

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 144

**Mishpatim** | Lifetime Opportunity - Me, Here and Now

# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha  
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,  
**Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita**

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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## Parshat Mishpatim

### Timelessness...

**Rabbi** Yitzchak Hutner, once sat among his students and said:

"**As** you may know, the passing of the founder and innovator of the Mussar movement, Rabbi Israel Salanter, occurred on Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> of Shevat, on the eve of Shabbat of Parshat Mishpatim in the year 5643 (1883). Many years have passed since then, both regular years (of 12 months) and leap years (of 13 months), yet, in all these years, the commemoration of the passing of Rabbi Israel Salanter always falls out on Parshat Mishpatim !

**His** students had seen in this a sign and wonder from heaven. Rabbi Israel's primary innovation was in the field of 'Bein Adam L'Chavero' (interpersonal ethics), and Parshat Mishpatim deals entirely with interpersonal relationships."

**Signs** of excitement were evident on the students' faces...

**Then**, one of the students asked: "Rabbi Hutner, I don't understand !

**Our** Torah consists of two parts: one part - commandments between a person and G-d, and the second part - commandments between a person and their fellow. If so, we are already commanded on the interpersonal commandments, what then was Rabbi Israel Salanter's innovation ?"

**A** look of calmness appeared on Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner's face, and he replied: "Throughout the generations, Torah scholars invested all their energy in the study of Torah, with labor, effort, and dedication, with depth of thought and absolute devotion of heart and mind. However, in the 'Torah of Ethics' (interpersonal commandments), they were largely content with the recitation of the sayings of the sages on the matter.

Just like is the custom of studying Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) during Shabbat in the summer...

**"Rabbi** Israel Salanter came and issued a great call to the Torah world, to imprint the method of study and debate of Halacha (Jewish law) also in the Torah of Ethics, in the commandments between a person and their fellow. Rabbi Israel's greatness was mainly expressed in his relations with others. His entire attention was focused on how to bring satisfaction and do good to others, how to be careful not to harm their

honor or property, and not to cause them sorrow or discomfort...

**Again**, the voice of the student was heard: "Rabbi Hutner, but from where do we begin this daunting task? What is the starting point?"

**The** answer was promptly heard: "Rabbi Israel Salanter believed that the first step is to be 'a person of understanding'. Only then can one proceed..."

**"Rabbi**, what does it mean to be a person of understanding?"...<sup>1</sup>

**And** Rabbi Hutner began to explain...

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**1. Rabbi** Mordechai Gerlitz recounts the following tale ("Besod Avadecha," Part 7, Page 45):

**Chaos** and desolation reigned in the house of the Jewish tavern keeper. The thugs of the furious nobleman had just left the house, not before venting their anger, for the time being, on wood and stones.

**The** Shabbat table, which had stood at the center of the dining room laden with dishes throughout the Shabbat meal, was now overturned and shoved in a corner, with the dishes scattered around it in disarray. The chairs were thrown about like straw, the cabinets -

broken open, their contents strewn about on the ground, and the Shabbat dishes, the pastries, and the stew, which had been dragged out of the pantry and the oven, were spilled and strewn above this grand mess.

**This** was merely a 'warning', after which the Jewish tavern keeper - in the view of the nobleman and his henchmen - was supposed to hurry and settle his debt to the Noble - the past year's rent, lest it be his turn to be thrown, together with his entire family, into the pit.

**This** occurred on the 'Great Shabbat', shortly before the upcoming Passover,

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and in the tavern keeper's house, there was mayhem and distress.

**Even** without this, joy did not dwell in his home, for not only could he not pay his debt to his master, but he also had not had a penny in his pocket for his household needs for a long time.

**Hard** times had recently fallen on the tavern, and whereas in previous years he had a good livelihood there, for many months now, it seemed like the source of his success had been blocked, and his luck had started to sink lower and lower.

**It** seemed as if the local peasants had imposed a prohibition upon themselves and stopped drinking liquor and spirits as before. Few and far between were the customers who still did occasionally step on the threshold of the tavern, and they did not nearly make up for the stream of customers who had frequented the place in its better days.

**Signs** of austerity began to appear in the tavern keeper's household, and instead of the prosperity and generosity that had once prevailed in his home, his family was forced to tighten their belts and get used to a life of restraint.

**As** the situation worsened, the tavern keeper stopped purchasing new stocks of liquor and sufficed with gradually bringing out the old stock from his cellars until it was completely depleted from the barrels. And from then on, even the few steadfast remaining customers refrained from stepping over the threshold, for they had no need for an empty barrel.

**On** the previous day, Friday, the tavern keeper had only a few silver coins, barely enough to cover Shabbat expenses, but as for the upcoming Passover expenses he hadn't had even a single penny.

**To** add insult to injury, now, just as the barrel of sorrow and lack was filled to the brim, the nobleman remembered his debt that had remained unpaid, and when the 'gentle' reminders did not help, he made sure to have the Jewish tavern keeper aware of the 'seriousness' and 'severity' of the matter.

**A** while after the henchmen finished their work and left, leaving the house and its inhabitants in sighs and despair, the tavern keeper still sat on an overturned crate that had appeared in front of him and sat amidst the commotion, supporting his chin with his hands and staring blankly with glazed eyes.

**A** great dark fear gripped his face, and he was consumed by despair. His other family members did the same, and a bitter and oppressive silence hung in the air.

**Suddenly**, as if awakened from a frightening dream, the tavern keeper shook himself to get up from his place, buttoned his collar, straightened his clothes, wrapped himself in his Shabbat cloak, and headed toward the door. His family looked at him with astonishment.

**'Shabbat Shalom!'** he muttered quickly- 'I am going out to town to hear the sermon of the 'Great Shabbat' from our town's Rabbi!'

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**His** family nodded their heads at his words, as if to say: 'He is doing the right thing at the right time, it's better than to sink into the deep despair that pervades the house !'...

