

# א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

2/8/2024-ד' תשפ"ד

משפטים

[abisltorah.wordpress.com](http://abisltorah.wordpress.com)

## How to Have a Just Society

By Danny Missaghi

הר סיני, nestled in the Book of Exodus, immediately follows the awe-inspiring events at הר סיני, where בני ישראל received the עשרת הדברות. While the previous פרשה focused on grandiose divine revelations, משפטים transitions to the nitty-gritty details of civil law and societal governance. Despite this shift in focus, משפטים emphasizes the sacredness of human relationships and the importance of fairness and justice in our daily interactions.

At its core, משפטים is a blueprint for creating a just and equitable society. It encompasses a wide array of laws, covering everything from interpersonal ethics, to property rights and criminal justice. However, amidst the multitude of laws, a central theme emerges: the value of empathy and compassion.

One of the most famous פסוקים in משפטים states, וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם יָדַעְתֶּם אֶת-נַפְשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי-גֵרִים הֵיִיתֶם, "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt" (שמות כג:ט). This commandment serves as a powerful reminder to בני ישראל, that they themselves have been oppressed outsiders, and compels them to extend compassion and empathy to others in similar situations. It underscores the importance of empathy in shaping a just society and reminds us that our own experiences of hardship should fuel our compassion for others.

Furthermore, משפטים introduces the concept of restorative justice, through the principle of עֵין תַּחַת עֵין, "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" (שמות כא:כד). Contrary to the literal interpretation, this principle actually emphasizes proportionality and restitution rather than vengeance. This פסוק is not teaching us that one should actually hurt another, rather they should pay the damages of what was done to another. It seeks to restore balance and repair harm rather than perpetuate a cycle of violence. In doing so, משפטים advocates for a justice system rooted in rehabilitation and reconciliation rather than punitive measures alone.

As we delve into the intricate laws of משפטים, we are challenged to reflect on our own conduct and interactions with others. Are we treating our fellow human beings with dignity and respect? Are we actively seeking to alleviate the suffering of those around us? Are we striving to build a society that values fairness, justice and compassion above all else?

פרשת משפטים serves as a timeless reminder of our collective responsibility, to uphold the principles of righteousness and equity, in all aspects of our lives. It calls upon us to embody empathy, pursue justice and strive to create a world where all individuals are treated with dignity and compassion.

## Fighting Our Battles

By Binyamin Orkaby

פרשת משפטים, is all about laws. Laws about how to treat ones slave, laws about how to pay someone that's been injured, and more. What becomes lost within all of the laws, is that there is more to פרשת משפטים than just laws. In the sixth עליה ה' tells בני ישראל that "וְאֹיְבֹתַי אֶת־אֹיְבֵיךָ וְצָרְתִּי אֶת־צָרֶיךָ" (ה') will be an enemy to your enemies and I (ה') will fight your adversaries". (שמות כג:כב). In this פסוק, בני ישראל are being taught a powerful lesson by ה'. If they listen to what ה' commands them to do then ה' will fight there wars for them when they enter כנען. In the next פסוק they, בני ישראל, are told that ה' will send a מלאך before them to fight וְהִבֹּסִי וְהָפַרְצִי וְהִכְנַעְתִּי הַחַיִּי וְהַיּוֹסֵף and ה' will destroy them. While this is a powerful message, that ה' will fight our battles, there is one strange thing about the list of nation. We know that there were seven nations of כנען. However, if we count the number of nations listed we find only six! The one missing nation from the list is the nation of the גרגשי; why were the גרגשי not listed?

חזקוני says that the תורה didn't bother to mention the גרגשי because they were the smallest nation. כנען רבינו בחיי says, based on a גמרא ירושלמי in שביעית that the גרגשי are not mentioned because they left כנען since they didn't want to fight with בני ישראל. Since the גרגשי weren't in כנען and as such they were not going to fight בני ישראל it was not necessary to have them listed in פסוק.

Following all the laws discussed in the beginning of משפטים is this idea of ה' fighting for בני ישראל. ה' is telling בני ישראל to look to the future when He will conquer their enemies in כנען as long as they follow His מצוות. This is a powerful message not just to בני ישראל in the desert, but a lesson for every subsequent generation. ה' is showing בני ישראל that He will fight for them and clear all enemies from their path as long as we follow his מצוות.

This weeks פרשה is teaching בני ישראל to view the מצוות not as commands laid upon us, rather a way for בני ישראל to connect with ה'. Furthermore, ה' is teaching בני ישראל that they must first have a proper justice system and proper relationships with their fellows before ה' can help them and fight their battles for them. May we be able to build strong relationships with the people around us and in doing so be able to come closer to ה'.

Editors in Chief: Binyamin Orkaby and Ephraim Fischer

Editors: Yochanan Cramer and Eitan Orkaby

Faculty Advisor: Rabbi Jaffe



Write a Dvar Torah for תורה א ביסל



Receive תורה א ביסל on WhatsApp