

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Mishpatim

For the week ending 27 Shevat 5759
12 & 13 February 1999

Parsha Questions

1. In what context is a *mezuzah* mentioned in this week's *Parsha*? (tricky question)
2. What special mitzvah does the Torah give to the master of a Hebrew maidservant?
3. What is the penalty for wounding one's father or mother?
4. 'A' intentionally hits 'B'. As a result, B is close to death. Besides any monetary payments, what happens to A?
5. What is the penalty for someone who tries to murder a particular person, but accidentally kills another person instead? Give two opinions.
6. A slave goes free if his master knocks out one of the slave's teeth. What teeth do not qualify for this rule and why?
7. An ox gores another ox. What is the maximum the owner of the damaging ox must pay, provided his animal had gored no more than twice previously?
8. From where in this week's *Parsha* can the importance of *work* be demonstrated?
9. What is meant by the words "If the sun shone on him"?
10. A person is given an object for safe-keeping. Later, he swears it was stolen. Witnesses come and say that in fact *he* is the one who stole it. How much must he pay?
11. A person borrows his employee's car. The car is struck by lightning. How much must he pay?
12. Why is lending money at interest called "biting"?
13. Non-kosher meat "*treifa*" is preferentially fed to dogs. Why?
14. Which verse forbids listening to slander?
15. What constitutes a majority-ruling in a capital case?
16. How is *Shavuot* referred to in this week's *Parsha*?
17. How many prohibitions are transgressed when cooking meat and milk together?
18. What was written in the *Sefer HaBris* which Moshe wrote prior to the giving of the Torah?
19. What was the *livnas hasapir* a reminder of?
20. Who was Efras? Who was her husband? Who was her son?

Sherlox and the Stolen Flocks

"Binghamton claims he's barely acquainted with his co-worker, Hanes; yet, during questioning, he referred to him by his first name, Jonas, more than once," said world famous *detective* Sherlox Holmes. "The repetition of the name raised difficulties in my mind."

"Speaking of difficulties," said Watstein, "I'm having difficulty understanding the following text: 'If a person steals an ox or a sheep, and he slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen (*chamisha bakar*) for the ox, or four sheep (*arbah tzon*) for the sheep.' (*Exodus 21:37*) Rashi explains why the sheep-thief incurs a lesser payment: Because he degraded himself when he flung the sheep over his shoulder and carried it away, this degradation is considered part of his penalty. Or, because the ox theft caused the owner to lose the work of his plow animal."

"Ah! Only a Divine system could be at once so just and so sensitive to human needs!" said Sherlox.

"True, but why does Rashi make this comment?"

"Well, isn't it curious that a thief pays five times the ox but only four times the sheep?" asked Sherlox.

"Many things are curious; Rashi doesn't explain them all. Why is quadruple payment only for a sheep and not for, say, chickens? Why only for selling or slaughtering? And why only for slaughtering and not for killing some other way? These are all very curious, yet Rashi addresses none of them!"

"The repetition of a name arouses suspicion," said Sherlox.

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Parshas **Mishpatim** — 27 Shevat 5759, 12 & 13 February 1999

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Answer

“Why does the verse say that the thief pays ‘five oxen’ (*chamisha bakar*) or ‘four sheep’ (*arbah tzon*)?” asked Sherlock.

“Well, if he paid five teacups and four pin-cushions, it wouldn’t do, would it?”

“No, it wouldn’t,” said Sherlock. “That is exactly my point: Don’t the words *bakar* and *tzon* (oxen and sheep) seem redundant?”

“Ah yes, I see,” said Watstein. “It could simply have said that he pays ‘five for the ox’ and ‘four for the sheep.’ It’s obvious that he pays oxen for oxen and sheep for sheep.”

“Yes,” said Sherlock, “just as we see regarding double payment: There, the verse says ‘he pays two.’ (*Exodus 22:1*) It doesn’t need to say two of what.”

“Therefore,” said Watstein, “Rashi explains that the seemingly extra words *bakar* and *tzon* hint at the *reason* for the differing payments. The differing payments are due to the differing natures of the *bakar* and the *tzon*, either regarding the way they are stolen, or their use as plow animals.”

“No need to feel sheepish about that explanation,” said Sherlock.

*(Sherlock” is by Reuven Subar,
inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)*

I Did Not Know That!

Parshas Mishpatim, dealing largely with monetary laws, precedes *Parshas Terumah* which details the donations needed to build the Sanctuary. This teaches that even when donating to charity (*terumah*), a person must be sure that the money honestly belongs to him (*mishpatim*).

Beis Halevi

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

21:1-2	Parallel with Ten Commandments
21:6	(first part) Divine Role in Human Justice
21:15	The Severity of Cursing One’s Parents
21:29-30	Death Penalty and Ransom
22:6	(first part) Two kinds of Shomrim
22:20-22	Prosecutor of the Helpless
22:30	Holiness of Kashrus
23:25	Blessings and Destruction
24:1	Matan Torah Chronology

Sefer Hachinuch

42	Human Kindness
43	Divine Kindness
47	Capital Punishment
50	Penalty for Anger
52	Despising Destruction
62	The Danger of Sorcery
66	Why Hashem Creates the Poor
70	Blasphemy
71	Respect for Authority
73	Kashrus
78	Antidote to Anarchy
84	Shemita
93	Relations with Heathens

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 21:6 - If a Hebrew slave desires to remain enslaved his owner brings him "to the door post *mezuzah*" to pierce his ear.
2. 21:8,9 - To marry her.
3. 21:15 - Death by strangulation.
4. 21:19 - He is put in jail until 'B' recovers or dies.
5. 21:23 - A) The murderer deserves the death penalty. B) The murderer is exempt from death but must compensate the heirs of his victim.
6. 21:26 - Baby teeth, which grow back.
7. 21:35 - The full value of his own animal.
8. 21:37 - From the "five-times" penalty for stealing an ox and slaughtering it. This fine is seen as punishment for preventing the owner from plowing with his ox.
9. 22:2 - If it's as clear as the sun that the thief has no intent to kill.
10. 22:8 - Double value of the object.
11. 22:14 - Nothing.
12. 22:24 - Interest is like a snake bite. Just as the poison is not noticed at first but soon overwhelms the person, so too interest is barely noticeable until it accumulates to an overwhelming sum.
13. 22:30 - As "reward" for their silence during the plague of the first born.
14. 23:1 - Targum Onkelos translates "Don't bear a false report" as "Don't *receive* a false report."
15. 23:2 - A simple majority is needed for an acquittal. A majority of two is needed for a ruling of guilty.
16. 23:16 - *Chag HaKatzir* — Festival of Reaping.
17. 23:19 - One.
18. 24:4,7 - The Torah, starting from *Bereshis* until the giving of the Torah, and the *mitzvos* given at *Mara*.
19. 24:10 - That the Jews in Egypt were forced to toil by making bricks.
20. 24:14 - Miriam, wife of Calev, mother of Chur