



From the desk of
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1

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Mishpatim

HAMELECH

In the Middle of it All

In Parashat Yitro, we read of *Kaballat HaTorah*, *Maamad Har Sinai*. At the end of Parashat Mishpatim is *Kaballat HaTorah*, Part Two. In the middle are many monetary laws. Why the juxtaposition? This is to impress upon us that monetary law is also from Heaven. No one should think that the *mitzvot* are only religious ceremonies, but when it comes to social interaction, people can decide for themselves how to act. The Torah also gave laws regarding how to respect other people's property and how to compensate for losses. The Torah determines responsibility on these matters as well and we must consult Torah authorities for guidance in all areas.

Go to Beit Din

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel states (Avot 1:17): The world stands upon three things: Justice, truth and peace. Practicing justice and truth will breed peace. The Medrash in this week's *parashah* speaks strongly against those who take money matters to a non-Torah court. One who does so (without permission from Beit Din) forfeits his place in *Olam HaBa!*

A *dayan* who renders a decision according to the Torah's truths becomes a partner with HaKadosh Baruch Hu in the creation of the world (Medrash).

Ramban explains that Mishpatim is a continuation from "*Lo Tachmod.*" In the *Aseret HaDibrot*, we learned not to covet, not to want for yourself that which belongs to another. In order to understand this properly, we need Parashat Mishpatim, which delineates what exactly belongs to whom.

It'll All Be Worked Out

A person ought to know that for monetary matters, it is of the utmost importance to follow the rules. Otherwise, he will have to come back until he rectifies the wrongdoing. Someone who takes that which does not belong to him returns as a *gilgul* and eventually gets the money back to the rightful owner.

The Baal Shem Tov once sent his *talmid*, Reb Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezrich, to a forest. He told him exactly where to go and in which tree to sit. R' Dov Ber went as instructed.

At first, things were quiet. Then, along came a rich man in a chariot. He got down and ate under a tree and drank from a nearby stream. Then he returned to his chariot to resume his journey, not before dropping his wallet from his pocket.



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A little later came Man #2. He, too, stopped to eat and drink. He found the wallet and took it along with him.

Then came Man #3, a poor fellow. He also sat down to eat his humble meal and to drink some water. As he prepared to continue on his way, the chariot pulls up and the rich man jumps out. He accuses, "Where's my wallet?!"

The poor man says, "I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Oh, no?" inquires/retorts the rich man. "You give it back now or you'll regret it!"

They get into an argument and the angry, arrogant rich man delivers a few blows. Seeing that his wallet was still not returned, he got back onto his chariot and headed off.

Reb Dov Ber felt that he had seen enough. He returned to the Baal Shem Tov and reported what he had witnessed.

The Baal Shem Tov explained: All of the three are *gilgulim*. In their previous lives, two litigants came to a Din Torah and the *dayan* did not give the matter enough deliberation. He quickly dismissed it, and wrongly *paskened* that Reuven must hand over a significant amount of money to Shimon. In that lifetime, nothing was rectified.

So now, all three returned. Reuven was the middle man in the story, who retrieved the

money which had been taken from him. Shimon was the rich man; thus he had to return the money which had wrongly entered his possession. And who was the poor man? None other than the *dayan* who was at fault for the whole mishap. He received his well-deserved beating!

[Note: Of course, it is only "well-deserved" from Heaven's standpoint. In the current *gilgul*, the rich man had no right to deliver such a beating, especially when taking into account that he had no evidence whatsoever that the poor man took his wallet. This is yet another episode of what Hillel told that floating skull (Avot Perek 2): Because you drowned someone else, that is why you were drowned. Nonetheless, those who drowned you will also be drowned themselves.]

The Hard-Working Donkey

Here is another one, this time with the Arizal.

The Arizal once visited a rich man and asked to be shown the barn. He looked around the animals and asked the rich man if he would give him a certain donkey. The rich man said, "That one I cannot spare. He works harder than all the others put together."

