

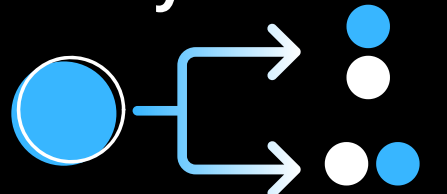


• MISHPATIM - משפטים •

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS WEEK'S PARSHA?

Mishpatim, or **laws**, refer to the laws that Hashem teaches Moshe in this week's Parsha. They include the following: the regulations for a **Jewish slave**, consequences of **assault** by a person or an animal, **thieves**, and **negligence**, and the laws of **borrowing** and **guarding property**. Then, the laws go from case law to ethical and religious behaviors: the prohibition of **sorcery**, bringing sacrifices to **false gods**, and oppressing a **convert**, **widow**, or **orphan**, the laws of **loans** and **interest**, the requirement to **respect leaders**, redeeming a **firstborn animal**, the prohibition of eating the meat of a **treifa**, an animal who died of a disease or defect, guidelines for treating **lost animals** or the **animals of your enemy**, the rules of **court**, the laws of **Shemita**, letting the land of Israel rest from agriculture in the 7th year, the requirement to keep **Shabbos**, the prohibition of saying **names of other gods**, the laws of the **three holidays** - **Sukkos**, **Pesach** and **Shavuot**, and the prohibition of cooking an animal in its **mother's milk**. Hashem tells Moshe that He is sending a **messenger** to lead them in Israel and to help them conquer the land, but only if they follow the commandments and do not adopt the ways of the nations in the land. Hashem tells Moshe to summon **Aharon**, his sons, **Nadav** and **Avihu**, and the **seventy elders** to approach **Har Sinai**, but not to go up. Moshe teaches the people the commandments, and they agree to follow them. Moshe writes the commandments with a ceremony with **twelve** sacrifices. The people accept the Torah, and say **"Naaseh v'Nishma!"** - **"We will do and we will listen!"**. Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and the 70 elders ascend part of Har Sinai and see a vision of Hashem. Then, Hashem commands Moshe to come up to **Har Sinai** to receive the **tablets** with the **Torah** inscribed on them. **Yehoshua** goes partially up with Moshe, and Moshe leaves **Aharon** and **Hur**, Miriam's husband, in charge of the people. The Jews see Moshe go into a cloud on Har Sinai, and he stays there for **40 days**.

THINK ABOUT IT: Torah commandments can be split into two categories: **commandments between the person and G-d**, and **interpersonal commandments**. In this week's Parsha, right after **Matan Torah**, which are the majority? Why?



BUILDING A SOCIETY



THINK

In last week's Parsha, the Jews were told (19:6): **You shall be to Me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation**. Hashem chose us to be His People and to represent Him and His Values to the world.

If you were in charge of introducing the **first laws** of Hashem's society, what would you choose? Why?

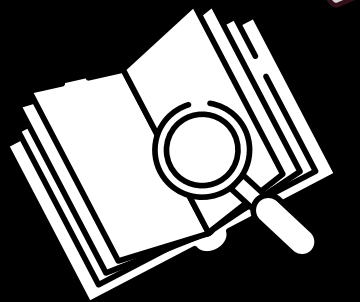
After Hashem revealed Himself to the Jewish people at **Har Sinai** and gave them the **Ten Commandments**, one might think that the rest of the Torah, the laws concerning minute details of daily life, has a lesser status. However, **Rashi** (1040-1105, France) points out that the Parsha begins with **"and these are the laws..."** - the word "and", which, in Hebrew, is just one letter, links the groups of laws to the giving of the Torah at **Har Sinai**.



אלה המשפטים



Look at the Parsha summary. Are there any laws that stand out to you? Why?
Do any of the laws seem like they don't fit in with the rest of the list?
How those laws connected to building a society for the Jewish people?
Which laws do you think were the most **revolutionary** for a society at that time? Why?



A BACKWARD PROMISE

The way that the Jews accepted in this week's Parsha is very unusual! Think of it this way: if someone wants to make a deal with you, you would want to know the conditions before saying yes. However, the Jews' promise was backward! Instead of hearing the conditions first, they said **"We will do and we will listen!"** This is unusual for a second reason: **the Jews may have already heard the Torah**, either partially or fully! So **what does this statement really mean?** **Rashi** (1040-1105, France) based on a **Gemara (Shabbos 88)** explains that the Jews accepted the Torah before they received the Torah, and before hearing any of the details, showing their unconditional acceptance! **Ramban** (1194-1270, Spain & Israel) explains differently, that, as the Jews had already heard some of the Torah, this statement meant: **we will do and [then] we will understand**. **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** (1948-2020, England) explains that, by acting first instead of waiting to understand, the Jews would gain the most complete experience of the Torah.

וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע: (שמות כד:ז)

Then [Moshe] took the book of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, **"All that G-d said we will do and we will listen!"**

DISCUSS: If someone asked you for a favor, would you say yes before hearing what it is? For who? Why? What does that teach us about the Jew's relationship with Hashem?

