

Parshat Mishpatim: Double Desire

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

We have just come from the spiritual high of Hashem's revelation at Sinai, and what immediately follows is *Parshat Mishpatim*, almost exclusively devoted to laws of property and damages. We move from the completely spiritual to the completely material. How can we reconcile this seeming disconnect?

In most laws of damages generally incurred through some form of negligence, compensation is made by repaying the value of the damages. However, when it comes to theft, the thief is required to pay double the damages. Why?

First, we must realize that holiness exists not only in heaven but in every atom of creation, notes the *Tallelei Chaim*. Integrity in business and the proper mindset with charity reveal the hidden sparks of holiness that already exists within the world. When one uses his material possessions honestly, one invests them with part of his own sanctity.

A thief comes surreptitiously, in the night, unseen by man. A robber, on the other hand, steals openly. Rabbi Rivlin points out, quoting the Gemara, that the robber is afraid of neither man nor God. On the other hand, the thief is afraid of man but is denying God's presence. For denigrating Hashem, he must pay an extra penalty. As the *Kerem Tuvia* notes, the armed robber is wicked, but doesn't cover it up. The thief on the other hand, pretends to be a *tzadik*. His hypocrisy is

another form of theft, *genayvat da'at*, "theft" of another's understanding. For this, the thief pays the penalty in addition to the actual damages. To look at it another way, these laws are not just technicalities, but also a reflection of who we are.

Rabbi Wolbe notes that the Ark in the Mishkan in which the *luchot* were housed was to be covered inside and out with pure gold. A talmid chacham who carries the *Torah* within himself can be likened to the Ark. He too must be the same pure person inside and out. The details of the *mitzvot* are important, but that is not enough. Rav Dessler reminds us that we must focus on the purpose of the *mitzvot*, on self improvement, and on performing them with enthusiasm that will help us grow spiritually.

The Minchas Michael points out that the *Torah* mandates that when one wishes to harm another, he is punished by suffering the fate he would inflict on his fellow. Here the thief must certainly repay the initial damage, but since he wanted to take that money or valuable item from another, he must suffer the loss he would have inflicted had he not been caught. That is why he must pay double the value of what he stole.

The *Torah* writes that if the animal was found in the thief's possession, the thief must "*chaim yeshalaim* – pay life." While in simple translation it means the thief must pay double if the animal is still alive, Rabbi Rivlin posits that the possessions of a *tzadik* are indeed his life, for

he attained them honestly through his own work, and invested time which cannot be brought back into his life. As the *Ohr Gedalyahu*, writes, if we are upright, our *kedushah* extends to our possessions. You are to love Hashem not just with meod, money or possessions, but with *meodecha*, that wealth which has become part of you.

Human beings are acquisitive by nature, notes the *Ohr Chodosh*. If someone has 100, he wants 200. The thief also wants double and acts upon that desire. Therefore, he must repay double. The *Shaarei Derech* quotes the *Kli Yakar* that the Hebrew letters that spell out the word for money *mamon*, are all spelled by doubling the letter of the sound. *Mem* = m+m followed by another *mem*, followed by the "O" sound written with a *vov* = v+v, and finished with a *nun* = n+n. The very letters of money attest to the desire for double. But this desire for more can and should be channeled toward positive acquisitions, such as the desire for more *Torah* knowledge and *mitzvot*.

The Knesset Yechezkel teaches that everything we learn can be internalized. If we find that we have a failing that is keeping us from a proper relationship with Hashem, we should resolve to "pay double", to work doubly hard on that characteristic, to study twice as much, and so with every *mitzvah*. That double effort will get us back on the path to being the righteous person and vessel of sanctity Hashem envisioned for us.

Introduction to Request Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tzipora Heller

We begin the blessing of *chonen hadaat* with the words- "You give humanity *daat*-the ability to draw meaningful conclusions. *Chochma* is analogous to the seed from which the plant will eventually sprout. It's the human curiosity that sparks the question- "What is this?" *Binah* is understanding, the nurturing of the seed. It's looking at the object you're focused upon and asking, "How do I understand this in terms of all its segments, how it all began, where it's going, and what it's really saying?"

Daat is the ability to draw a meaningful conclusion on the basis of *chochma* and *binah*. It's asking, "How is this my inference or the basis of other things? What is this object's uniqueness and how does it relate to reality? What am I meant to do with it?" *Chochma* is like the sperm, *binah* is like the womb, and *daat* is like the newborn child. The ability to ask questions is a gift from Hashem. In practical life you need *daat*. But there's no *daat* without *chochma* and *binah*.

