



8 years of Points to Ponder on

Parashas Mishpatim/Shekalim

**Learning in the Shul this week is graciously sponsored**

By Lynn and Marvin Rosenzweig & family

In memory of

Lynn's grandmother, Bayla Freyda bas Chaim Volf (Yartzeit 26 Shvat),

Marvin's father, Klonymis ben Moshe Yisroel (Yartzeit 27 Shvat)

& Lynn's father, Avraham Yoel ben Shmuel (Yartzeit 7 Adar)

& by

the Pinsker families

in memory of Yossi's and Chaim's grandmother,

Rachel bas Elchanan Tzvi HaLevi

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים These are the Mishpatim that you will place before them (21:1) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would often note that there is a Machlokes in Sanhedrin as to whether Peshara (arbitration) is permissible, permitted or obligatory. We hold it is a Mitzva. But what is Peshara? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl** stated that Peshara refers to what Yosher dictates even if it is beyond the letter of the law. Rav Schachter added that sometimes this means paying in full and sometimes it is even a Chutzpah to ask for the letter of the law. He used the example of the person who borrows a piece of jewelry from an employee, loses it and then argues that there is no need to pay since Baalav Emo.

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים Why do Mishpatim follow the Mizbeiach? –** **Rashi** explains that we learn that the Sanhedrin needed to meet in a semi circle so as not to sit in the Azarah but we see that they needed to sit s close to the Mizbeiach as possible. This is learned from the proximity of this Parsha to the end of Yisro. **Ramban**explains that the Psakim of the Sanhedrin are binding on the rest of the people. Many assume that this means that it is binding even if the Sanhedrin is incorrect. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often point out that this is wrong --- even the Talmidei Chachamim CAN make mistakes. The meeting of the Sanhedrin reminds us that they will hopefully receive inspiration from the Mizbeiach when they judge not only for themselves but from Siyata D’Shmiya.  Alternatively**, Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl**. suggested that the issue was that one cannot be “Frum” (i.e. the mizbeiach) without strict adherence to Bein Adam L’Chaveiro rules.

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים And these are the Mishpatim(21:1)  -  President Richard Joel** once spoke about a train accident in which the investigators tried to piece together the causes of the accident. They interviewed the signalman who swore top the investigators that he did as he was trained – and waved the lantern as he was taught. The board was about to find fault with the engineer until it dawned on them that they also needed to ask the signalman to find out if he also remembered to put batteries into the lantern and turn it on. **Rabbi Bernard Weinberger Shlita**  explains that the same thing happened at MaaMad Har Sinai. We needed the Mitzvos of Mishpatim which are logical and almost run on their own. However when we received the spark at Maamad Har Sinai with Matan Torah it was the factor that was supposed to ignite the Jews to stay on track.

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים These are the Mishpatim that you should place before them (21:1)-** The Sanhedrin met in Lishkas HaGazis which is identified as being half in the Mikdash and half not. Ramban explains that this was the case so that the Sanhedrin would have the inspiration of the Luchos in their Psak. **Rav Schachter Shlita** points out that even after Yoshiahu  HaMelech hid the Aron, the guidance of Psak is built on the idea of Siyata D’Shmiya which helps protect the Rav from erring in Psak.

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֥ר תָּשִׂ֖ים לִפְנֵיהֶֽם And these are the Mishpatim (21:1)** -  **Rashi** notes that the connection between this section andthe one before it teaches us that that the sanhedrin needs to be near the Mizbeiach. Why? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that in general we say “Sod Hashem Liyireiav Uvris Lihodiam”  -- that Hashem promised siata dishmaya to all the chachamim. But the Sanhedrin needs a higher level of Siyata dishmaya because their rulings are binding on everyone in a global way. Being close near the mizbeach will give them that extra Divine influence.

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֥ר תָּשִׂ֖ים לִפְנֵיהֶֽם These are the social laws which you shall set before them (21:1) - Rashi** notes that the Mishpatim here are combined with the preceding one to teach us that all of the Mtzvos, like the Aseres HaDibbros, are Divine. **Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl.** explained that the Torah wanted us to know that even the socially conscious Mishpatim are not subjected to the interpretation of society at a particular moment in time. Even those Mitzvos are not open to reinterpretation or suggested reapplication or disbandment. Torah is Divine and it cannot be subjected to social whims.

**וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים  These are the laws (21:1)** - In his opening comment on the parsha, **Rashi**points out (quoting the tana'im) that the correct location of the Sanhedrin is in the Beis Hamikdosh. The particular room (known as the lishkas hagazis) in which they met during the period of Bayis Sheini was divided into two parts. One half was sanctified with the kedusha of the azarah, while the other half only had the kedusha of the har habayis. No one may sit in the azarah except for a king who is a descendant of malchus Beis Dovid. Even the seventy one members of the Sanhedrin had to be careful to only sit in the half of the room which did not have kedushas ha'azarah. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would regularly quote the **Netziv**who noted that toward the end of the first Beis HaMikdash the Aron was Nignaz in order to give the Sanhedrin a chance to practice Psak without the heavy overt presence of their proximity to the Luchos. **Rav Schachter** added that even after this major change, our ability to rely on the psak of a human being is still based on the assumption that "sod Hashen leyerai'av" (Tehilim 25:14). Whenever we don't know one way or another, we should assume that a talmid chacham who is God fearing has had divine assistance to pasken properly. When the Sanhedrin sat in their office near the aron with luchos we assumed that they had an even stronger degree of siyata dishmaya not to err. Whether during the earlier years of the first Beis Hamikdash (when the aron was in the kodesh hakodoshim), during the period of the second Beis Hamikdash (when the aron was in the specially designed vault in the basement), or nowadays (when the rabbonim are nowhere near the aron at all) the right (and the obligation) to assume that the psak of a rabbi is not in error is certainly based on the supernatural assumption that the rov was granted divine assistance not to err.

 **וְאֵ֨לֶּה֙ הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים And these are the ordinances that you shall place before them. If you buy a Jewish slave, he shall work for six years ( 21:1-2). Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita**  noted in the name of his father-in-law who  wondered why the parsha begins with the laws relating to the Jewish slave. After all, these  laws were only to apply once they entered Eretz Yisrael. There are other laws in Parshat Mishpatim which applied immediately so why does the Parsha open with the laws of the Jewish slave? Moreover, the  Yerushalmi teaches us that the laws of the Jewish slave were taught while the people were still slaves in Egypt? Why was that the time to teach about the laws of a Jewish slave?  Rav Nebenzahl’s father in law answered  that the best time to teach about the laws of the Jewish slave is when one is a slave and understands what it means to be a slave. Hashem wants us to understand, to live what we learn and not just to say the words - to feel what the other person is going through. Only a slave can truly understand what it's like to be a slave.

 **עֶ֣בֶד עִבְרִ֔י** **Eved Ivri (21:2)-- Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** noted the proximity of the story of Naaseh V’Nishma in this week’s Parsha to the life and law of Eved Ivri. He utilized the famous comment of the **Lev Simcha**who once told his Chassidim that if when reciting Hallel they were to have the greatest Kavana when saying “Ana Hashem” they could do amazing things. The Chassidim debated as to whether their Rebbe meant Ana Hashem Hoshiya or Ana Hashem Hatzlicha and he explained that he meant “Ana Hashem Kee Ani Avdeicha”. Rav Asher added that the first 2 “Ana Hashem” examples begin with a pleading “Ana” (where Ana ends with an  Alef) while the one he referenced was an “Ana” that ended with a “Heh” which was a statement of Hakarat HaTov. When one says that one -- where we are thanking Hashem for making us His servants -- we have the ability to recognize the single most important thing in our lives -- that we have the connection that gives meaning to everything -- and that will inspire others as well.  This was achieved at the time of Maamad Har Sinai. We became Avdei Hashem and were finally free of all other burdens.

**וְרָצַ֨ע אֲדֹנָ֤יו אֶת־אָזְנוֹ֙ בַּמַּרְצֵ֔עַ You shall pierce his ear (21:6)** - Why his ear? It is because that is the ear that had heard that Bnei Yisrael are only supposed to serve Hashem (Kiddushin 22b). When you choose to be a slave, Hashem wants your ear to open more. **Rav Belsky ztl** explained that the purpose of the piercing is to get him to have better hearing. He thinks that everything is ok as a slave to another. He needs to open his ear to hear better.

