

Parashat Mishpatim

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

EXODUS 21:1-24:18

Parashat Mishpatim / פְּרָשַׁת מִשְׁפָּטִים

In this week's guide...

The **COMMENTARY** from Rabbi Jason unpacks the significance of the title of this week's Torah portion: *Mishpatim*. In this study, we're invited to consider the deeper implications and purposes of God's commands. Were the laws given in a vacuum, strictly serving to ensure a particular kind of behavior or even society? Or might there be a broader, more historical context for these texts, one that is not only just, but personal?..... 1

Our **NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** ushers us to the "Mountain of God"—Sinai. The giving of the Ten Commandments was a covenantal event and afterward, the Lord established it in a series of actions culminating with a banquet for Moses and those seventy elders he selected (remember *Yitro*?). This epic, holy moment contains so many connections to New Testament realities that the article is running over with them. Get ready!..... 2

BY THE NUMBERS picks up where the NT Tie-in leaves off and analyzes the numerical value of the Torah's description of that covenantal mountain-moment: "the glory of YHVH rested." And things take off from there! Rabbi guides us on an alpha-numeric journey that includes the tabernacle, the Aaronic Blessing, the tablets of the Commandments, and so much more. As always, your mind will be blown and your faith will be strengthened..... 3

OVERVIEW

Mishpatim is the Hebrew word for "laws" and is the second word in this *parsha*, which is the sixth weekly Torah portion in the Book of Exodus and the eighteenth in the annual Torah reading cycle. This portion lays out a series of laws, which some scholars call the "Covenant Code." It reports the people's acceptance of the covenant with God. Finally, there is a section which establishes the Sabbath and other "[appointed times](#)."

WORD OF THE WEEK

דֶּרֶךְ
derek

def: Way, road, journey, manner, work. Related to the verb *darak* "to tread, trample"; hence, it refers first to a path worn by constant walking. *Derek* can also mean "journey," usually one of several days' duration. More numerous are the metaphorical uses of *derek*. It often refers to the actions and behavior of men, who either follow the way of the righteous or the way of the wicked (Psalm 1:6).

taken from *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

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FUSION GLOBAL WITH RABBI JASON
Weekly Torah Portion – *Parashat Mishpatim* / פרשת מִשְׁפָּטִים

Exodus 21:1-24:18

COMMENTARY

by Rabbi Jason Sobel

This week's Torah portion is named *Mishpatim*, which means "statutes." In the context of this Torah reading, *mishpatim* refers to those social laws which were given by God to ensure that the Jewish people wouldn't abuse others, but rather, would treat them with dignity and respect.

Mishpatim begins by discussing the laws of the indentured Hebrew servants. Why does the Torah talk about Hebrew slaves after the giving of the Ten Commandments? Because one of the underlying messages of Exodus is that God wants to continually move His people from slavery to higher levels of freedom. God wants to break His people completely out of their slave mentality. **He took Israel out of Egypt, but he had to take Egypt out of Israel.** Their redemption was not the end, but the just the beginning of a long spiritual journey of transformation and healing.



The "indentured servant" spoken of in this passage was a Hebrew who was forced to become a servant due to financial hardship. Either they could not provide for themselves, or they owed a debt they could not repay. But the Scripture makes it clear that they were not to remain slaves forever but only for a season: **"If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve for six years, and in the seventh he is to go free, without payment"** (Exodus 21:2).

The Children of Israel had to allow indentured servants to be set free eventually. Why? Because God made humanity in His image. This reality means that every individual has inherent dignity and worth. Even the Declaration of Independence acknowledges this: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

God's justice was not like the Egyptians who wanted to enslave Israel in perpetuity. God commanded Israel not to be like the Egyptians, the people, and places that sought to destroy destiny and potential by limiting freedom for personal profit. The *mishpatim* commandments in the Torah are, in part, meant to ensure that the Children of Israel would not do to others what the Egyptians had done to them. These commandments are significant because too often, the abused become abusers and perpetuate the cycle of abuse. **God empowers His people to rise above and break any negative cycles in their past.** Setting people free is what our Messiah came to do. While in the synagogue in Nazareth, *Yeshua* stood and declared,

The Ruach Adonai is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor... Then He began to tell them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Lk 4:18-19, 21)

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Yeshua paid your debt so that you could be set free! Don't remain a slave to your past hurts, fears, and disappointments. Walk in the freedom that Messiah purchased for you.