Hashem puts us in a continuum where we learn more as we live more. He is continually teaching us. But in order to be taught, we have to be willing to learn. Therefore, we ask Hashem, "Grant us *chochma*, *bina*, and *data*..."

Think about the mistakes in your life. We all make them. Usually you'll find that had you known beforehand, it would've been different.

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In this blessing we ask Hashem for adequate awareness so that we may not come to err. We need *daat*. We need the ability to differentiate where all the varying roads of life will take us. So before the *bracha* closes, and this is true for all the *brachot* of requests (not gratitude), we can include a personal request. There is a dissenting view that one should not verbally express one's personal requests, but rather think it in one's mind. We can ask Hashem to give us the necessary *daat*. And in fact the great scholar, the *Chazon Ish*, would include a personal request for success in learning in this blessing. If you know someone who is struggling in learning, this is the opportunity to pray for him.

The next blessing speaks about forgiveness. In the Gemara, Rav Huna discusses the downward spiral of committing a sin multiple times. At first there's guilt. Then it becomes ok. Then it becomes a *mitzva*. Then the sinner ends up with addictive negative behaviors. There are all sorts of big mistakes in life that on the surface seem unable to be renegotiated. But Hashem gives us the opportunity to recalibrate. *Teshuva* means returning to the path we should have been on all along.

You can't keep on going left and moan about going right. It won't work. Unless you actually act on the instructions given to you, you won't get there. The *Torah* tells us what our decisions should be, but it won't make the

actual decision for us. There's never a place where a person finds himself, that there isn't a way to go back. But we have to make the first step. Before we can legitimately ask Hashem to bring us back, we have to be willing to move. We have to recognize that the direction we're in now, will not take us where we want to go. That step is called confession and regret. Then we have to be willing to change.

In this blessing, we ask Hashem for the clarity and the energy to actually do it. "Bring us back Father to your *Torah*." Hashem is like a father who cares more about us than we care about ourselves. "And our King, draw us back to your service." He is leading us where we are meant to go.

Shir Shel Yom Revii

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The chapter that is recited on the fourth day begins by depicting Hashem as one who takes revenge. We ask Hashem to take revenge on the nations who persecute us both physically and spiritually and prevent us from keeping *Torah* and *mitzvot*. This refers to the time of *Mashiach*. We ask Hashem to judge the nations and repay them for their arrogance. The Seforno speaks about the repetition of phrases and explains that it refers to the first and second *Beit Hamikdash*. Both Nevuchadnezzar and Titus arrogantly thought that it was their might that destroyed Hashem's abode. But in fact Chazal say, "You destroyed a desolate structure." At the moment when Hashem's presence departed, it became merely a shell that anyone could decimate. Still Nevuchadnezzar and Titus took credit for themselves. And that is why we ask not only for revenge for their evil acts, but that Hashem punish them for their arrogance.

The chapter continues, "How long will the wicked exult? They praise themselves for what they did. There's no sign of regret or recognition that what they did was wrong. We ask Hashem, "Till when will the wicked rule and afflict us?" They deceive themselves into

thinking that Hashem doesn't see or understand. The fact that we are in exile, vulnerable to attack, makes them think that Hashem has abandoned us and that they can do what they want. The longer our exile stretches, the more it strengthens their misguided beliefs. David Hamelech admonishes to them. "Does the one who created ears not hear, does the one that made eyes not see...?"

Why are the nations who afflict us enjoying life while we are doomed to suffer? "Happy is the man who is afflicted..." Although we may experience suffering, it's temporary. It's an atonement meant to save us from punishment in the world to come. It's in no way a sign that Hashem abandoned us.

The chapter ends by affirming that although it might take a long time, in the end justice will prevail. "If not for the help of Hashem, my soul might have soon grown quiet." This refers to death. We tell Hashem that His kindness supports us. His words of comfort given over to us through the prophets who depicted the end of days, strengthen us. When *Mashiach* will come, the nations will be punished, and we

will finally reap our just reward.

Some have the custom to add two verses from the next chapter. "*Lechu neranena*... Let us go and thank Hashem, we will sing to Him, He who gives us salvation..." This addition indicates that on Wednesday we begin to anticipate the coming Shabbat.

What does the fourth day have to do with Moshe Rabbeinu? What is the message and potential inherent in this day that we are called to tap into?

The commentaries ask, what is the difference between the light that was created on the first day and the luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, that were created on the fourth day? On the first day the light was so powerful, that part of it needed to be hidden away for the righteous in the world to come. On the fourth day, the light was contained within the luminaries. Too much light is damaging. We need something that will minimize it, to the extent that our eyes will be capable of absorbing it. By creating the luminaries, Hashem made the light fit for the use of man.