**The** tavern keeper's feet led him on the short path that separated his house in the suburb from the city of Kolbasov. At that time, the holy and famous Gaon, Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel, later the Rabbi of Apta and the author of 'Ohev Yisrael,' served as the Rabbi of Kolbasov.

**The** streets of Kolbasov were teeming with people flowing to hear the Rabbi's sermon.

**Warm** and fragrant spring breezes blew in the air, bringing a breath of life to a world just emerging from a gray and frozen winter. The people inhaled deeply, enjoying the air and atmosphere, and their spirits lifted with each passing moment.

**The** tavern keeper, too, merged into the flowing crowd and was carried along like a leaf in the river's current. Soon, he found himself standing in the midst of the great synagogue, which was packed and crowded from wall to wall.

**A** deep silence fell over the hall as the figure of the Rabbi was seen ascending the steps before the Holy Ark. For a moment, the Rabbi turned his face towards the curtain, whispered some prayerful words, then turned to face the congregation and began to speak.

**The** tavern keeper's heart was filled with deep sadness and heavy worry,

casting a thick fog over his mind, preventing him from absorbing even a single sentence of the Rabbi's speech. Even the words themselves could not find a path into his heart, and he stared at the Rabbi with a sealed and blank gaze, as if his mind were blocked and blunt.

**Occasionally**, he felt a kind of radiant glow, a kind of blinding flash of light that seemed to emanate from the Rabbi's radiant face, piercing straight into the depths of his soul. A spark of rekindled life then flared up for a moment in his extinguished and faded soul, and he deeply inhaled, as if trying to draw that spark into the depths of his being and secure it there firmly.

**Suddenly**, it seemed to him as if the Rabbi's penetrating gaze was fixed directly on him, as if searching for him among the sea of faces. For a long time, the Rabbi did not take his eyes off him, until the tavern keeper felt the fog lifting from his mind, and slowly, his ears began to hear and his heart to understand the pure and illuminating words coming from the Rabbi's mouth.

"**We** find two blessings that are similar to each other," preached the Rabbi, "one, the final blessing after the morning Shema: 'Blessed are You, L-rd, who Redeemed Israel' - 'Redeemed' in past tense.

**The** other, in the seventh blessing of the Amidah: 'Blessed are You, L-rd, Redeemer of Israel' - 'Redeemer' in present tense.

**The** blessing 'Who redeemed Israel,' the Rabbi explained sweetly, 'refers to the

**Parshat Mishpatim - Timelessness...**

redemption from Egypt, which has already occurred, while the blessing 'Redeemer of Israel' refers to the ongoing redemptions that we experience every day. It refers to the continuous redemption that the Holy One, blessed be He, brings to His people of Israel as a whole, and to every Jew in particular, at all times and seasons, and from every trouble and adversity.

**'Know** how far-reaching this is!' - the Rabbi raised his voice, and the tavern keeper's ears were listening attentively - 'Even a Jew living in a remote village, his house empty, unable to pay his landlord rent on time, and the landlord seething with anger, sent his henchmen to wreak destruction and ruin in his house, breaking, destroying, and demolishing left, right, and center leaving behind utter desolation - even for such a Jew, his redemption is assured and prepared, and the Holy One, blessed be He, sends it to him in its time and season, offering him redemption and relief from all his troubles...'

**'For** this type of redemption,' the Rabbi concluded his impassioned words, 'we bless 'Redeemer of Israel' in the present tense!'...

**The** Rabbi continued his sermon, but the tavern keeper's ears no longer heard anything. The gloom and despair that had filled his entire being and consciousness just moments ago suddenly vanished as if they never existed, and in their place, an extraordinary joy and exhilaration took hold, almost causing him to burst into dance.

**After** the sermon, the tavern keeper turned to return home. Initially, he had planned to stay in the city until after the evening prayer at the close of Shabbat, after all, what was there to rush back to, aside from the devastation and ruin waiting for him at home? But the words he heard from the Rabbi during the sermon turned his mourning into dancing, and instead of the great bitterness that had enveloped him earlier, his spirit was now cheerful, and his mouth did not cease from singing and rejoicing. With that joy, he hurried to walk back home, as though all the happiness and goodness in the world awaited him.

**When** his family saw their father returning from the city, lively and happy, jumping and skipping, his mouth full of song, they thought he had drunk himself into oblivion to forget his troubles. They grabbed him by his arms, one on each side, and told him to lie down until the wine wore off and he returned to his senses. But the tavern keeper quickly brushed them off, joined their hands in his, and dragged them along with him in a dance.

**"The** Rabbi said: 'Redeemer of Israel!'" he exclaimed joyfully as he sang, "The Rabbi said: 'Redeemer of Israel!' in the present sense!"

**His** family, stunned and confused by the depth of their sorrow, were sure they had added trouble to their existing woes. Wasn't it enough that they were surrounded by destruction and had incurred the wrath of the nobleman, now their father had lost

## Parshat Mishpatim - Timelessness...

his mind - where were they headed? And their cries rose to the heavens.

**Only** when the tavern keeper calmly explained to them the words he had heard from the Rabbi, which seemed to be directed solely at him and his circumstances, did they slightly calm down from their great grief. Together, they sat and waited to see how things would unfold and from where the redemption would come.

**In** the evening, when the stars emerged, the nobleman's messengers came again to the tavern keeper's house. This time, they arrived quietly, observing their surroundings with interest. They saw the terrible destruction left behind by their predecessors, and in the background, amidst the ruins, the tavern keeper was jumping and leaping, clapping, dancing, rejoicing, and singing wholeheartedly...

**They** saw, took note, and left as quickly and quietly as they had come.

**The** family was once again seized by deep fear: who knew what the wicked nobleman was plotting in his heart? However, the tavern keeper himself was unaffected; he continued with his song and dance, and his lips kept on repeating: "Redeemer of Israel"...

"**His** mind has been lost!" the messengers reported to their master, the nobleman, upon their return.