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

Many Bibles include chapter headings that offer a brief description of a given section. While not divinely inspired, these editorial supplements can be helpful in our effort to get the “lay of the (textual) land.” For example, we can see phrases like “The Covenant Confirmed” or “Cutting the Covenant at Sinai” or “The Blood of the Covenant” atop Exodus 24 in this week's *parsha*. The word common to each of those phrases is “covenant.” Of course, the covenant at Sinai points to a “better” covenant—the one established by *Yeshua* (see [Heb 8:1-6](#)).

In Exodus 24 there are several elements that serve as signposts, pointing us to the ultimate “covenantal” reality found in our Messiah. Consider the opening verses,

Then to Moses He said, “Come up to *Adonai*, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, and worship from afar. Moses alone is to approach *Adonai*, but the others may not draw near, nor are the people to go up with him.” (vv. 1-2)



Garden of Gethsemane

In this text detailing events that involved Moses and three companions, we find allusions to the Lord's experience in Gethsemane, when three men (Peter, James, and John) joined Him. Like Moses, *Yeshua* withdrew from them to commune with God (Matt 26:36).

The events in the Garden of Gethsemane led directly to that supreme covenantal moment: the cross of Calvary. On the cross, our Lord shed His blood. While the blood of the Passover lamb provided *protection* in Egypt, the blood of the “Lamb of God” provides *transformation* for us today: “how much more will the blood of Messiah—who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God—cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14)

And what do we see in the description of the events on the mountain? The shedding of blood (Ex 24:5-8). The writer of Hebrews identified this exact moment later on in the same chapter, “not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood” (v. 18 – *Exodus 24 and Hebrews 9 complement each other*). Paul's description of the Last Supper in his first letter to the believers in Corinth further connected “covenant” and “blood”:

In the same way, He also took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in memory of Me.” (xi.25)

It's worth noting, therefore, that Exodus 24 also includes an allusion to that inaugural covenantal meal that *Yeshua* shared with His disciples.

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up. They saw the God of Israel, and under His feet was something like a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the very heavens. Yet He did not raise His hand against the nobles of *Bnei-Yisrael*. So they beheld God, and ate and drank. (vv. 9-11 *emphasis added*)

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There is a profound connection between these three realities: covenant, sharing a meal, and revelation. At the “confirming of the covenant” at Sinai, Moses and the elders shared a meal on the foot of the mountain. *Yeshua* established the new covenant with a meal in an upper room (Luke 22:12). But the Torah also notes that Moses and the elders “beheld God.” This detail foreshadows another moment when a meal led to revelation: “**And it happened that when He was reclining at the table with them, He took the *matzah*, offered a *bracha* and, breaking it, gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him**” (Luke 24:30-31). Whom did they recognize? The very One who declared, “**He who has seen Me has seen the Father**” (John 14:9).

Following the spectacular meal at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses instructed the elders, “**Wait for us here until we come back to you... When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it**” (Ex 24:14-15).

Their covenant feast immediately follows the solemn covenant oath taken by all the people, who stand fenced off at the foot of the mountain (Ex. 24:3, 8). But Moshe is called to Sinai’s summit. He alone penetrates the mist from *ha-shamayim* (*the waters above*). He alone enters heaven’s clouds.¹

Moses climbed the mountain in response to God’s command: “Come up to Me” (v. 12). The Hebrew for that phrase is *aleh elai*—literally, “ascend to me.”ⁱⁱ This fact points to Acts 1:9, “**while they were watching—[*Yeshua*] was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.**” Yes, this passage in Exodus even includes a reference to the Lord’s Ascension into the clouds. This part of the account is especially relevant for our daily lives. Moses told Israel to wait until he returned. Yet, in the interim, they grew impatient and committed the sin of the golden calf. The New Testament tells us that our Ascended Lord—the “greater than Moses” (Deut 18:18)—“**will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those eagerly awaiting Him for salvation**” (Heb 9:28 *emphasis added*).

How are you living in the waiting? This is not the time to lose heart or grow impatient, but to wait faithfully and eagerly for our Messiah’s return. We have a sure and reliable promise that “**This *Yeshua*, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven**” (Acts 1:11).



Ascension by John Singleton Copley (1775)

BY THE NUMBERS



When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it... The appearance of the glory of *Adonai* was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of *Bnei-Yisrael*. So Moses entered into the midst of the cloud and went up onto the mountain. -Exodus 24:15, 17-18a

In this week’s Torah portion, God calls Moses to ascend Mount Sinai to establish His covenant with the Children of Israel. God appears on Sinai like a “consuming fire,” and “the glory of *Adonai* settled” upon the mountain. The numerical value of the Hebrew phrase “the glory of YHVH rested” is 444. What is the fire and glory of God in connection to 444 meant to communicate to the Children of Israel and us today?