**וְרָצַ֨ע אֲדֹנָ֤יו אֶת־אָזְנוֹ֙ בַּמַּרְצֵ֔ע And his master shall bring him to the door and prick the ear (21:6) – Rashi**cites the Gemara (Kiddushin 22b) that explains that we do Retziah in the ear because it was the ear that heard at Sinai that the Jewish people were supposed to serve Hashem and now wants to remain a slave to another man. **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** asks why we do not prick the ear when the person is sold if, after all, the same ear heard that a Jew is not supposed to steal? Rav Schwab ztl. answers that when one steals a soul from the Jewish people he is not stealing from the rest of the nation, he is stealing the person from his obligations to Hashem. Now, at the time he makes the choice to remain a Porek Ol, he deserves the punishment of Retziah.

**וְרָצַ֨ע אֲדֹנָ֤יו אֶת־אָזְנוֹ֙ בַּמַּרְצֵ֔ע And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl (21:6) –** Why the ear? Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai explains (Bava Kama 7b) that the ear that heard that the Jews should only be servants to Hashem and now wants to take on a different master, that ear shall be pierced. **Rav Yechezkel Levenstein ztl.**noted that homiletically this section does not only speak to the person who is an Eved Ivri but rather to teach us that a regular human being was not naturally created to be a slave. He was created to be an Eved Hashem. What is an Eved? Rav Chatzkel explained that an Eved lacks personal strength and personal desires. He is totally submissive to his master. The same commitment to a master IS desirable when the master is Hashem. **Rav Elya Sveii ztl**. added that if one is enslaved to his own desires, such a person is also enslaved and has acquired a foreign master for himself. This is a contradiction to serving Hashem and needs corrective action and focus.

**וְרָצַ֨ע אֲדֹנָ֤יו אֶת־אָזְנוֹ֙ בַּמַּרְצֵ֔ע And his master shall prick his ear at the door  (21:6)–** How does one EVER choose Retziah over freedom? **Rav Leibel Sheinbaum Shlita  quoted Rav Yitzchak Malca** who noted that when one does not know what one wants from life, s/he is enslaved to it.And eventhough it is tough in life to make decisions, it is a responsibility. A free person chooses to make life choices. An Eved stays enslaved to whatever s/he hears.  **Rav Wolbe ztl.** adds that when one makes the Beracha Shelo Asanee Eved, he needs to consider what he is enslaved to. If one is worried about PR then one is an Eved. If one worries about the title “Yeshivishe” “open” etc. then he or she is not free but is an Eved.

 **לֹ֥א תֵצֵ֖א כְּצֵ֥את הָֽעֲבָדִֽים:  When a man sells his daughter as a maidservant, she shall not leave as the servants do  (21:7) - Ramban** explains that this means that if he dislocates her eye or tooth, she might not go free but he must pay her for the damage.**Rav Wolbe ztl.** quoted from Uncle Tom’s Cabin that in the old Slavery movement, the slaves, male and female were there to allow one to do with them as the master wanted. This was not the case with the Jewish concept of slavery. The Jewish slave was entitled to some sort of workfare wherein the owner needed to care not only for the slave but also for his family and had to pay work related injury fees. Even the Eved Canaani was given certain Torah based rights wherein one could not damage him and if he did, in the eye or tooth, he was entitled to his freedom.

**Dinei Nezikin** – The Gemara in Bava Kamma (4a) expressly exempts the owner of a slave from paying for damages caused by the slave in order to prevent the slave from exacting revenge on his master. **The Chazon Ish ztl.** learns that it is impossible for one to make another responsible for the damages of a Baal Bechirah. **Rav Pam ztl**. would often add that the same is true for those who blame others for wasting time. The surroundings that one has, often impacts the one’s use of time but ultimately it is the Baal Bechirah who is responsible for how the time is spent.

 **מֵעִ֣ם מִזְבְּחִ֔י תִּקָּחֶ֖נּוּ לָמֽוּת: From my Mizbeiach he shall be taken to his death (21:14) - Ibn Ezra**notes the stark contrast to the Shogeig-- in the latter case, there is a potential for Ir Miklat while here, with the Meizid the holiness of the Mizbeiach - the most holiest of places, shall not protect him. Why? **Rabbeinu Bachaya**explains that the rule needs to be this way because it is the will of Hashem. Demonstrating Rachmanus when the law is to encourage death, is Achzariyus on the world. **Chasam Sofer**explains that the one who committed murder and hangs out on top of the Mizbeiach is in the wrong place. The Mizbeiach extends life and he who took a life willingly, cut one off -- he does not deserve the protection of that which extends life. Thus, he is removed. **Rav Binyomin Eisenberger Shlita** used this idea to explain why it happens that people who engage in known Segulos for Arichus Yamim do not always achieve it. The answer is that one cannot have the long life if s/he is still attached to things that cut off life. Engaging in behaviors that cut life short and asking for long life is a contradiction and it is not a surprise that such contradictions do not work.