"**What** nonsense are you talking about?" the nobleman jumped up, greatly surprised. "What does this mean?"

"**We** went to the Jew's house," his messengers replied, "and there, our eyes darkened. Destruction was wrought upon him, total and complete devastation - the henchmen did a fine job, a masterpiece !

**However**, amidst all these ruins, the tavern keeper stood like a groom on his wedding day, jumping and skipping vigorously, clapping, dancing, rejoicing, and singing with all his might..."

**The** nobleman's spirit was greatly disturbed. His face turned pale, his hands trembled, and it was evident that he was at a loss for words.

"**I** didn't mean this!" he mumbled in confusion. "It's a pity for a shrewd Jew like him to lose his mind, G-d forbid ! 'Moshka's' brain is beneficial to my business, and therefore, it is necessary to take care of him. I shouldn't have exaggerated the threats !"...

**Not** an hour passed and the nobleman's messengers came for the third time and summoned the tavern keeper to appear before their master.

"**Father**, don't go !" the children cried out - "Let us flee, at least for the time being !"

"**Quiet**, quiet with your nonsense !" the tavern keeper replied cheerfully and reassuringly - "Didn't the Rabbi clearly say: 'Redeemer of Israel !' - What more do I have to fear? I am going, therefore, toward the Redeemer of Israel, blessed be He and His name, and to witness the redemption prepared just for me ! Be at peace, and remove fear from your hearts !"



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**With** a festive wish of "Good week," he left the house and followed the nobleman's messengers waiting for him...

**The** nobleman received the tavern keeper with gestures of friendship.

"**I** apologize to you!" he said with an ingenuous smile. "Why did you bring this great misfortune upon yourself? Why can't you manage and succeed like any other tavern keeper?"

"**Is** it up to me or my will?" the tavern keeper replied, surprised and bewildered.

"**Indeed**, it is!" the nobleman replied in a flattering tone. "If you only wished, then you could!"

"**Perhaps** the master will enlighten me with understanding, what should I do?" the Jew replied in a conciliatory tone, realizing that the nobleman had changed his attitude towards him.

**The** nobleman, who was pleased to hear his 'Moshka' ask relevant and intelligent questions, and possessing a clear mind, paused for a moment in thought and replied:

"**Look**, Moshka! I am giving you a written and signed directive to my wine distillery managers to give you ten barrels of fine liquor on credit, so you can start and open a new start in your business! I am postponing your old debts for now. When you start trading successfully again, like in the old days, and have money in your pocket, you will pay me for the liquor along with these old debts.

**Now**, go in peace, and see to it that you rid yourself once and for all of the bad luck that has stuck to you!"

**With** the nobleman's written directive in hand, the tavern keeper hurried to the nobleman's wine distillery, collected the barrels, loaded them onto a wagon, and brought them to his house.

**From** amazement, his family, witnessing the miracle unfolding before them, could not open their mouths from sheer shock and astonishment.

**The** tavern keeper stood before them and teased them: "Well, 'Redeemer of Israel,' is He not?"

**What** did you think, silly ones, that the Rabbi's words were spoken in vain? Can it be that he spoke and the L-rd would not fulfill? 'A righteous man decrees and the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfills!'"

**The** next morning at dawn, the tavern keeper opened the doors of his tavern, which had been closed now for several months. The peasants, as if they had been waiting for this sign of life, gathered and came to the tavern in droves, hounding on the liquor like locusts on the grass of the land.

**By** the end of the day, the stock of liquor the tavern keeper had brought from the nobleman's distillery was depleted. Seizing the profit of these sales, he purchased a great additional quantity, for the coming days.

**By** the eve of Passover, which fell out at the end of that week, the tavern keeper had managed to serve his increasingly

## Every Creation Has Its Place

**When** King David looked about at the creation made by G-d, his heart was filled with awe, and he began to praise and glorify G-d for His works. One such Psalm starts with the verse: "Bless the L-rd, my soul. L-rd my G-d, You are very great; You are adorned with honor and majesty" (Psalms 104:1).

**Indeed**, when we contemplate upon this chapter, we see that King David is thanking G-d for giving every creature its special place – "The mountains rise, the valleys sink down to the place that You have established for them" (Psalms 104:8), "The high mountains are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers" (Psalms 104:18).

**The** place, that is unique to each creature, gives it the strength and ability to express its potential into action. On the sixth day of creation, G-d created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden. It became clear that man's natural place is in the Garden of Eden...

**We** learn from our sages that immediately upon his creation, Adam, and his descendants, were given six commandments: not to perform idolatry, blasphemy, murder, immorality, theft, and to create civil laws. In addition to these, he was commanded not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

**Adam** settled in his place, in the Garden of Eden, and performed

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...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

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large clientele great quantities of liquor, and only with great difficulty convinced the gentile peasants to buy their liquor during the eight days of the coming passover festival from other non-Jewish tavern keepers, who were not prohibited from chametz (leavened products) as he was.

**The** tavern keeper celebrated the days of Passover in tranquility and with generosity, and held the 'Seder' night extravagantly, as he was accustomed to in the good old days.

**On** one of the intermediate days of the festival, the tavern keeper gathered a large sum of money and went out to town to present it as a gift to the righteous Rabbi of Kolbasov.

**"What** is the meaning of this large sum you have brought me as a gift?" the Rabbi asked in wonder.

**"I** brought the Rabbi the 'Redeemer of Israel!' profits" replied the tavern keeper, his voice trembling with emotion and joy...

**Parshat Mishpatim - Wandering and Restless on Earth**

his sacred task. However, suddenly the serpent appeared, poisoned the mind of mankind, and Adam transgressed G-d's command and ate from the Tree of Knowledge...

**G-d** revealed Himself to him, punished him with ten curses, and expelled him from his natural place – from the Garden of Eden, down to our lowly and material world...

