

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

February 12 - 18, 2023
21 - 27 Shevat, 5783

Torah reading:
Exodus 21:1 - 24:18
Exodus 30:11-16
Haftarah:
Kings II 11:17-12:17

PARSHAT MISHPATIM

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Forgotten.

What Kind of Guardian Are You?

Immediately after the great revelation at Sinai, the Torah proceeds to teach the civil laws that govern the interactions between people in day-to-day life.

One of the topics discussed in this week's [Torah](#) portion is the laws of the guardian who agreed to watch another's item. The Torah introduces four categories of guardians, who have different levels of liability if anything happens to the item. The degree of liability is determined by the division of benefit derived by the owner of the object and the guardian.

The first category is the "unpaid guardian." Since he receives no benefit from watching the item, he is not liable if the object is lost or stolen (unless he was negligent).

The next two categories of guardians are the "paid guardian" and the "renter." Both receive some benefit (either payment for guarding the object or the right to use the object) but give as well (either the guardianship of the object, or the money paid for the right to use it), and therefore they have some liability. They are obligated to pay in a case where the object was lost or stolen, yet not if the object was destroyed by an event that was completely out of their control.

The fourth guardian is the "borrower," who receives all the benefit, as he uses the object without paying for it, and his liability is therefore the greatest. The borrower is liable to pay even if the object was destroyed by an event outside the borrower's control.

The monetary laws of the Torah are more than just utilitarian laws that allow for a functioning society. Just as

with all other parts of the Torah, the monetary laws contain deep psychological and spiritual truths. Thus, the laws of the four guardians also represent four states of mind in our relationship with G-d, our soul and the purpose of creation.

A healthy relationship is one in which both parties benefit from the relationship. Yet, a relationship is more than a "win-win" arrangement, where each party is involved in order to receive that which they consider beneficial. While the parties may have entered the relationship for personal gain, in order for the relationship to be more than a transactional business-like arrangement, it must develop from the original cost-benefit analysis and mature to include commitment and selfless devotion to the other.

The Torah tells us that [G-d](#) created Adam and "placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it." G-d entrusts us with a spiritual soul and places us on this earth with a mission to "work it and guard it," to preserve and increase the goodness on this earth. We, the guardians, receive benefit from our work on behalf of G-d, for G-d blesses us and provides us with our material and spiritual needs. Yet, just like in human relationships, there are different levels in the relationship with G-d. On one end of the spectrum is a person who is primarily interested in receiving the "benefits" life has to offer. On the other end of the spectrum is the person who is an "unpaid guardian." He is in love with G-d to the point of being completely altruistic; his motivation is to serve G-d and do the right thing for its own sake.

In a wholesome human relationship, we can and should benefit from our relationship, yet we must also experience selfless devotion to our partner. The same is true in our relationship with G-d. At times we will be a "borrower," motivated primarily by our own needs and desires. But we should always seek those moments when we transcend our own ego and act as an "unpaid guardian," motivated primarily by the desire to devote ourselves to our beloved.

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

Rules

Before you switch on your laser printer, read this:

A laser is a device that produces an intense beam of light of a very pure single color. This beam can be made potent enough to vaporize a diamond, and precise enough to deposit a dot of ink 1/600th of an inch across in exact juxtaposition with tens of thousands of similar dots to produce your office memo in 12 pt. Times New Roman (captions in 14 pt. Arial Narrow). Even more precise (and more expensive) are devices that yield a beam exact enough to perform eye surgery.

A laser beam is a beam of optic light — basically the same light produced by the flashlight you keep in the glove compartment of your car. The difference is that while the excited atoms in your flashlight bulb each emit light independently of each other and in many different wavelengths, a laser device stimulates a great number of atoms to emit light in a single frequency and in step with each other, thereby producing a light beam of great potency and accuracy.

As a rule, people don't like rules. We don't like being told that a food palatable to our taste buds is unhealthy for our body. We don't like being told that something desirable to ourselves is hurtful to another person. We don't like being told that a convenient habit is damaging to our environment. In other words, we don't like being told what to do. We don't like restrictions.

When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt, they were told that, in seven weeks' time, they will be given the Torah. They were so excited that they literally counted the days. At Mount Sinai, their souls flew from their bodies in ecstasy when they heard G-d proclaim the Ten Commandments.

On the face of it, their joy seems somewhat misplaced. After all, these were a people just emerging from several generations of slavery. The last thing they would want—one assumes—is a set of restrictions on their lives. Basically, that's what the [Torah](#) is. Seven of the Ten Commandments are "Thou Shalt Not"s, as are 365 out of the Torah's 613 mitzvot (the rest are "Thou Shall"s).

But the Jews *wanted* the Torah. The Midrash relates how [G-d](#) went to all the nations of the world asking them if they want a copy. "What does the Torah contain?" they asked. "Thou shalt not..." said G-d and was met with a no-thank-you almost before He could finish the sentence. The Jews, however, understood that this was no ordinary set of rules: this was a life regulator designed by the One who invented life and knows how it is best applied.