**עַ֚יִן תַּ֣חַת עַ֔יִן  An Eye for an eye (21:25)** – The idea is that one pays Money in place of the damaged eye. Why do we use the word “Tachas” instead of the more obvious “B’Ad”? The **Vilna Gaon** answers that if one looks at the letters that immediately follow the letters of Ayin you will get the letters of the word Kessef.

**עַ֚יִן תַּ֣חַת עַ֔יִן  Eye for an eye (21:25)** - Secular societies took this literally. Even in Chazal, Rabbi Eliezer saw this as a potentially literal punishment. The other Chachamim argued. How did they arrive at their conclusion that the intent of the Possuk was Mamon? **Rav Yaakov Medan Shlita** suggested that the moment there is a choice between death or amputation, on the one hand, and monetary compensation, on the other, a person is obligated to choose the latter, on the basis of the principle, “And you shall choose life”.

**עַ֚יִן תַּ֣חַת עַ֔יִן  An eye for an eye ( 21:25)** – The Talmud uses deductive logic to teach us that one is obligated financially – not like the Hammurabi code. But how can the Gemara go against the obvious literal meaning of the Possuk? And if it was to mean financial, why didn’t the Torah just say that? **Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook ztl.** explained that while the punishment is merely only financial, the Torah is teaching us that the offender really deserved a more serious penalty.

**כָּל־אַלְמָנָ֥ה וְיָת֖וֹם לֹ֥א תְעַנּֽוּן Don’t distress any widow or orphan…for I will hear since I am merciful (22:21-22) – Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** points out that this is a great source for one who calls out to Hashem when he has nowhere else to turn. Such Tefillos are sincere and are unlikely to go without response. Parenthetically, **Daas Zekanim** adds that those careful not to distress these people down on their luck will also benefit for when they offer Berachos of praise in gratitude for the good done to them, Hashem hears that too.

**כִּ֣י אִם־צָעֹ֤ק יִצְעַק֙ אֵלַ֔י שָׁמֹ֥עַ אֶשְׁמַ֖ע צַֽעֲקָתֽוֹ I shall certainly hear his scream (22:22)** - Why the double language of “I will certainly hear”? **Rav Michel Feinstein ztl**. explained that even the Middas HaRachamim will work AGAINST the person. Usually, the Middas HaDin prosecutes the sinner and Middas Harachamim tries to defend but when the person tortures a widow or an orphan Middas HaRachamim stays with the orphan.

**אִם־כֶּ֣סֶף | תַּלְוֶ֣ה אֶת־עַמִּ֗י When you have money (22:24)** - The Torah sees the prohibition against Ribbis as being a major violation. While it is a financial one deserving of placement in Choshen Mishpat, it appears in Yoreh Deah. Why? It seems that based on our Parsha, Hashem takes special exception to the one who accepts Ribbis as not only an affront to one’s fellow man but to Hashem as well. But why can’t Ribbis be collected if both parties agree to it? **Ksav Sofer** explains that the Torah abhors passive self advancement. The Torah wants us to work for our advancement. When it comes without any effort on our part, the Torah is not ok with the process.

**אִם־כֶּ֣סֶף | תַּלְוֶ֣ה אֶת־עַמִּ֗י When you will lend money to a poor person who is with you (22:24).- Rashi**explains that one should look at himself  as if he is the poor person. **Rav Mordechai Willig Shlita** added that one cannot properly fulfill the mitzvos of tzedaka and chesed unless one establishes a strong sense of unity with the recipient. If one looks down on the poor, or is emotionally detached, the mere giving of money is only an incomplete mitzvah.In a world of adversarial relationships, of banging and bruising, of looks which can kill, we are commanded to achieve unity between donor and recipient, blesser and blessed. By viewing and loving others as part of ourselves, we can transform negative forces into positive ones, and merit Hashem's bracha.