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The numeric value of *mikdash* (“sanctuary/temple”) is 444. God did not intend for Israel’s experience of His glorious Presence at Sinai to be merely a one-time visitation. His intent was inauguration of His long-term habitation among them. The Lord’s command to build “a sanctuary/tabernacle” (444) was to lead to “the glory of YHVH settling” (444) among the Children of Israel from “generation to generation” (*L’Dor VaDor* / 444). The number 444 even hints at the future location of God’s House. The numeric value “in the heights of Zion” (*bemarom Tzion*) equals 444, which alludes to Jerusalem (aka “Zion”) as being the future site of the “Temple” (444).

More specifically, 444 points to having an intimate relationship with the Lord. The High Priestly blessing by which God would place His name upon the people says, “*Adonai* make His face to shine on you” (*Yaer Adonai panav eilecha*), which has the value of 444 (see [Num 6:25](#)). Just like God’s glory filled the Temple, the Lord wants us to manifest His glorious Presence, which is the source of great blessing.

But of course, there is more! The Hebrew phrase “consecrate to Me” (i.e., the LORD)—*kadesh li*—equals 444 and comes from the same lexical root as “Sanctuary/Temple” (444). God not only wanted the “Temple” (444) to be the place that “the glory of the Lord settled” (444) but instead wants every person who believes in Him to become “temples of the Holy Spirit” ([1 Cor 6:19](#)).



A key to Israel’s holiness and consecration to God was knowing and keeping God’s commandments. The foundational commandments are the Ten Commandments, which God inscribed on the “two table tablets of stone” that Moses received on Mount Sinai. It’s fascinating that “Tablets” (*Luchot*) as well as the “the way of your precepts” (*derech pekudecha* – Psa 119:2) both add up to 444.

Most importantly, 444 is connected to love, which is the ultimate key to our intimacy and connection with God. The phrases “I love the Lord” and “to the love the *Alph-Tav*” (the First and the Last) both equal 444. The phrase “perfect love” (*teleia agapē* in Greek) also adds up to 444 as in, “[There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear](#)” (1 John 4:18). When we know God’s love for us and love Him in return, it brings freedom and victory over fear and anxiety.

The ultimate demonstration of God’s “perfect love” (444) is that the Eternal Word...

the “Messiah of God” / *Mashiach Elohim* (444)...
became “flesh and blood” / *sarx kai aima* (444 in Greek) and...
“He shed blood” / *dam shafak* (444) by...
dying “upon the tree” / *al ha-eitz* (444 – full calculation) to...
reverse the “exile” / *hagelut* (444) so that...
we find “life” / *chayyah* (444 – full calculation) through...
Yeshua, “the Lord, the great God, and the great King above all gods” / *El gadol YHVH u’Melech gadol al kol elohim* (444 – Psa 95:3).

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Tree of Life Version*.

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Rabbi Jason Sobel & Fusion Global present BY THE NUMBERS
HEBREW & GREEK ARE "ALPHANUMERIC" // LETTERS = NUMBERS

The following words and phrases = **444**

"Adonai make His face to shine on you" / *Yaer Adonai panav eilecha*

"in the heights of Zion" / *bemarom Tzion*

"the way of your precepts" / *derech pekudecha*

"the glory of YHVH rested"

"sanctuary/temple" / *mikdash*

"consecrate to Me" / *kadesh li*

"perfect love" / *teleia agapē* (Gr)

"the Lord, the great God,
and the great King above all gods"



El gadol YHVH u'Melech gadol al kol elohim



THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- We believe that God is involved in our lives on a personal level. He is a God of action. But God doesn't necessarily do everything—we're invited into the process. Rabbi Jason said, "God empowers His people to rise above and break any negative cycles in their past." What is the connection between God's commandments and our empowerment? Between those commandments and living in freedom for the negative cycles of our past?
- After Moses told the Israelites to wait for his return, they fell into the sins of idolatry and revelry because they grew impatient. How do you handle waiting for God? What are your most significant challenges during the waiting? When have you experienced tremendous success in waiting (and why)?

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NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: *Parashat Terumah* / פרשת תרומה

TORAH

Sunday / Exodus 25:1-16

Monday / Exodus 25:17-30

Tuesday / Exodus 25:31-26:14

Wednesday / Exodus 26:15-30

Thursday / Exodus 26:31-37

Friday / Exodus 27:1-8

Saturday / Exodus 27:9-19

Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*): 1 Kings 5:26-6:13

New Covenant Reading: Mark 12:35-44

ⁱ Jeffrey Enoch. Feinberg Ph.D. and Kim Alan Moudy, [*Walk Exodus!: Names*](#) (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2000), 113.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.