**Wandering and Restless on Earth**

**Adam's** first two sons were Cain and Abel. Despite being twins, Cain was unable to live in unity with Abel...

**One** day, a dispute erupted between them, and Cain rose up against Abel and killed him. This sin was the first sin committed in our world.

**The** sin that Cain committed was a combination of two aspects: he transgressed G-d's commandment not to shed blood, and also violated the principles 'between man and his fellow' by killing his brother Abel.

**G-d** revealed Himself to Cain and punished him: "A fugitive and a wanderer shall you be on the earth" (Genesis 4:12). Simply, meaning that Cain would be exiled from place to place, never able to settle in one location.

**We** cannot but wonder: Adam transgressed G-d's will and was punished with ten curses, yet Cain, who in addition to transgressing G-d's will, also harmed his fellow man, received a seemingly much lighter punishment?

**Imagine** a person caught for murder and is brought before a court. The judge looks at him angrily and decrees: "Your punishment is to fly from country to country, you are not allowed to stay permanently in any one country!"

**Certainly**, this is a punishment, but not the punishment we would expect for a murderer!

**Moreover**, how would such a punishment be implemented in practice? After all, G-d did not take away Cain's free will, and if Cain still had the power of choice, why would he wander, couldn't he defiantly choose to settle in one place?

## The Terrible Punishment - Exile of the Mind

**We** find in the teachings of the great Rabbi Yisrael, the Maggid of Koznitz, a profound interpretation in the punishment Cain received. It was indeed great and terrible, and in some respects, even more severe than the punishment of Adam.

**With** the words "A fugitive and a wanderer shall you be on the earth" (Genesis 4:12) G-d punished and cursed Cain's mind. Cain's thoughts would never be settled; they would wander and roam. The nature of this mental exile created confusion, fear, and

madness in the person, forcing him to be unable to settle in one place, compelled to wander and roam the earth.

**This** punishment that Cain received was the first punishment in our world, and unfortunately, it is destined to accompany humanity for all time, until the days of Moshiach...<sup>2</sup>

**This** punishment, the lack of peace of mind, is a most severe punishment...

**To** elaborate further...

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...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

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**2. A** story is told about one of the disciples of the great Rabbi Yitzchak of Neshchiz, who was childless for many years. Miraculously, in their old age, his wife gave birth to a son.

**The** child grew up, showing great promise and talent. The parents' hearts overflowed with gratitude to G-d. When the boy reached the age of thirteen, his father said to his mother, "We are both very old. Perhaps we should marry him off, so we might see our grandchildren..."

**They** agreed and started looking for a suitable match. Not long after, the boy fell severely ill from a virulent flu and

was deathly ill, leaving his parents heartbroken. The father immediately rushed to the house of study of his rabbi, Rabbi Yitzchak of Neshchiz.

**Arriving** on a Friday evening, the father entered his Rabbi's presence in uncontrollable tears. The Rabbi didn't respond to his tears but instead shouted "Shabbat ! Shabbat !"

**The** candles were lit, and the community prayed Mincha, Kabbalat Shabbat, and Maariv with fervor and holy fire.

**After** the prayer, everyone, including the Rabbi, went to the study hall for the

**Parshat Mishpatim - The Terrible Punishment - Exile of the Mind**

Friday night meal. After Birkat Hamazon, the Chassidim began to sing and dance. The father also started dancing with great vigor and joy.

**A** Chassid asked him, "How is your son?" The father replied, "Didn't you hear the Rabbi say today is Shabbat?"

**The** Chassid persisted, "But your son is nonetheless ill, how can you be so happy and rejoice?"

**The** father then recounted a teaching he had heard from the Rabbi 15 years earlier, in the week of Parshat Bereshit, about Cain and Abel:

"**And** Abel was a shepherd, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" (Genesis 4:2).

**Abel** was a righteous man who sought spirituality over materiality. Despite this preference of his, he felt compelled to engage in material pursuits, but did so with a sense of sorrow. This is reflected in the phrase "וַיְהִי הֶבְל" (And Abel was), where "ויהי" is a term our sages teach us that denotes sorrow.

**In** contrast, Cain desired both spirituality and materiality. And therefore, when he engaged in material pursuits, his heart was filled with joy, as indicated by the phrase "וַיְקַיֵּן הָיְהִי" (And Cain was), a term a term our sages teach us that is associated with joy.

**Upon** murdering Abel, God said to Cain, "נַעַב וְנָד תֵּהִיה בָאָרֶץ" (You will be a restless wanderer on the earth), implying that Cain would be restless from both spirituality ("נע") and materiality ("נד").

**Cain's** responds to G-d, "גָּדוֹל עוֹוֹנִי מִנְשׂוּא" (My punishment is more than I can bear), reflecting his anguish at being deprived of both spiritual and material fulfillments.

**G-d** then partially relents, allowing Cain some material fulfillment, as indicated in "וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ נֹד" (and he lived in the land of Nod), symbolizing the return of the aspect of materiality to Cain.

**Cain** laments to G-d that without spirituality, "וְהִיָּה כָל מוֹצְאֵי יִהְרַגְנִי" (everyone who finds me will kill me), meaning that without spiritual guidance, all the harmful influences he would encounter would overpower and distract him from G-d's service. Through spirituality a person elevates above their circumstances through faith, trust, and joy in the creator. But without this spiritual strength, any adversity can cause great sorrow and lack of resilience.

**So** immediately, G-d marks Cain with a sign, "וַיִּשֶׂם ה' לְקַיֵּן אוֹת" (The L-rd put a mark on Cain).

**This** refers to the sign of Shabbat ("אות") and through the joy of Shabbat, Cain could attain spirituality and overcome any negative influences he would encounter, since the joy of the Shabbat would dispel all worries and sorrows.

**The** father continued, "When I heard the Rabbi shout 'Shabbat! Shabbat!' I was reminded of this teaching I had heard so many years ago and felt an overwhelming joy from the sanctity of Shabbat. This joy eclipsed any sorrow and grief and prevented me from being disturbed in my worship of G-d."