**וְאַנְשֵׁי־קֹ֖דֶשׁ תִּֽהְי֣וּן לִ֑י You should be people of Kedusha to me… meat in the field is a Treifa, it should be left to the dogs (22:30) – Rashi**reminds us that this was a reward for the fact that the dogs were silent when the Jews left Mitzrayim. **Rav Shmuel Barenbaum ztl**. asked why we reward the dogs who lacked Bechira how to act? He explains based on **Ramban’s** commentary that the reason we are unable to eat Treifos is that it is against our nature but we still need to withstand the nature. Similarly, barking is in the nature of the dog. If the dog is not able to follow its natural inclination, it must have been pained. If it withstood its nature, we need to withstand ours and also be Maker Tov.

**בַּ֤עַל הַבּוֹר֙ יְשַׁלֵּ֔ם The owner of the pit shall pay (21:34)** - Who owns a pit in the public domain? Rashi notes that  the owner of the pit is the one who created it -- as the pitfall**. Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlita** explained that the Torah assigns the ownership to him as a means to make him Chayav for the damages even if he has nothing to do with it. The same can be said to the one who creates a situation of sin (he was talking about talking in a Shul) even if he no longer engages in it, it still translates back to him.

**הָשֵׁ֥ב תְּשִׁיבֶ֖נּוּ You shall certainly return them to your brother (23:4) – Rav Elyashiv ztl.** pointed out that there are 2 types of lost objects: those that can seek out their owners (sheep etc.) and those that cannot. In regard to the former, it is easier to guarantee that the object and the owner will reunite in that both are seeking. Rav Elyashiv ztl. added that the idea of returning lost objects applies to returning lost Jews who are also seekers who must be brought to see the lifestyle – Torah – that they are missing.

 **וְחָֽדַלְתָּ֖ מֵֽעֲזֹ֣ב ל֑וֹ  And you shall hold back (23:5) - Rashi** comments that this phrase is read as a question. **Rav Michel Feinstein ztl.** noted that this is the only time that the Torah mentions approaching a human with a question instead of a command.   The reason, he explains, is obvious. The Torah could not understand how a human could see someone else who needs assistance and not provide it. Even if you are commanded to dislike someone, you are still obligated to see his Tzelem Elokim and to look to him to reduce that burden fully.

**לְמַ֣עַן יָנ֗וּחַ שֽׁוֹרְךָ֙ וַֽחֲמֹרֶ֔ךָ 6 days...so that your ox and your donkey will rest (23:12)** - Is the purpose of Shabbos merely to give the donkey some time off? **Rav Zevin ztl.** explained that the message here is that Shabbos is not only about not working, it is about achieving a state of mind. By not having your animals working, they will not be on your mind.

**שָׁל֣שׁ רְגָלִ֔ים 3 Regalim…3 times (23:14)**– Why does the Torah refer to the time as both Regalim and then again as times? What is the difference? **Rashi**notes that even in the Shmitta year, the people will still observe the Regalim. **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** explained that during the other years, the Yamim Tovim are opportunities to thank Hashem for his involvement in the agricultural cycle of the year. That is why in those years, they are called Regalim from the word Regel as a reason for the trip (L’ Regel HaMelacha Asher Lifanai). In a Shmitta year, the ground is not worked and this reason is not there. One is still obligated to be Oleh Regel though – because the time of the year demands it.

**אֶת־מִסְפַּ֥ר יָמֶ֖יךָ אֲמַלֵּֽא I will fill the number of days in your life (23:26) – Rav Shmuel Brazil Shlita** explains that there are 2 aspects to the fulfilled life that are mentioned here as a result of Torah and Mitzva living: There are days that are “numbered” – that one does the Mitzvos to be Yotzai and then there are those days that are filled with Torah living that describes not how one does Torah but how one lives Torah. The first type, have no Peiros – there is no satisfaction in doing the Mitzvos simply because they are being done without feeling and by rote. At their weakest, Mitzvos performed this way are seen as a burden. To these Hashem promises Es Misar Yameicha Amaleh – to change them into the latter version.

**וַיִּכְתֹּ֣ב משֶׁ֗ה אֵ֚ת כָּל־דִּבְרֵ֣י ה Moshe wrote all of the words of Hashem (24:4)** - Clearly this recording was not Moshe writing “the Torah” as he was not yet commanded to write the Torah yet. Why did he write this? **The Brisker Rav ztl.** suggested that there was a second work called Sefer HaBris that **Rashi** explained contained Jewish history from creation to Marah including the Mizvos there. By virtue that those Mitzvos are not mentioned in our Torah, clearly the work is not the same. **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik ztl.** added that **Tosafos** in Gittin (60a) questions how Moshe wrote the Sefer HaBris if one assumes that the Torah was not given in sections. However, based on the comment of his father the Griz ztl., Rav Dovid explained that the Sefer HaBris does not pose a challenge since it is given as a separate work, not as part of Torah.

