

Parashat Mishpatim: “The God of Small Things”

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- What obligations do I have towards my immediate family? Towards my extended family?
- What obligations do I have towards my neighbor? Towards another citizen?

Exodus 21:1-11: Treatment of Slaves

1 These are the ordinances that you shall set before them:

2 When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, but in the seventh he shall go out a free person, without debt. **3** If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. **4** If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out alone. **5** But if the slave declares, “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out a free person,” **6** then his master shall bring him before God.^[a] He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

7 When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

8 If she does not please her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly with her. **9** If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. **10** If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife. **11** And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out without debt, without payment of money.

Exodus 21:12-14: Violence

12 Whoever strikes a person mortally shall be put to death. **13** If it was not premeditated, but came about by an act of God, then I will appoint for you a place to which the killer may flee. **14** But if someone willfully attacks and kills another by treachery, you shall take the killer from my altar for execution.

Exodus 21:28-36: Property and Responsibility

28 When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. **29** If the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not restrained it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. **30** If a ransom is imposed on the owner, then the owner shall pay whatever is

imposed for the redemption of the victim's life. **31** If it gores a boy or a girl, the owner shall be dealt with according to this same rule. **32** If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slaveowner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

33 If someone leaves a pit open, or digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, **34** the owner of the pit shall make restitution, giving money to its owner, but keeping the dead animal.

35 If someone's ox hurts the ox of another, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the price of it; and the dead animal they shall also divide. **36** But if it was known that the ox was accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not restrained it, the owner shall restore ox for ox, but keep the dead animal.

Exodus 22: 21-30: Status, Privilege, and Gratitude

21 You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. **22** You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. **23** If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; **24** my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

25 If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. **26** If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; **27** for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

28 You shall not revile God, or curse a leader of your people. **29** You shall not delay to make offerings from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. **30** You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

Exodus 24: 3-7: Sealing the Covenant

3 Moses came and told the people all the words of God and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words that God has spoken we will do." **4** And Moses wrote down all the words of God. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. **5** He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the Lord...**7** Then he

took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."