## Man Is the Form

**One** of the great mysteries of the universe is mankind. We are accustomed to being around, living with, being disappointed by, and rejoicing in their existence - all without truly knowing what 'man' is about.

**Indeed**, if the Creator had not revealed the mysteries of man through the great sages of Israel, we would still be groping in the darkness of his mysteries !

**To** adequately explain the wondrous creation called 'man', one needs to study the profound book "Etz Chaim" by Rabbi Isaac Luria, the AriZaL, and only after thoroughly understanding everything written there, can one begin to understand the concept

of 'man'. However, we will focus on one message encapsulated in the verse: "And from my flesh I shall see G-d" (Job 19:26).

**The** explanation is as follows: G-d created the human body in such a way that all the higher worlds are reflected within it.

**Just** as in the higher worlds, there are aspects of length (from above to below) and depth (inward). So too in the human body:

**The** depth (inward) of a person is: skin, flesh, sinews, bones, and the marrow in the bones.

**While** the length (from above to below) is: the head (Chochmah, Binah, Da'at), arms (hands), and

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...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

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**Throughout** the Shabbat, the father danced with the Chassidim with great joy. And on Saturday night, he received the good news that his son's condition had improved significantly.

**The** Rabbi then commented, "Yesterday, when the father came to me crying, I saw no possibility of helping him, the decree that he would pass away had already been sealed.

**That's** why I shouted 'Shabbat ! Shabbat !' and reminded him of this teaching.

**By** filling himself with the joy of Shabbat to the extent that no sadness or worry could affect him, the sanctity of Shabbat itself interceded before G-d. The Shabbat's plea was fruitful, the evil decree was sweetened, and the boy was healed completely..." ("HaDeah VeHaDibur,"

by Rabbi David Kahan issue 255, p. 41)

**Parshat Mishpatim - Man Is Where His Thoughts Are**

body (Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet), legs (Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malchut).

**Likewise**, all the organs and senses of man reflect sublime and deep matters in divinity.

**For** a period of time a group of Kabbalists decided to study the development of the spiritual worlds as they are reflected in the human body, and I too participated in these lessons. These lessons made us realize that although the body is physical, its roots are planted in sacred and awesome higher worlds that are revealed in every movement of the limbs and sinews, and each movement one makes affects and stirs all the worlds.

**A** person who is exposed to such things and contemplates them achieves true fear of sin, and whenever they encounter a sinful act, they flee from it as from fire. Conversely, whenever one will then encounter a positive commandment, they will fulfill it with much love and awe.

**Man Is Where His Thoughts Are**

**Rabbi** Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin wrote (Tzidkat HaTzadik - Letter 144):

**However**, this all pertains to the external body, not the person himself. As the divine Kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital wrote (Sha'arei Kedusha, Part One - First Gate):

**"It** is known to those of wisdom that the human body is not the person himself, for the body is merely called the flesh of man, as it is written: "With skin and flesh You have clothed me, and with bones and sinews You have knit me together" (Job 10:11), and it is also written: "Do not pour it upon the flesh of man" (Exodus 30:32)...

**It** turns out that the person is the inner part, and the body is an outer garment in which the intellectual soul, which is the person himself - so long he is in this world - is clothed, and after death, this garment is removed and clothed in a pure and clean spiritual garment...

**The** reality of man is thus the soul...

**"Where** a person's thoughts are, there the entire person is. For the essence of a person is not the

body, but the soul. And the soul is nothing but the power of thought, contemplation, and the desire within a person. Where his thoughts are focused, such is his entire form at that time."

**This** means that a person's vitality is concentrated and follows his thoughts. When one's thoughts are always attached to holy and pure places, to matters of serving G-d, studying the holy Torah, performing acts of kindness, and helping others, then his entire vitality is found in the realms of holiness and divinity.

**Conversely**, someone who sits in his house, with his mind and heart wandering in bad and forbidden thoughts, of anger and heresy, of immorality and abomination, they should know that their entire essence and being are there - in the place of filth and waste!

A person who thinks of good things lives a divine life. In contrast, a person who thinks of waste is immersed in a pool of waste at that moment...

**We** can now understand the severity of Cain's punishment:

**Adam** was in the Garden of Eden both in body and mind, and after he sinned, only his body was exiled from Eden. His mind remained there, and therefore his vitality remained there...

**But** Cain was exiled from Eden in his thoughts also, and this 'disconnection' was very painful...

**Now** we can understand the story of Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz (footnote 1 above).

**The** thoughts of the Jew were entirely immersed in the prayer of 'the Redeemer of Israel', and thus his entire being and essence were there, thereby nullifying any possibility of harm, and the decree was transformed into salvation!

**Parenthetically:** The revered Chabad Rebbes revealed that positive thought has the power to bring salvation! When a person thinks positively, he has the ability to change his situation, even when the path of nature does not leave room for any positive outcome. The thought and trust in G-d that everything



will be good are themselves the catalysts for good influence from above beyond any calculations!

**Before** we move on to this week's portion, let us quote the words of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler...

### Cain's Curse and Modern Civilization

**After** explaining at length the concept of exile as a punishment for unintentional murder, Rabbi Dessler wrote (Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. 4, Page 171):

**There** is another aspect to the concept of wandering and exile, a mystical aspect. The internal idea of wandering and roaming is the confusion of the mind. A person who sins and takes the life of his fellow - his mind becomes deranged, and his life is not a life. The external result of this is that he cannot find a permanent place in the world to settle.

**Kabbalists** wrote that someone forced to uproot from his place and travel frequently in the world for his livelihood, surely this comes to rectify a sin of murder, either in this incarnation or in a previous one, or it is because of the known sin that contains an aspect of murder, as our sages said (Niddah 13b).