They returned to the mansion. The Arizal asked to see some of the man's documents of loans. After perusing a few, he picked up one and



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asked, "Can I have this one? Will you give me the rights of collection?"

The host acquiesced. He said, "That borrower died a bit ago; I don't think there is much chance at collection. You can have it."

The Arizal took it and tore it up. Just then, a worker came in with the news that the prize donkey died suddenly. The rich man was surprised, but the Arizal wasn't. He explained, "When the borrower died without paying up the loan, he was denied entry into Gan Eden until he would repay the loan. He was sent back into a donkey to work for you until his work would equal the value of the loan. That is why he worked so hard. He wanted to finish his term as fast as possible. Now that you gave me the loan and I cancelled it, he no longer owes you a thing. So his soul departed in order to receive his reward for all of his *mitzvot* he did in his previous *gilgul*."

The Coffee Corner

The fact of the matter is that people are not as careful with money matters as they should be. A *bochur* once had his own private "coffee corner" in his room, milk and all. He only allowed his closest friends to use it. But he noticed that too much milk was missing daily. So he put a note on

the milk container "Cholov Akum" and it was left alone.

This is an example of people being more scrupulous regarding *Issur veHeter* than *Choshen Mishpat*. We really must be equally careful, as all *mitzvot* are from Sinai.

Reb Yisroel Eats *Pat Palter*

Rav Yisroel Salanter once went to a health resort, expenses paid by a wealthy philanthropist. While he was there, he bought a roll which was *Pat Palter* (not *Pat Yisrael*). A distinguished Jew was there and questioned Rav Yisroel's conduct. He personally had brought along homemade bread. While it was a bit old and moldy, he preferred it over *pat akum*.

Rav Yisroel explained: My visit here is expenses paid for the sake of my health. Were I to eat moldy bread or skip the bread altogether and return home malnourished, I have misused the expenses given to me to rejuvenate and return refreshed. Therefore, I decided that *Halachah* dictates that in this instance I be lenient regarding *pat palter* and not regarding misusing someone else's funding.

The Chafetz Chaim and the Paper

In Bava Kama 30a, Rav Yehuda teaches that someone who wants to be pious must be



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cautious regarding matters of blessings, monetary damages and Pirkei Avot. Maharsha explains that these correspond to matters between man and Hashem, man and his fellow, and man with himself.

The Chafetz Chaim once needed a piece of paper to write upon. There was paper right next to him, but he refused to use it without permission from the owner. Someone present said, "What's the big deal? It only costs a kopek."

The Chafetz Chaim responded, "The piece of paper may cost but a kopek. But the Destructive Angel created from stealing one kopek can burn down a city the size of Warsaw!"

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach would say: Not being careful with other people's money – besides for being an *aveira*, it is simply foolish! In the long run, you are not going to gain a thing. You will only pay for it dearly.

Rav Moshe and the Two Coins

The Arizal knew how to read foreheads. All of a person's sins are etched into his forehead. But only special people can read them.

In the days of the Arizal, there lived a big Talmid Chochom and *mekubal* named Rav Moshe Galanti. One day, the Arizal saw Rav Moshe and told him, "I see *gezel* on your forehead."

R' Moshe was aghast. Immediately, he set about thinking what he could have possibly done wrong. Now, this R' Moshe was a wealthy man and a very pious man. He owned two factories. In one, he employed only men. In the other, he employed women. This way, he maintained total segregation.

R' Moshe went to the men's factory, placed a sack full of coins on the table and announced, "If anyone thinks that I did not pay them enough, please come and take what is owed to you."

No one stepped forward.

R' Moshe then made his way to the ladies' factory and made the same announcement. Again, no one moved. Almost no one. One older lady came forward and took out two coins.

R' Moshe returned to the Arizal who informed him that his slate is now cleared.

This is yet another illustration of how important it is to be careful in money matters, including boss-employee associations, in both directions.

May we merit to be careful in these matters and see only blessing in all of our endeavors.

Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka