



Parsha Snapshot



L.I.T.N.
LONG ISLAND TORAH NETWORK
longislandtorah.org

Mishpatim

The Jews have experienced Revelation at Sinai and received the Ten Commandments.

Mishpatim means “Laws;” this Parsha lists a variety of laws, many pertaining to other people’s property. A sampling of topics includes:

- Limitations on the term of an indentured servant; a husband’s obligation to provide for his wife; the distinction between murder and accidental killing.
- Personal injury and property damage, which take four basic forms:

A **human being** who injures another human being is liable for as many as five separate payments: permanent loss of ability to work, temporary loss of ability to work while recuperating, medical expenses, physical pain and embarrassment. [The oft-misinterpreted “eye for an eye,” found in this Parsha, means payment of the eye’s *monetary value*.]

An **ox** or any other animal can cause damage by “walking” or “eating” – normal activities – or “goring” – willful destruction. In the latter case, a distinction is drawn between a first-time offender and a habitual “goring ox,” which has done so three times. [Hence the concept that “three times establishes a trend,” a principle with bearing on many areas of Jewish law.]

A **pit** or other obstacle in the public domain.

Fire or other inanimate object that travels by forces of nature.

- Liability of a watchman:

An **unpaid watchman** is liable only for negligence.

A **paid watchman** is liable even for loss or theft.

A **borrower** is liable for any mishap that occurs.

- The prohibition against harassing widows, orphans and converts; the obligation to offer a free loan to those in need, and the prohibition against charging interest; the obligation to return lost objects, and the prohibition against ignoring them; the commandment to assist a traveler whose beast of burden has collapsed—even if he happens to be your enemy.
- A summary of the Jewish holidays.
- The prohibition against combining meat and milk.

The Parsha concludes with a flashback to the events preceding the Revelation at Sinai. The Jewish People declared, “All that G-d has spoken we shall do and we shall hear – ” indicating their readiness to *do* what G-d would command, even before they had a chance to *hear* what He expected of them. G-d was greatly pleased by this expression of faith and trust in Him.