



# Parshat Mishpatim

For the week ending 29 Shevat 5760  
4 & 5 February 2000

## Overview

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of judges, and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by object that one accepted responsibility to guard; the right to self-defense of a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should not be delayed, and the Jewish People must be Holy, even concerning food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbat and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year Pesach, Shavuot and Succot we are to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of kashrut not to mix milk and meat.

Hashem promises that He will lead the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, helping them conquer its inhabitants, and tells them that by fulfilling His commandments they will bring blessings to their nation. The people promise to do and listen to everything that Hashem says. Moshe writes the Book of the Covenant, and reads it to the people. Moshe ascends the mountain to remain there for 40 days in order to receive the two Tablets of the Covenant.

## Insights

### SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR AWAY

We perceive G-d in two ways. We believe that He is pre-existent, the Cause, the Creator and the Sustainer of all reality. He is far beyond and above. Ultimately distant. No creature can fathom Him, for what can the painting know of the Painter? He created thought, so no thought can think of Him. He is utterly separate and distant beyond all concept of space and time.

And yet He is very, very near. There is no place or time where He is not. For if He were not there, that place could not be, that second would never take place. He fills all worlds and encompasses all worlds.

G-d is both transcendent and immanent.

It is the unique privilege of the Jewish People to proclaim these two seemingly opposite aspects of our perception of G-d. Many religions have a concept

of G-d being supremely elevated above all, but they falter in their recognition of His imminence. They fail to understand that He is here right now. He sees all, knows the secrets of every living thing and is interested in their every move.

During their *kedusha* prayer, the Jewish

Holy, Hashem, Master of Legions. The whole world is filled with His Glory. Hashem from His place

The first statement depicts our relationship with G-d as immanent place or time being devoid of Him. The second statement expresses G-eparation and elevation from this world

This is the deeper meaning of the words of the

these two beliefs, G-d radiates a constant stream of Heavenly influence.

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These two aspects express themselves in the awe of Heaven, on the one hand, and the love of G-d on the other. A person is awed by that which is above and

fear into his

when there is no contact.

*And you will bow down from a distance.*

parsha is that bowing expression of fear and awe is the natural partner of distance G-

Sources:

- *Kedushat Levi, Arizal*

## Haftarah: Shmuel I 20:18 - 42

### PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

**M**achar Chodesh is the Haftara read when Shabbat falls on the day before Rosh Chodesh. It relates the story of one of the heroes of Israel, Yonatan, whose integrity and humility are the focus of the following narrative:

throne of Israel. But Yonatan knew of G-  
-in-law.

Suspecting that Saul would soon sentence David to death for planning to usurp the throne, Yonatan and David made a plan. David would hide in the field while Yonatan returned to the palace to natan would return to the field with bow and arrows. After shooting, he would call to his servant to gather the arrows. If

David would know that the danger lay behind him and

that he was safe. If, however, Yonatan would shout danger waits ahead and he must flee.

absence, and Yonatan replies that David had gone to Bethlehem for a family event. Sensing that Yonatan is merely protecting David, Saul flies into a rage, making no effort to hide his deadly intentions toward David.

Yonatan returns to the field, shoots his arrow,

his servant home. Immediately, David appears from his hiding place. The two embrace and pledge allegiance to one another.

unparalleled as is his honesty and humility. This is one of the most heartwarming stories in the Tanach. A story of a true friend whose pride did not get in the way of doing what was right.