**We** witness in our generation terrifying phenomena, where murders multiply endlessly, human blood becomes utterly worthless, and people consume each other's lives. Unfortunately, even within the walls of the Torah community, we are not completely free from this, as under the guise of 'mitzvah', one descends into the life of his fellow, shaming in public and speaking slander, all of which are aspects of murder.

**And** the terrible consequences do not delay: life falters, G-d forbid, and the restfulness and tranquility of life are completely gone. Furthermore, people travel and fly from one end of the world to the other in methods and at speeds never seen before. They think that they do all this for their pleasure or what is called 'entertainment', but it is actually the 'dispersal of the soul', i.e., confusion of the mind.

**Parshat Mishpatim - The First Law of Parshat Mishpatim**

**However**, we must know, that according to the depth of our holy Torah and its secrets, the fact that people are being shaken from place to place incessantly is none other than the curse of Cain: "A fugitive and a wanderer shall you be on the earth".

**Thus** are the results of modern civilization that is erected on the denial of the Torah:

**The** pressure is increased, corruption and murders multiply, there is no trust, and peace of mind is gone.

**And** externally, the threat of terrible wars that can destroy and devastate all life in this world, G-d forbid, fill the entire atmosphere, every breath.

**If** we look at our physical lives from an inner perspective, we see that it involves essentially a weariness of laziness. This weariness and laziness is a form of death - the death of the soul, as the sages say (Ketubot 59b):

"Idleness leads to madness," as Rashi interprets the saying.

**Conversely**, spiritual work with enthusiasm and willingness does not tire one at all, as it is written: "He gives power to the faint." For in the attachment of the divine, there can be no weariness.

**A** person who perseveres in studying the holy Torah finds the source of his life within himself, and 'news' from the outside is irrelevant to him and does not interest him. He is grounded within himself and nothing external can confuse him.

**On** the other hand, an idle person - asleep on the inside, dead within himself, any slight movement from the outside will confuse him and he will immediately pursue it in his thoughts. This is the spiritual aspect of wandering and restlessness - the curse of Cain...

**Now** let us turn to this week's Torah portion...

**The First Law of Parshat Mishpatim**

**Parshat** Mishpatim mainly deals with laws of damages and

property, and other matters between people, hence it is called

**Parshat Mishpatim - Israel - Children of G-d**

'Mishpatim' ('Laws'). Because 'law', unlike 'statute', indicates the commandments that are also understood by human reason.

**It** begins with the laws of a Hebrew slave. A person caught stealing, who cannot repay the value of the theft, is sold by the court as a slave, and the money is used to repay the victim.

**The** court sells him for a period of six years of work, which equals approximately 2,190 days.

**Israel - Children of G-d**

**In** the holy book 'Etz Chaim' it is written (Gate 1, Branch 2):

**Initially**, before the creation of all the worlds, the plain light of G-d filled all of existence. When He wished to create the worlds, He constricted His light to the sides and created a vacant space where He created all the worlds.

**The** Maggid of Mezeritch explained:

**Initially**, a simple light filled all of existence, and then it arose in His thought to create the souls

**The** purchaser of a Hebrew slave is obligated to take care of him and re-educate him...

**The** Talmud in Tractate Kiddushin (14b and onward) elaborates on the laws of the Hebrew slave. And in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 267:14) it is ruled: 'A Hebrew slave is applicable only when the Jubilee is observed.'

**Therefore**, currently, the laws of a Hebrew slave do not apply.

of Israel, to derive pleasure and enjoyment from their service.

**Thus**, as it were, G-d contracted Himself with a single thought. This concept is somewhat lofty and obtuse.

**And** wherever that thought of G-d is found, there is vitality. Thus, He contracted Himself, and by doing so, the souls of Israel - who are the fruit of His love - were created. And by contractions, the worlds were also created, for without contraction, the worlds could not be created, as is known.

## Parshat Mishpatim - Seed of Man and Seed of Animal...

**Rabbi** Hillel of Paritch wrote (Pelach HaRimon, Shemot - page 345): It thus comes out that the root of all the souls of Israel is above Atzilut, since Israel is rooted in the internal and essential thought of G-d.

**In** Parshat Bereshit, the river flowing out of Eden to water the garden is mentioned. According to the inner explanation, this river symbolizes a very high aspect in the order of creation called 'the union of Chochmah and Binah'.

**The** souls of Israel are rooted much higher than this aspect; they are 'beyond' this aspect, which

means that their source is 'beyond the river', and therefore the souls of Israel are called 'Ivrim' (Hebrews, 'those from the other side').

**And** as these souls descended below, they passed through the four worlds: Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah, Asiyah, and during this transition, each soul received the spiritual tools and garments necessary for their divine service...

**Moses**, in our Torah portion, received a command to elevate and exalt even the lowest of souls.

**But** before we elaborate, let us proceed with an introduction...

## Seed of Man and Seed of Animal...

**In** the publication "Sichat HaShavua" (Issue 241), it is written:

**Chassidut** distinguishes between things that are accepted by a person 'simply' and things that come to a person as 'a novelty'.

**There** are things that a person accepts as self-evident, without needing any proof or explanations. These are things that come 'simply'.

**Other** things, even though they acknowledge their existence, are a 'novelty' to them - a new concept, not part of their natural being.

**For** most people, the physical and material reality is 'simple', while the divine reality is a 'novelty'. A person is born into the world, and its existence is completely natural and self-evident to him. A typical person, unless he engages in deep

philosophy, would not think to question the authenticity of the existence of the world. It is clear to him that the world exists, and any explanation to prove this seems superfluous and absurd to him.

**The** divine reality, on the other hand, does not come to them naturally. They need to spend time in thought, reflection, and rational proof. Through deep contemplation, they may reach an intellectual recognition that the world could not have been created by itself and that there is a divine force that creates and sustains it.

**But**, however strong and profound this recognition may be, it is nonetheless a novelty for them, not the natural way they perceive things.

**But** there are other people in the world. Those with higher souls, the truly righteous individuals of every generation.

