

Points to Ponder  
Mishpatim/Shekalim 5775

**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 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.

**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 to 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.

**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 even though 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.

**An Eye for an eye (21:24)** – 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 Kesef.

**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*.

**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.

**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.

**Haftorah – 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.