

Beit Chachamin

PARSHAT MISHPATIM

11TH FEBRUARY, 2026

COME & LEARN

THE BIG RECAP [PARSHA SUMMARY]

1 – Civil laws are presented to Israel, beginning with rules about Hebrew slaves. Slaves serve six years and go free in the seventh. Slaves who choose to stay permanently have their ears pierced at the doorpost. Laws follow concerning female servants, capital crimes such as murder, hitting parents, or kidnapping, and compensation for bodily injury. The section ends with payment requirements when a person injures another and causes loss of time or medical costs.

2 – Legal code about violence by people or animals and property continues. If a slave is beaten and dies immediately, the offender is punished; if the slave survives some time, no penalty applies. Regulations are given for oxen that gore people or animals, including fines or death for negligent owners. Theft laws require restitution, with higher penalties for stealing and selling livestock, and allow selling a thief into servitude if he cannot repay.

3 – Laws addressing property damage caused by animals, fire, or negligence, require full restitution. People entrusted with goods must swear innocence or repay if theft or loss occurs. A man who seduces an unbetrothed woman must pay a bride-price and marry her unless her father refuses. The section bans sorcery, idolatry, bestiality, and commands fair treatment of strangers, widows, orphans, and the poor. Interest on loans is prohibited.

4 – Cursing God is prohibited. Firstborn sons and animals should be dedicated to God. You can only eat properly slaughtered meat, not animals torn in the field. The laws prohibit spreading false reports, siding with wrongdoers, or showing favoritism in judgment.

4 (cont.) – The people are also commanded to return lost animals and help care for their enemy's donkey if lost.

5 – Justice must not be denied to the poor or corrupted by lies or bribes, and strangers must be treated kindly. The land is to rest every seventh year, and the Sabbath every seventh day, allowing all to rest. Three annual festivals must be observed and all males must appear before God each year. The Israelites are told not to mix leaven with sacrifices, leave fat overnight, or boil a kid in its mother's milk.

6 – God promises to send an angel ahead to lead Israel safely. The people are warned to obey the angel's voice and if they listen, God will oppose their enemies. They must destroy foreign idols and serve only the Lord, who will bless their food, water, and health.

7 – God promises fertility, health, and victory to the people and that they will drive out the nations gradually and avoid their gods. Moses records the covenant laws, builds an altar with twelve pillars, and offers sacrifices, sprinkling blood to seal the covenant with the people. Moses, Aaron, Nadav, Avihu, and seventy elders ascend and behold a vision of God, eating and drinking in His presence. Moses then goes higher alone, where God gives him the stone tablets as the mountain burns with divine fire, and he remains there forty days and forty nights.

PARSHAT MISHPATIM

Mishpatim zooms in on what it means to live the Sinai covenant in everyday life, translating lofty revelation into concrete laws of justice, responsibility, and compassion. It shows a society being built where civil law, care for the vulnerable, and loyalty to God are all part of one binding covenant.

This verse opens the whole legal section and frames the set of laws to follow.

EXODUS 22:20-23

וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תָּשִׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם:

These are the rules that you shall set before them:

Following a long list of civil laws, the following verses provide reason for why the people of Israel must act in a just and compassionate way. These verses ground the legal code in Israel's own experience and a framework of empathy and care.

EXODUS 22:20-23

וְגַר לֹא־תוֹנֶה וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ כִּי־גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

כָּל־אִלְמָנָה וְיָתוּם לֹא תַעֲנוּן:

אִם־עָנָה תַעֲנֶה אֹתוֹ כִּי אִם־צָעַק וְצָעַק אֵלַי שָׁמַע אֲשַׁמַּע צַעֲקוֹ:

וְחָרָה אַפִּי וְהִרְגַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּחָרֶב וְהָיוּ נְשִׁיכֶם אִלְמָנוֹת וּבְנֵיכֶם יְתוּמִים:

You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan

If you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to Me, and My anger shall blaze forth and I will put you to the sword, and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

After hearing these laws, including the demand to protect the vulnerable, the people publicly commit to do and obey everything God has said.

EXODUS 24:7

וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנוֹ הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע:

Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, "All that GOD has spoken we will faithfully do!"

Taken together, these three verses show the flow of the parsha: God presents a detailed legal code, at its center is a call to remember oppression and protect the stranger, and the people then consciously accept these laws as the binding terms of their covenant.