**For** them, things appear completely differently. In their eyes, the divine reality is 'simple', and most natural, which they cannot exist without, while the physical reality is a 'novelty',

something that needs to be thought about and contemplated in order to recognize its true existence.

**The** verse states "I will sow the house of Israel... seed of man and seed of beast" (Jeremiah 31:27). This is interpreted in Chassidic teachings as indicating two types of souls in Israel - 'seed of man' and 'seed of beast'. The main difference between man and beast is that man has 'daat' (knowledge) while a beast does not. Animals have a brain, but not 'daat'. 'Daat' means grasping the meaning of things, recognizing their inner essence. This is exclusive merely to man.

**And** this is the essential difference between the souls of the 'seed of man' and the souls of the 'seed of beast':

**In** the lower souls of the 'seed of beast', there can exist faith in G-d, and an intellectual understanding of G-d's greatness, but the essence of these things is distant from them. They do not see the divine revelation as it is but need external means - like intellect and understanding - to achieve any recognition of divine reality.

**Parshat Mishpatim - The Role of Moses...**

**The** souls of the 'seed of man' on the other hand, sense the divine revelation as something entirely natural and self-evident. They perceive it without needing external means to reach this realization. To them, the earthly concealment that covers the divine truth does not exist. For them, divine reality is as straightforward as we perceive the world, self-evidently existing.

**This** gap between the souls of the 'seed of man' and the souls of the 'seed of beast' cannot be bridged, just as it is impossible to bridge the gap between a blind person and one who sees.

**The** seeing person may have no knowledge of the science of

light and color, but he sees it! At the same time, the blind person might be an international expert in the science of vision, but he will never know what light is in the palpable sense. Similarly, the souls of the 'seed of beast' can never reach the natural and simple divine recognition that exists in the souls of the 'seed of man'.

**It** is in this respect as well, that a righteous person is fundamentally different from other people. He sees the world as it is seen from above, from the divine perspective.

**Therefore**, it is crucial for one to cling to the righteous and follow their path to get as close as possible to the inner truth they represent.

**The Role of Moses...**

**Our** Torah portion begins: "And these are the judgments which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew slave" (Exodus 21:1-2)...

**The** words 'which you shall set before them' are in the plural, so why is the continuation of the verse in the singular "If you buy (singular) a Hebrew slave"?

**Rabbi** Shneur Zalman of Liadi explained (Torah Ohr, "Ve'eleh HaMishpatim") that the intent of "If you buy a Hebrew slave" is addressed to Moses.

**Within** each Jew lies a part of G-d above, utterly united and nullified to the Creator. However, as mentioned, when the soul

**Parshat Mishpatim - Reincarnation - Completing the Deficiencies**

'clothes' itself in the worlds of Beriah, Yetzirah, Asiyah, it becomes materialized, and the light of the soul is concealed.

**Moses'** role is to reveal and manifest this concealed soul from potential to actuality. Moses' task is to elevate all the souls of the people of Israel (even those at the level of 'slave') and to generate within them a real sense of divine service.

**He** is tasked with bringing the people of Israel to a state where they merit the level of perceiving G-dliness 'simply'.

**Thus**, this is the meaning of the verse: "If you buy a Hebrew slave"

- 'Hebrew slave' refers to the souls of Israel who are at the level of 'seed of beast', and 'you shall buy' means to reveal the lofty hidden aspect in them (see his words there at length).

**At** the very least, to bring them to a state where they are there in their thoughts - in spirituality and the divine light.

**Moses** is therefore instructed by G-d: "And these are the judgments which you shall set before them" - explain to them the importance of utilizing the time in this lowly material world in which they live. And if not... they will need to return to this world again.

**Reincarnation - Completing the Deficiencies**

**The** Zohar, the primary work of Jewish mysticism, interprets the verse "And these are the judgments which you shall set before them" (Exodus 21:1) in the context of reincarnation (Zohar, Mishpatim 94b):

**Rabbi** Shimon opens the discussion by stating that these laws are the ordered structures of reincarnation.

**Meaning** that G-d told Moses to teach every individual among the people of Israel the necessity of fulfilling all 613 commandments. And by doing so, they can complete their souls and merit the World to Come.

**However**, if a person does not merit and arrives in the World to Come with missing

## Parshat Mishpatim - Me, Here and Now

commandments or with sin, meaning that during their life they sinned and did not repent, then they will need to be reincarnated in this world to rectify these deficiencies.

**Rabbi** Yaakov Moshe Hillel, a renowned Kabbalist, explains that every soul must fulfill all 613 commandments, as the 248 limbs of the soul correspond to the 248 positive commandments, and the 365 sinews of the soul which correspond to the 365 prohibitions. A soul must reincarnate several times until it completes the fulfillment of all 613 commandments, after which it is connected to the Source of life to receive its full reward.

**As** the soul fulfills the commandments, its limbs and sinews corresponding to those

commandments are rectified. The parts that remain unrectified, corresponding to the commandments not yet fulfilled, must reincarnate again and again until they are perfected. Therefore, it is not surprising that a person might be punished for sins committed in a previous incarnation, as it is he himself, and not another, who is reincarnated to rectify those previous sins.

**This** is why every person must recite the entire confessional prayer, even for sins he knows that he did not commit, since the confessions also apply to actions from the previous incarnations, and it is possible that in those previous incarnations he committed those sins (see 'Ben Ish Chai', Year 1, Parashat Ki Tisa).

## Me, Here and Now

**Rabbi** Hutner turned to his students and said: Now, after this long introduction, it is clear what is 'a person of understanding' that Rabbi Salanter referred to.

'A person of understanding' is someone who understands and knows that life is given and granted so that one can achieve 'knowledge of G-d', as it is said: "If you seek it like silver and search



**Parshat Mishpatim - Me, Here and Now**

for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the L-rd and find the knowledge of G-d" (Proverbs 2:4-5).

