



Parshas Mishpatim 2023, seize the moment

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the immediate and speedy recovery of **Daniel Aaron Chaim Ben Ruth**. May he and all those who need a Refuah Shlema experience G-d's mercy and compassion swiftly!*

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with G-d giving Moshe and the Jewish nation fifty-three new practical commandments. The laws regarding the treatment of slaves, personal injury, murder, and the requirements of a person who is a guardian of another's property. The commandment to see the Beis Hamikdash three times a year, the laws of Shemitah, sacrifices, and returning a lost object.

Moshe then tells the Jewish nation what rewards they will receive for keeping G-d's commandments. There will be no miscarriages, the borders of Israel will grow, and they will conquer the land without opposition.

The Parsha ends with G-d summoning Moshe Rabbienu back up Mt. Sinai to study the Torah for forty days and forty nights. Moshe told the seventy elders that his brother, Aaron, and his nephew, Chur, would answer any questions they had in his absence.

G-d's glory set the mountain top ablaze as Moshe began to ascend the mountain with his most faithful student, Yeshuah Ben Nun. The whole Jewish nation watched as Moshe disappeared into the clouds from afar.

However, a question comes to mind: The commandment that Moshe is given is about the Jewish slave. A Jewish slave is someone who stole and can't pay back what they have stolen; they are required to work to pay off their debt. But why is the Jewish slave the first commandment that Moshe is given to teach the Jewish people? What is the purpose of teaching laws that can't be fulfilled in the desert?!

The Ramban, Rav Moshe Ben Nachman, a leading Torah scholar in the 12th century, gives a very simple explanation. He writes that there is a seven-year limit for a Jewish slave. Meaning that unless they want to extend their servitude, they go free at the end of the Shemitah cycle.

The Ramban explains that whether they want to remain a slave or go free, they invoke our liberation from Egypt. They say וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּפְדֶּךָ ה' - *Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and G-d redeemed you; therefore, I commanding you about this (the Jewish slave) today.*"

However, the Rabbeinu Bachya, Rav Bachya Ben Asher, a leading Torah scholar from the late 12th century, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that with the giving of the Torah, G-d took ownership and control over the Jewish people. He gave us our mission to be His ambassadors of light and kindness, joining us together permanently.

The Rabbienu Bachya explains that G-d first commanded Moshe about the Jewish slave for two vital and important reasons. First, to show the depth of the relationship between Creator and creation, G-d and His chosen people. When we succeed and prosper, His Holy Name is elevated and exalted. His Oneness and Unity are known and recognized across the world.

Second, we may never be truly enslaved or subjugated by anyone but by the King of Kings, our Father in Heaven. Our lives are forever bound to the obligations and duties that were bestowed upon us at Mt Sinai.

Any and all other enslavement are brief and temporary, for G-d only owns us.

The time we are granted here on earth is an opportunity from above to accomplish our purpose. To fulfill our unique and singular objective, to experience the power and love of G-d.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we understand that the one thing we can never get back is time. The clock is always ticking, no matter who we are or what we have. Most take it for granted, yet, time is the most finite and precious resource in the world.

The most perplexing part of time is that some accomplish much more in the same 24 hours. Although it may appear that they have more hours in their day, in reality, they just value and utilize every second given to them.

The lesson of the Jewish slave is recognizing that every second we are given is valuable beyond comprehension. We should seize the moment to fulfill our mission and purpose and create a path for the coming of Moshiach.

**"To be a Jew is to know that though we are here, we are also elsewhere.
We live in time, but we are addressed by the voice of One who is beyond time."**

-Rabbi Lord Dr. Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*