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח משֶׁה֙ חֲצִ֣י הַדָּ֔ם Half the blood he poured on the Mizbeiach (24:6)** - Why was the blood split 50-50 between the Mizbeiach and the people? **Rav Hunter ztl** notes that the Luchos were also split 50-50 and are identified as Luchos Habris. In fact, we find 50-50 whenever we mention a bris because a good Bris has a 50-50 devotional split. Here, when the Bris is about Torah, it also needs a 50-50 split but instead of between parties, the split has to be in the Bein Adam Lamakom vs. Bein Adam l’chaveiro realm. The responsibilities are equal. **Rav Yisroel Reisman Shlita** added that this is a Yesod Gadol in Avodas Hashem — that when you have one without the other, you have a lack in your Avodas Hashem.

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח משֶׁה֙ חֲצִ֣י הַדָּ֔ם And half the blood (24:6)** - The **Midrash** notes that the dividing of the blood was exact without one part falling over into the other. It was achieved with a Malach (Rashi Shemos 23:20 says it was Mattatron) appearing in the form of Moshe to make sure the measurement was 100% accurate. Similar to the Half Shekel of Parshas Shekalim where Hashem intervened to show Moshe what exactly a “Half-Shekel” was, here too, the Half was achieved through intervention from Shomayim. Why? **Rav Shmuel Brazil Shlita** suggested that in the case of the blood and the Shekel, the concept of halves demonstrates that Am Yisrael and Hakadosh Baruch Hu share an equally unshakable bond with one another. Both agree to stand by one another and never leave or let go.

 **נַֽעֲשֶׂ֥ה וְנִשְׁמָֽע  Naaseh V’Nishma (24:7)**- The Talmud (Shabbos 88a) notes that when Bnei Yisrael put Naaseh before Nishma 600,000 angels came down and tied 2 crowns to the heads of each member of Klal Yisrael -- one for Naaseh and the other for Nishma. **Rav Neriah ztl.**explained that this was a result of their realization that in the same way it is impossible to gaze at Hashem it is also impossible to fully “get” his Mitzvos. This does not mean that one is exempt from them. There is some value to performing the Mitzvos. Getting more involved with Mitzvos by performing them allows one to be able to fully grasp them on a deeper level. This is the intent of Naaseh before Nishma -- by doing one is able to get around the ideas and concepts and become able to fully grasp the intent on a deeper level.

**נַֽעֲשֶׂ֥ה וְנִשְׁמָֽע  Naaseh V’Nishma (24:7)** – Why was Naaseh V’Nishma uttered in the plural “We” instead of the singular “I Will do” ? **The Chiddushei HaRim** suggests that when everyone is in the same boat – we stick together.

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח משֶׁה֙ אֶת־הַדָּ֔ם וַיִּזְרֹ֖ק עַל־הָעָ֑ם Moshe took the blood and he sprinkled it on the nation (24:8) – Rashi** explains that this teaches us that Chazal entered a Bris here with Milah, Tevilah and Hazaah (as there is no Hazaah without Tevilah). **Rav Gifter ztl.** pointed out that the preparation for Matan Torah described here is quite intense. First it required a communal acceptance as described in Parshas Yisro. After that, there needed to be a process that removed the regular “Ben  Noach” status from  them as described here and then only afterward did they enter the Bris at which time they were finally prepared to receive the Torah. Rav Gifter explained that if this is the preparation for the nation receiving the Torah, it must also be the attitude that we use when we get ready to go study it.