**He** understands that one must not postpone the work and that there is no one else to rely on, one must serve G-d: me, here and now.

Otherwise, he will - G-d forbid - have to return to this world again.

**Since** he understands the responsibility placed upon him, he dedicates his thoughts to the service of G-d, and in his thoughts, he is 'there', in spirituality and lofty matters.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



## Summary and Practical Implications

**A.** At the beginning of a person's service to G-d, it is essential to be 'a person of understanding.' This means that one must understand and know that their life is given to them in order to attain 'the knowledge of G-d.' As it is said, "If you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the L-rd and find the knowledge of G-d."

**When** a person internalizes the responsibility placed upon them, they understand that it is forbidden to postpone or delay this divine service, and there is no one else to rely on. They must serve G-d: me, here and now. Otherwise, G-d forbid, they will need to return to this world again.

**B.** Every Jew has a holy soul composed of 248 spiritual limbs and 365 spiritual sinews corresponding to the 248 positive commandments and the 365 negative commandments. Therefore, for a person to merit to complete their soul properly and to merit the life of the World to Come, they must strive to fulfill all the 248 positive commandments and to guard against all 365 negative commandments that correspond to their 248 limbs and 365 sinews.

**C.** When a person does not merit to complete their soul and is lacking in the fulfillment of the 248 positive commandments or has transgressed any of the 365 negative commandments, they must return in reincarnation, possibly several times, until they merit completing their soul through the fulfillment of the missing commandments and guarding against the negative commandments.

**D.** Therefore, every person must recite all the particulars of the confessional prayer, even though they may have not sinned that particular transgression in their lifetime, because a person does not know what sins they committed in a previous incarnation, for which they have returned in this incarnation to rectify.

**E.** Wherever a person puts his mind, that is where they are found, because the essence of a person is not the body but the soul, and a primary manifestation of the soul in a person is in thought, and all the vitality of a person is drawn from it. Therefore, when the thought is connected to holy and pure places, to matters of serving G-d, studying the holy Torah, performing acts of kindness,

**Parshat Mishpatim - Summary and Practical Implications**

and helping others, then their entire vitality is found in the realms of holiness and divinity.

**Conversely**, someone who sits inside their house, surrounded by four walls, and their mind and heart wander in bad and forbidden thoughts, of anger and heresy, of immorality and abomination, their entire essence and being are there - in a place of waste and filth!

**F.** There are two types of souls - 'seed of man and seed of beast.'

**For** souls that are of the 'seed of beast,' the world is the simple reality, but the divine revelation in the world

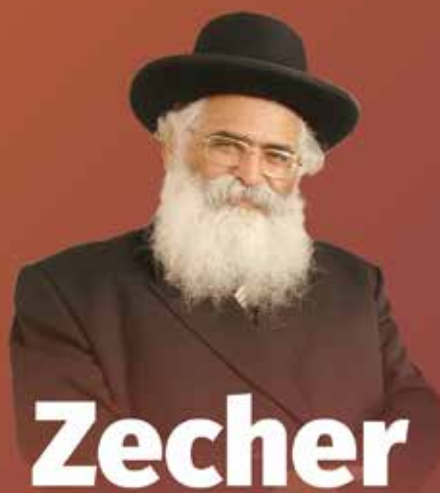
is hidden from them, and they need to use external means like intellect and understanding to come to the recognition of the divine reality.

**However**, for souls that are of the 'seed of man,' the simple reality is the divine existence in the world, and they feel it as natural and do not need any external means to reach it, and this is the state of the souls of the true righteous individuals in a generation.

**Therefore**, every Jew should aspire to find a true tzaddik (righteous person) to whom they can draw close, for they have the power to bring them closer to divinity.



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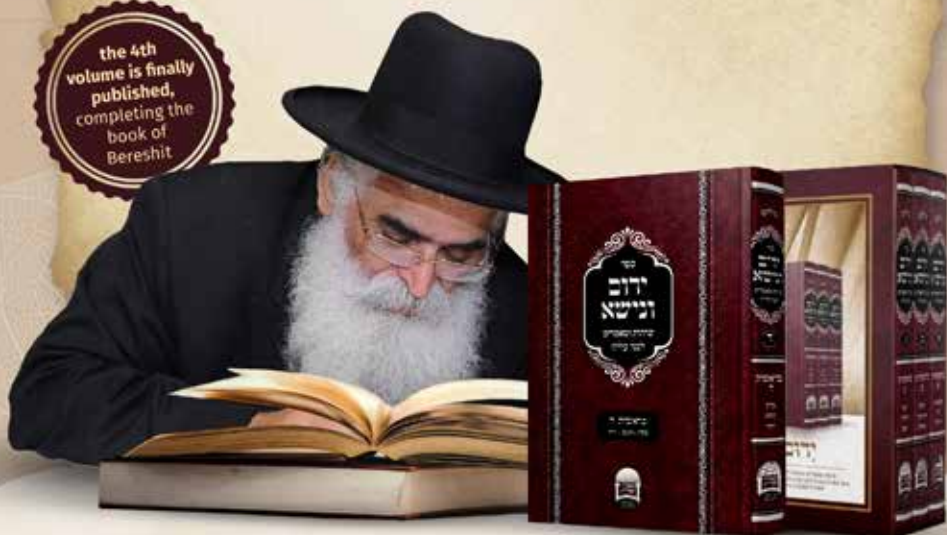


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Montreal	4:54 pm	5:59 pm	6:25 pm
Toronto	5:21 pm	6:24 pm	6:52 pm
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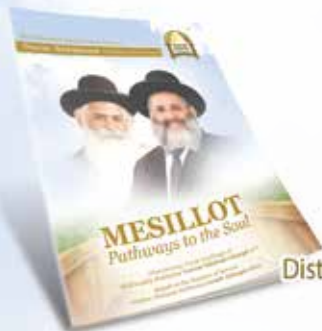
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