

# Kinder Torah<sup>®</sup>

## Parashas Mishpatim

### Fight Discrimination

*One day at the post office, a long line of people were waiting to be served.*

"Yes, may I help you, sir?"

"One minute! I was ahead of him in line! You cannot serve him first!"

"I can serve whoever I like. Now you, who had the nerve to challenge my authority, wait until I serve everyone else."

"That's not fair. I am always served last. At the post office, the bank, the restaurant, it is always the same story. I feel like a second class citizen."

"That is exactly what you are, a second class citizen."

"I am fed up with this unfair discrimination. My ID card says that I am a citizen – just like you. I deserve equal treatment and consideration."

*An onlooker is revolted by the scene in front of his eyes.*

"Discrimination is terrible."



"And these are the laws which

you shall place before them" (Shemos 21:1). This parasha deals with the laws *bein adam li'chaveyro* (between man and his fellow man). Laws of property damage, injuries, theft, proper treatment of servants, watchmen, loans,

consideration of people's feelings, and fair judgment in Beis Din are some of the subjects mentioned in the parasha. Do these mitzvos receive fair treatment, or are they the victims of discrimination? Are we as scrupulous about them as we are about the mitzvos *bein adam li'makom* (between man and Hashem)? For example, a person may be very careful to eat only kosher food with the best *hechsher* (certification). Does he make the same effort to refrain from speaking *loshon hora*? Is he equally cautious about the words that come out of his mouth, as he is with the food that goes into it? A person may spend a large amount of money on a beautiful *esrog*. Is he equally scrupulous with his money in business dealings?

Rav Yisrael Salanter fought a campaign against discrimination against these mitzvos. He founded the *mussar* movement in 5609 when he opened a small yeshiva in Lithuania. One of the three principles of *mussar* is perfection in Torah observance. All of Hashem's holy mitzvos must receive equally fair consideration, even those *bein adam li'chaveyro*. This was not an easy task, because these mitzvos go against negative character traits. However, Rav Yisrael persevered and created a revolution in the Torah world. To this

very day, we benefit from his work.

*Kinderlach . . .*

*Discrimination is horrible! Let us all fight it! Never treat any mitzvah unfairly!*

*Parashas Mishpatim is a great place to begin. It contains 36 mitzvos bein adam li'chaveyro. Study them carefully. Learn their halachos (laws) and observe them. Treat them with the same respect and seriousness as you do the mitzvos of kashrus, shofar, and Shabbos. That is the way of the Baalei Mussar, those who strive for perfection. Emulate them. Rav Yisrael will be very proud of you.*

### Upon Whom Do You Rely?

"Shalom my dear wife, Esti! I'm home."

"Shalom, Moshe! It is so good to see you! I did not expect you home so soon."

"Well, there is a good reason for my coming home early from work today."

"Is everything okay?"

"Esti, please sit down."

*Esti sits down with a worried look on her face.*

"I lost my job."

"What?!? How can it be? You have been working for the same company for ten years! They really value you and your work. What happened?"

"The company went bankrupt and closed down. Everyone lost their jobs."

"What are we going to do? We have a family to support."

"I know. We are in a difficult situation. However, I have an idea."

*Moshe walks over to the bookshelf, takes two sifrei Tehillim in hand, opens to chapter 146 and begins praying.*

"Halleuka! My soul will praise Hashem! My tribute does not come merely from the lips and outward, rather from the depths of my soul! 'I will praise Hashem with my life. I will sing to my G-d as long as I live. Do not rely on noblemen (people in positions of power); in man who has no salvation.' The Malbim relates the reason why we are commanded not to trust in nobles. A man of flesh and blood has no *koach* (might) of his own to save someone. Any power that he does have comes totally from the Almighty. The Radak adds that Hashem even puts the desire into the heart of the noble to help. Therefore, why rely upon the servant? No human being can help or save without Hashem. The salvation is His, and we are just His agents. Therefore, go straight to the source to state your plea. 'When his spirit departs, he returns to the earth,

on that day his plans all perish.' The Malbim explains that even if man did have the *koach* to save, he could die any second, and his plans die with him. How can you trust in someone so frail? Rely only on the Eternal, the All powerful. 'Trust in the G-d of Yaakov, Hashem.'"

"This is so inspiring, Moshe. Why is Hashem called the G-d of Yaakov?"

"The Medrash (Bereshis Rabba 68:2) relates that Yaakov was traveling to the house of Lavan with no possessions (Elifaz, the son of Eisav had stolen everything he had). To Whom did Yaakov turn for help? 'I raise my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come?' Eliezer came with gold jewelry to bring Rivka to my father. What shall I do? I have nothing to betroth a wife. 'My help is from Hashem, Maker of heaven and earth' (Tehillim 121:1,2). Indeed the Torah itself testifies that Yaakov trusted Hashem, 'Behold, I am with you and I will guard you wherever you go' (Bereshis 28:15)."

"Moshe, we need not worry. Hashem is with us."

"Yes, Esti. He is All Powerful; He makes heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. He guards the truth forever. The Radak relates that He alone has always proven dependable and faithful, for there are no limits to His essence and power. The psalm then goes on to list the Merciful One's *chassodim* (acts of kindness). He performs justice for the oppressed; He gives bread to the hungry; He releases the imprisoned, gives sight to the blind, straightens the bent, loves the righteous, and protects strangers. He encourages the orphan and widow, while thwarting the plans of the wicked."

"Moshe, we have nothing to worry about. Hashem is in control. Losing your job is just a test. We will place our faith and trust in Him, pray, do *teshuva*, acts of kindness, and wait for His salvation. 'Hashem will reign forever; your G-d, Tzion, throughout all generations, halleluka!'"

*Kinderlach . . .*

*Do you recognize this psalm? We say it every morning in Pisukei DiZimra after Ashrei. It acclaim's G-d's loving care as experienced by each Jew in his own life. We all have our challenges and tests. To Whom do we turn? Who do we rely upon? Not flesh and blood. He has no power to save, and even if he did, he could lose it any moment. Rather, we put our faith in the Eternal, All Powerful G-d of Yaakov. He saved our ancestor from Lavan, and took his descendants out of Mitzrayim. He has done countless chassodim for our nation throughout the generations. He is the Ruler of the universe and will reign forever and ever. Praise Him – Halleuka!*

<sup>1</sup> Siddur Iyun Tefillah