**וְתַ֣חַת רַגְלָ֗יו כְּמַֽעֲשֵׂה֙ לִבְנַ֣ת הַסַּפִּ֔יר וּכְעֶ֥צֶם הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם לָטֹֽהַר And under His feet was like a brickwork of sapphire and  an appearance of the heavens in their brilliance (24:10) – Rashi** explains that the brickwork was a reminder of Hashem’s eternal concern for Am Yisrael – even while enslaved in Mitzrayim. But why were they made of Sapphire and not of mud and straw like the ones in Mitzrayim had been? **Rav Belsky ztl**. explains that the lesson the Torah wants us to internalize is not that of the brick and the mud but rather the lessons we learned in it. The Jews learned the lessons of leket and knowing another Jew’s suffering because, as we are reminded, V’zacharta Kee Eved HaYisa. The lesson of the suffering in Mitzrayim taught the Jew to create a sensitivity in their character. The greatness of a person is revealed when s/he can take the hardship bricks of clay in his/her life and transform them into gems of beauty.

**וְאֶתְּנָ֨ה לְךָ֜ אֶת־לֻחֹ֣ת הָאֶ֗בֶן וְהַתּוֹרָה֙ וְהַמִּצְוָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר כָּתַ֖בְתִּי לְהֽוֹרֹתָֽם And I will give you the Luchos and the Torah and the Mitzva that I wrote to teach them** (24:12) – The Gemara (Berachos ) learns that Hashem was going to give the written Torah, the Aseres HaDibbros, the Torah She’Baal Peh and the Neviim and Kesuvim. Rashi (Malachi) explains that anything that any other Novi was going to say, was given to Moshe at Sinai. Similarly, the **Mabit** notes that the reason some say KaAmur Poseich Es Yadecha even though Moshe composed the first Beracha of HaZon long before Dovid Hamelech gave us Tehillim because although Dovid revealed it within a Tehillim context, everyone else knew it at the time of Moshe for he knew anything else that was destined to be Torah based. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would regularly remind us that it is only based on this idea that Anshei Knesses HaGedolah were able to add to the Canon and to compose the Torah She’Baal Peh into a formal “Torah.” Without it, adding would have been a subtraction from its divine nature.

**וַיָּ֣קָם משֶׁ֔ה וִֽיהוֹשֻׁ֖עַ מְשָֽׁרְת֑וֹ And Moshe and Yehoshua his attendant arose (24:13) – Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** points out that Yehoshua was the same one who led the battle in Amalek. Usually those who are generals do not take orders well, they GIVE them. Yet, Yehoshua demonstrates what it means to be a Talmid – not out of weakness but rather out of deference for truth.

 **וַיְהִ֤י משֶׁה֙ בָּהָ֔ר אַרְבָּעִ֣ים י֔וֹם וְאַרְבָּעִ֖ים לָֽיְלָה:  Moshe was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights (24:18)** - The Gemara (Menachos 99b) compares the gestation period of a child to the giving of the Torah -- just as one is given in 40 days, so too, the other is generated in 40 days teaching us that one who keeps the Torah, the Torah will protect his/her soul. What is the comparison? **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** explained that  each time Moshe went up the mountain he went for a period of 40 days. In order to properly acquire Torah, one needs to do so with a newness of spirit -- that spirit takes 40 days to develop.

Parashas Shekalim

**כִּ֣י תִשָּׂ֞א When you count (30:12)** – Why is the term Ki Sisa used instead of a more conventional term for counting**? Rav Moshe Feinstein Ztl.** explained that when it comes to being counted as a member of Bnei Yisrael, it is not enough to be counted but rather one must raise himself up to the standards and raise ourselves to stand proudly when we accept the responsibilities that being a part is all about.

**מִמַּֽחֲצִ֖ית הַשָּׁ֑קֶל Machatzis HaShekel (30:15)** - Why is the concept of ½ stressed here? **Rav Shlomo Alkabetz ztl**. highlighted the idea that we are only a part of who we are without our Achdus. **Rav Binyamin Eisenberger Shlita** notes that this idea comes from the natural concept of man not being good by himself. This is the ultimate message for the month of Adar which is designed to counteract the claim of Haman in the past -- that we are Mifuzar U’Miforad and not united.

**Haftarah for Mishpatim**

 **-   אָֽנֹכִ֗י כָּרַ֚תִּי בְרִית֙ אֶת־אֲב֣וֹתֵיכֶ֔ם בְּי֨וֹם הֽוֹצִאִ֚י אוֹתָם֙ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם מִבֵּ֥ית עֲבָדִ֖ים**  **I made a covenant with your fathers on the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt (Yirmiyahu 34:13)** - Why is it so important to teach the lesson of setting the slaves free at the moment of Maamad Har Sinai? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.**suggests that it is hard to let something or someone go away for nothing. However, at the moment that someone realizes what freedom means on a personal level, s/he is more inclined to share that experience with others in a similar predicament. Hence, it was at that moment of freedom that Hashem taught the lesson of sending the slaves free to highlight the point of appreciating and sharing the freedom.