At Sinai, all the peoples of the world were given a choice. Take box A, and you get a life that expends its energies every which way, in whatever color or frequency that strikes your fancy at any given moment. It'll even be able to do many useful things, like projecting animal shapes on the wall of a darkened room or finding those car keys you dropped in the bushes. Take box B, and you get a life that focuses its energies on the purpose to which it was created.

Many took the flashlight. We opted for the laser.

By Yanki Tauber

Sunday, February 12, 2023 --- 21 Shevat, 5783

First Jew Granted Residence in England (1657)

On February 4, 1657, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, issued the first residence permit to a Jew, Luis Carvajal, since the expulsion of all Jews from England by King Edward I in the year 1290. The edict of expulsion had been officially overturned in the previous year, 1656. The re-admittance of Jews into England was partially due to the efforts of the great scholar Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel.

Rabbi Moshe Galante (1689)

Rabbi Moshe Galante II was born in Safed in 1620 and later moved to Jerusalem where he founded a large yeshivah. He was a grandson of the famed Rabbi Moshe Galante I, who was a student of Rabbi Yosef Karo.

Rabbi Galante was the first rabbi endowed with the title *Rishon l'Tzion* ("the First of Zion"), a title traditionally conferred upon the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Jerusalem and later of the Land of Israel. This due to the profound love and esteem he was given by the Sephardic community in Jerusalem.

He authored a number of works including *Elef HaMagen*, which includes 1,000 responsa on various topics; *Parpara'ot l'Chochmah*, a commentary on the Bible; and *Zevach HaShelamim* on the Talmud.

Counted among his students was Rabbi Chizkiyah De Silva, rabbi of Hebron and author of the *Pri Chadash* (printed in the standard edition of the Code of Jewish Law).

Monday, February 13, 2023 --- 22 Shevat, 5783

Passing of Kotzker Rebbe (1859)

Passing of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859), renowned Chassidic leader, and forerunner of the Ger chassidic dynasty and others.

Rebbeitzin's Yahrtzeit (1988)

Rebbeitzin Chaya Mushkah Schneerson (b. 1901), wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, passed away on the 22nd of Shevat of the year 5748 (1988). Chabad's annual international conference of sheluchot (woman "emissaries") is held on or near this date.

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 --- 23 Shevat, 5783

War on Benjamin (circa 1228 BCE)

Armies of the Tribes of Israel converged upon the tribe of Benjamin in the aftermath of the "Concubine at Givah" incident, in a war which nearly brought about the extinction of the Benjaminites (as related in the Book of Judges, chapters 19-2). The event occurred during the judgeship of Othniel ben Knaz, who led the people of Israel in the years 2533-2573 from creation (1228-1188 BCE).

Wednesday, February 15, 2023 --- 24 Shevat, 5783

Zachariah's Prophecy (351 BCE)

"On the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month of Shevat, in the second year of the reign of Darius, the word of G-d came to Zachariah the son of Berechiah the son of Ido the prophet, saying: '...I will return to Jerusalem in mercy, my house will be built within her...and the Lord shall yet console Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem.'" (Zechariah 1:7-17)

This was two years before the completion of the 2nd Temple on the 3rd of Adar, 3412 (349 BCE).

Passing of Rebbeitzin Menuchah Rachel (1888)

Rebbeitzin Menuchah Rachel Slonim, daughter of Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch and granddaughter of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, was born on Kislev 19, 5559 (1798) -- the very day on which her illustrious grandfather was freed from his imprisonment in the Peter-Paul Fortress in Petersburg; she was thus named "Menuchah", meaning "tranquility" (Rachel was the name of a daughter of Rabbi Schneur Zalman who died in her youth).

The Rebbeitzin's lifelong desire to live in the Holy Land was realized in 1845, when she and her husband, Rabbi Yaakov Culi Slonim (d. 1857), led a contingent of Chassidim who settled in Hebron. Famed for her wisdom, piety, and erudition, she served as the matriarch of the Chassidic community in Hebron until her passing in her 90th year in 1888.

Friday, February 17, 2023 --- 26 Shevat, 5783

Passing of the Taz (1667)

Shevat 26 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi David ben Shmuel Halevi (1586-1667), a primary Halachic authority, known as *Taz* after his work *Turei Zahav* ("Rows of Gold") -- a commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law).

Shabbat, February 18, 2023 --- 27 Shevat, 5783

The "Simlah Chadashah" (1737)

Rabbi Alexander Sender Schorr was a direct descendant of Rabbi Yosef Bechor Schorr of Orleans, one of the most famous of the French Tosafists. At a young age he was already appointed Chief Justice of the Rabbinic Court in the town of Hovniv which is directly outside of Lviv, Ukraine.

He authored the classic work on the laws of ritual slaughter called *Simlah Chadashah*, as well as a deeper commentary on those laws called *Tevu'ot Shor*.

Rabbi Alexander Sender Schorr passed away in the town of Zhovkva on the 27th of Shevat in the year 5497 (1737).