



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Mishpatim

February 21, 2020

A Taste of Torah Out of This World

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

This week's parsha discusses the laws of the Jewish court and the many worldly and mundane matters which are to be adjudicated by that body of law. Interestingly, those laws come immediately on the heels of laws dealing with the construction of the Altar, discussed at the close of the previous parsha. What is the connection between the Altar and monetary law? Rashi explains that the Torah is hinting that the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court of seventy-one judges, is to be located in the Temple courtyard, near the Altar.

The Be'er Yosef (Rabbi Yosef Salant; 1885-1981) points out an additional similarity that is found between the Altar and monetary law. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabba 68:12) says that the ladder Yaakov saw in his famous dream, with its feet planted on the ground and its top reaching the heavens, is an allusion to the Altar. On a similar note, the Talmud (Bava Basra 8b) explains that the verse (Daniel 12:3) describing "the wise ones shining like the shine of the heavenly spheres" is referring to a judge who issues a ruling that is truth to its core. There seems to be a connection between Yaakov's ladder and the judge who uncovers the truth that is associated with the heavens. How are we to understand this connection?

Picture the following scene: Two litigants come to the *bais medrash* asking to speak to the rabbi. The rabbi is in the midst of delving into a complex subject, carefully scrutinizing the pages of a pile of *sefarim* on his table. The rabbi closes his books and leaves the *bais medrash* to hear the claims of the pair. The two begin to argue and shout about a piece of real estate they purchased together

as an investment, belting out details about legal documents, financial agreements, and the stock market.

This scenario occurs with many Torah scholars on a consistent basis; they are constantly being pulled away from their Torah study to hear and rule on monetary cases.

Any bystander would probably wonder why these great sages have to be pulled from their holy and sacred studies to deal with the mundane and sometimes disgraceful details of all manner of cases of law. What a shame that such holy minds need to be tainted by such proceedings.

This is exactly what the Torah is coming to teach us, says Rabbi Salant. No one would question the holiness of the laws and service of the Holy Temple and the Temple offerings, and the process of adjudicating mundane and worldly court cases is no less holy. The purpose of Mankind in this world is to connect the mundane with the holy. This is apparent from the service of the sacrifices, which involves the offering of a lowly animal, its meat and its fats, as an elevated and holy offering. Similarly, the function of the Sanhedrin is to sanctify our otherwise mundane and worldly involvements by ensuring that those proceedings abide by the framework and structure of Torah law.

This idea provides the explanation of a puzzling Medrash found at the end of Parshas Yisro (Mechilta Yisro 4) which discusses the Revelation at Sinai. On the one hand, says the Medrash, the verse (Shemos 19:20) states that G-d's presence rested upon Mt. Sinai, in this world. On the other hand, a different verse (Shemos 20:19) states that G-d

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

Who is Wealthy?

A person came to Reb Shayale Steiner of Kerestir (1852-1925), complaining that he was unsuccessful in making a living. Reb Shayale advised him to enter a certain business and blessed him with success. The man followed the directive, succeeded, and became wealthy.

The next time he came to Reb Shayale, he had a different complaint. This time he was upset that so many people were asking him for money. Reb Shayale replied, "If you don't want to distribute money to the poor, we'll find someone else who is a better emissary to hold onto the money."

The man pleaded, "Please, Rebbe, don't take the money away from me."

"Why does one need wealth if it isn't to help others?" came the reply.

Reb Shayale continued, "I am going to write down the names of all the people in this village on pieces of paper, and I will write your name on a piece of paper, as well. I will make a *goral* (lottery) and choose one of them. The one deserving to be wealthy will be chosen by the *goral* and will get the wealth. I advise you to repent and commit yourself to help the poor, as then there will be a better chance that your name will come up."

The man sincerely repented, and his name was chosen. "Now I see that you did complete *teshuvah*," said Reb Shayale. "The wealth will

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL 22ND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ON MARCH 24

The Kollel will mark 22 years of bringing Torah to Denver Jewry with its annual Celebration, 2020 Vision, on March 24 at Aish of the Rockies. Kerry and Mindy Berman will be honored with the Aish Tamid Award for their steady and unwavering dedication to Torah and the Denver Jewish community.

WHEN AN AGENT EXCEEDS AUTHORITY AT MAR. 4 T4T

Join Bob Weiss, Vice President/CFO of LCM Property Management, and Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, Program Director for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore this fascinating subject. March 4th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

COMMUNITY-WIDE PURIM CELEBRATION

The Kollel invites the community to join its annual Purim Seudah to be held on Purim, Tuesday, March 10, 5:15 pm at the Ethel A. Beren Auditorium, 1261 Zenobia. Cost: \$18 per person/\$60 family max. The entire community is invited to join in Simchas Purim (no charge!) following the seudah at approximately 7:00 pm until... To reserve and for more info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) A set table | 4) Snake bite |
| 2) Killed under a ladder | 5) Metatron |
| 3) Half an ounce | 6) Nadav and Avihu |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part XIII

This reality of having a regular, qualified community rabbi and a *rav mita'am* created considerable strain within the Jewish communities, as two salaries had to be paid, toes were often stepped upon, and the not-unusual existence of friction between the *rav mita'am* and the actual rabbi.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

revealed himself and spoke from the Heavens. The Medrash answers that G-d lowered the heavenly realms and placed them upon the mountain like a bedsheet, and then brought down His Throne of Glory upon them. Thus, G-d spoke from both Heaven and Earth together. What is the meaning of this touching of Heaven, Earth, and the Throne of Glory?

Rabbi Salant explains that as G-d's emissaries on Earth, our job is not to keep our heads in the clouds. Rather, through following the Torah and its laws, our mission is to involve ourselves in earthly and worldly things, sanctify them, and connect them with the spiritual realms and, ultimately, G-d's Throne of Glory. By keeping the Torah in all its details, we

have the ability to connect Heaven and Earth. By the same token, the placement of the Sanhedrin next to the Altar, whose shared function was to take that which is rooted in Earth and connect it with the highest of spiritual spheres, is truly apropos.

Many a time, as we go through the day-to-day grind, it is difficult to feel spiritually connected and energized. If we take a step back and focus our perspective, we will realize that when done within the framework of Torah law, our seemingly mundane proceedings are truly what connect us with the eternal and holy. May we live up to the great task and opportunity of spiritualizing the mundane!

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

remain with you."

In this week's parsha, the Torah command us to help the less financially fortunate through loans, and to be sensitive to the borrower

and not pressure him. Hashem does not provide material wealth for the mere purpose of supporting oneself; one is meant to share his blessings with others, as well.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) A set table 21:1 s.v. asher tasin | 4) Snake bite 22:24 s.v. neshach |
| 2) Killed under a ladder 21:13 s.v. v'haElokim | 5) Metatron 23:21 s.v. ki shimi |
| 3) Half an ounce 21:32 s.v. sheloshim | 6) Nadav and Avihu 24:11 s.v. v'el azilei |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers