls that one created; payments for theft; not returning an object that one accepted responsibility

to guard; the right to self-defense of a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should not be delayed, and the Jewish People must be Holy, even concerning

food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbat and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year – for Pesach, Shavuot and Succot – we are to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of kashrut to not cook or mix meat and milk.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com

**Q**

1. In what context is a mezuzah mentioned in this week's parsha?
2. What special mitzvah does the Torah give to the master of a Hebrew maidservant?
3. What is the penalty for wounding one's father or mother?
4. A intentionally hits B. As a result, B is close to death. Besides any monetary payments, what happens to A?
5. What is the penalty for someone who tries to murder a particular person, but accidentally kills another person instead? Give two opinions.

**A**

1. 21:6 - If a Hebrew slave desires to remain enslaved, pierce his ear.
2. 21:8,9 - To marry her.
3. 21:15 - Death by strangulation.
4. 21:19 - He is put in jail until B recovers or dies.
5. 21:23 - (a) The murderer deserves the death penalty. (b) The murderer is exempt from death but must compensate the heirs of his victim.
6. 21:23 - (a) The murderer deserves the death penalty.



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