**And you returned and desecrated my name to return people to their state of slavery (Yirmiyahu 34) – Rav Avrohom Rivlin Shlita** explains that that in a country in which there is slavery, even if it involves only a very small percentage of the population, the entire country is considered to be in a state of subjugation. The reality of slavery is that it leaves its imprint on the entire society, transforming it into a society of slaves! In the seventh year, each slave goes out individually based on when he was bought, and therefore it has no impact on society. However, in the Yovel year, when the presence of slavery is completely annulled, all the inhabitants of the land go free; that is, it is a free land! This concept stands out in Yirmiyahu's prophecy. Each time that "chofesh" is used, it is said regarding individual slaves. However, when Yirmiyahu uses the word "d'ror," he is speaking of the entire nation as brethren. When there is freedom for all slaves, there is liberty for the entire society, because then everyone returns to their state of natural purity - "mor d'ror."

**Haftara for Parashas Shekalim**

**Yehoash was seven when he became king** – Yehoyada HaKohein had hidden Yin the Cheder HaMittos assumed to be the Kodesh HaKodashim – in order to protect him from the evil queen Asaliya. After the death of Yehoyada, Yehoash went down the wrong path ultimately murdering Zechariah who dared chastise him. Why was Yehoash chosen for safety? **Rav Moshe Wolfson Shlita** suggests that the secret of Machatzis HaShekel is in its understanding of the value of each Jew and his soul. No one soul is more valuable than another as each one is a piece of the Jewish mosaic. Yehoash understood that – when in the Kodesh HaKodashim where each Jew stands alone – and the value of each Jew was a worthwhile lesson at the Jew’s own level.

**The priests shall take for themselves each one from his acquaintance; and they shall strengthen the damage of the house, wherever damage is found (Melachim II:12:6)** – The **Rogachover** explains that there is a difference between taking things from an individual which must be checked to see if he is giving things with a full heart versus if he gives it with a half-heart wherein it must be re-examined. **Rav Yitzchok Sorotzkin Shlita** explained why. The Beis HaMikdash had the status of a Korban Tzibbur which means that it cannot be made or maintained by personal monies. Hence, when collecting the coinage here, the Novi warns the people to take from his acquaintance (Makoro) – one he can state for sure, relinquishes personal hold over the monies he is giving to the Mikdash.

 **וַיִּתֵּ֣ן אֹתוֹ֩ אֵ֨צֶל הַמִּזְבֵּ֜חַ And he placed it next to the Mizbeiach (Melachim II 12:10)** - In Divrei HaYamim (II: 24:8) we see that the box was put outside of the Nikanor gate. How do we explain the contradiction? The Korban Haeidah (Shekalim 6:4) suggests that Yehoyada placed it near the Mizbeiach but the king moved it to the gate. Why? **Rav Yitzchak Sorotzkin Shlita** notes that the King wanted everyone -- even those who were Tamai and could not enter the Mikdash -- to have the chance to pay their obligation and join with the Jewish people. The chance to join in the project is an important one and allows everyone to join the people.

**Haftaras Shekalim -  בְּבֽוֹא־אִישׁ֙ בֵּ֣ית יְהֹוָ֔ה וְנָֽתְנוּ־שָׁ֚מָּה הַכֹּֽהֲנִים֙ שֹׁמְרֵ֣י הַסַּ֔ף אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּ֖סֶף הַמּוּבָ֥א בֵית־יְהֹוָֽה** (Melachim Ii: 12:10) Why was Yehoash so adamant that all the monies needed to be given to the Beis Hamikdash? Why didn’t he just pay the needs of the Beis Hamikdash from the royal treasury? And why is there a special Shabbos to focus on the ideas of a Half-Shekel? Other Mitzvos do not get this treatment?! **Rav Gideon Weitzman Shlita** suggested that Yehoash wanted the people to have a personal connection to the Beis Hamikdash. Therefore he wanted their donations to be direct. Rav Weitzman added that there is a connection in this Mitzva to Pesach as well. Redemption, celebrated during this time, is not just about leaving Mitzrayim, it is about having the ability and freedom to use our entire being and possession to serve Hashem.