

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
MISHPATIM 5778

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

# בְּשִׁיטְיָחָא

## Nothing Like Knowing

The *Medrash*<sup>1</sup> points out the words which our *Parshah* starts with, "And these are the laws..." implies that this sentence is a continuation of a previous sentence. What is the connection between the beginning of *Parshas Mishpatim*, and the previous *Parshah*?

The *Medrash* explains that in *Parshas Yisro, Klal Yisrael* received the *Aseres HaDibros* in the morning, while they received the *Mishpatim*, laws, in the evening.

Though this may explain how the two events were connected (both being on the same day) it seems an insignificant circumstance of history. Why is it important to know exactly when various laws were told to the *Bnei Yisrael*?

Reb Gedaliah Schorr<sup>2</sup> (1910-1979) clarifies the message behind this cryptic comment. He points out that in the morning, we are able to see with clarity, as the bright sun is shining, lighting up the world. However, as the evening nears, our sight is blurred, and we do not have the lucidity that we possessed just hours ago.

Similarly, when the *Aseres HaDibros* were given, there was a burst of clarity that obviated the very need for the *Mishpatim*. At that point, who could possibly think of harming another person through theft and the like? Nevertheless, life goes on, and that clarity is lost. Therefore, the *Mishpatim* were given 'in the evening,' as a way to navigate through the darkness of life.

What seems to be a plethora of *Halachic* edicts is nothing more than what we would have done ourselves, had we retained the understanding we had 'in the morning' at *Har Sinai*. Not only that, but the *Mitzvos* and accompanying *Halachos* even allow us to return to the recognition and comprehension of *Har Sinai*, if we would spend the time to properly analyze and understand them.

What an opportunity! We have within our grasp the ability to understand the Torah to the point that we would intuitively keep all of its laws. And even if we have not yet achieved that level of understanding, we can recognize that the laws of the Torah are not minutiae to be dispatched, rather, every obscure *Halacha* is a chance to better understand the beauty of Hashem's Torah.

1 *Shemos Rabbah* 30:11

2 *Ohr Gedalyahu* p51-58

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Light and dark, morning and evening, what does it mean to me? How will this help my Torah learning?

Sometimes the simplest approach is the best. We all know that Hashem gave us the Torah at that wondrous moment in history. But have we ever stopped to contemplate what that truly means?

The Master of all creation, the One who knows all, and sees all, and knows the purpose of the universe, and my purpose in the world, has given us the 'manual' of life! We have within our possession, the 'book' written by Hashem Himself!

You can walk into any school, shul, or house, and take it right off the shelf! You can hold it in your hands! And by learning it, and the Gemara that explains it, you will access the wisdom of Hashem!

How amazing is that?! We have the ability to reach across the ages, to tap into that moment at *Har Sinai*, and read the same words that Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon HaKohen, and that entire generation experienced!

When we focus on this idea, it cannot fail to inspire us.

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# LEARN LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Jon\* always liked telling his story of how he became a *Baal Teshuvah*. He liked reliving his experience of discovery, and found that people enjoyed hearing him discuss his background.

"I was a college kid out in the Midwest. I always knew I was Jewish, but it didn't mean much to me - I had no connection to the religion, and very little knowledge of what it means to be a Jew.

In college, I took some electives, one which was Medieval Philosophy. During the course, the professor quoted something from Maimonides, which I found to be thought provoking, so I went to look it up.

While searching online, I came across so much information, both about him, and about Judaism in general. I didn't know there was so much to know!

A bit later, I was in the cafeteria when I saw a rabbi walking through (turns out, he was the campus rabbi, but I didn't know that at the time). I approached him, and asked him some questions about the quotes I heard from Maimonides. He started to answer, sized me up, and asked me if I'm Jewish. When I responded in the affirmative, he suggested that we sit down, and study the sources together, instead of a short conversation in the cafeteria.

What an experience that was! In just that first session, I saw a clarity of thought, not just of the *Rambam*, but of Judaism, that I'd never seen before. What really caught me was the systemic approach to everything. All laws, whether it's about properly honoring parents, sending away a mother bird, or speaking gossip, are approached with the same earnestness. These people take life seriously! I always assumed Judaism's main message was, "Be good," but that's about it. The fact that for millennia, every aspect of life has been worked out until its end was really inspiring. It made me want to learn as much about Judaism as I could."

*\*Based on a true story, name has been changed.*

**The fact that for millennia, every aspect of life has been worked out until its end was really inspiring.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Learning the relevant laws is a powerful strategy one can employ in responding to challenges of the *Yetzer Horah*.<sup>1</sup>
- One cannot properly understand the Torah without understanding the pertinent Gemara as well, much like one cannot understand a lecture from simply reading a student's shorthand notes.<sup>2</sup>
- One reason why the general populace sins is because their leaders don't properly understand Torah to the depths that they should!<sup>3</sup>

1 *Ohr Yisrael* Letter 7

2 Rav S. R. Hirsch *Mishpatim* 21:2 s.v. כי תקנה

3 *Seforno Devarim* 32:15 s.v. וישמן ישורון