

# WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

## PARSHAS MISHPATIM

### Even The Simplest Torah Law Is Hashem's Deepest Will

This week's Parsha, Mishpatim, begins, "And these are the laws that you should *Tasim* (set) *Lifnayhem* (before them)." On the word *Lifnayhem*, there are several different explanations.

One of the explanations in the Talmud is brought by Rashi, "Before them, and not before the idol worshippers." When Jewish people have a dispute among themselves, they should bring it before a Jewish court and not before the court of the land. This is true, even if you know that, in this case, the jurisprudence of the land is the same as that of the Torah. So the first explanation is, *Lifnayhem*, before a Jewish court.

Another explanation in the Talmud is that when you are teaching a student, you have "to show him the *Panim*," the reasons for the laws, and not leave him to figure them out on his own. Everything should be laid out clearly for the student. *Panim*, which means a face, means that nothing is hidden. The face shows who the person is and what he or she is feeling. The second is *Lifnayhem*, to teach the *Panim*, the reason.

The Alter Rebbe tells us the Chassidic and esoteric explanation that *Lifnayhem* means "*Lipnimiyusam*," that these laws should reach the innermost hidden recesses of the Neshama. As the Talmud Yerushalmi translates the word before *Lifnayhem*, *Tasim*, to mean *Sima*, a treasure, which is a hidden thing. In other words, if you will teach the treasure of the Torah, the esoteric part of the Torah, then you will reach the treasure of the person, the innermost depths of the Neshama.

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When there are different explanations on one word of the Torah, there has to be a common link between the explanations. What is the connection between these three explanations?

We also have to understand why did Hashem put the

teaching of *Lifnayhem* specifically by the laws called *Mishpatim*?

There are three kinds of laws. The first is *Chukkim*, decrees, laws that we don't know the reason for. Hashem decreed them, and we do them because He wants us to and for no other reason. Examples of these laws are kosher, Shatnez, and the laws of purity and impurity.

Then there are laws called *Eidus*, testimony. These are laws that bear witness to an event, like Shabbos and the holidays, or that remind us of something, like Tefillin, Mezuzah, and Bris. We wouldn't understand them on our own, but once Hashem told us about them, they make sense.

Finally, there are *Mishpatim*, torts, and other laws that make sense, and if Hashem wouldn't tell us them, we would understand them on our own.

Which laws does the teaching of *Lifnayhem* make more sense to apply to?

If you go with Rashi's explanation that we shouldn't bring our cases before a non-Jewish court, it makes sense to have this teaching by *Mishpatim* because it is the only kind of laws they adjudicate. They have nothing to do with Shabbos, kosher, etc.

If you go with the Talmud's explanation that *Lifnayhem* means to teach the reasons behind the laws, *Mishpatim* seem the least necessary to give the reasoning for because they make sense to us. On the other hand, *Eidus* and *Chukkim*, which are unclear to us, would make more sense to teach the reasons.

And if you go with the Alter Rebbe's explanation that they should reach the innermost depths of the Neshama, for *Mishpatim*, it seems unnecessary to be inspired to the depths of the Neshama. On the other hand, *Eidus* and *Chukkim*, which aren't natural to us. For them, we need to reach to the depths of our Neshamas and be inspired.

With all this stated, we have to ask: Why is the teaching of "*Lifnayhem*" specifically taught by *Mishpatim* and not by *Eidus* and *Chukkim*?

Even though "the main thing is the action," for example,



Tefillin. If one studies all about Tefillin and is inspired to the depths of his Neshama, but he hasn't put on Tefillin yet, he has done nothing, and he is considered "a head that has never put on Tefillin," which is a very sorry state for a Jewish man. On the other hand, if one knows nothing about Tefillin and is not in the least inspired, but he puts on Tefillin, he does the Mitzvah, and he is required to say the blessing over Tefillin, pronouncing Hashem's name.

Nevertheless, what Hashem really wants, is that when we do a Mitzvah, it should affect our whole person. Not only action, speech, and thought but even the mind, the emotions, and even the higher faculties of will and pleasure. This is not only referring to mitzvahs of the heart, like love and fear, belief and knowing Hashem, but also the most simple of mitzvahs, *Mishpatim*, should permeate the whole of the person, that he should take pleasure in doing the simplest action for Hashem.

This works the other way around too. *Chukkim*, that we don't understand, and do out of accepting Hashem's will, should also be accepted by the mind.

This doesn't mean that he thinks, "True, I don't understand them, however, there is a reason that is above my ability to understand, and someone smarter than me understands them. Hashem has a good reason for them, so I will rely on their understanding." Because we are meant to do them out of accepting Hashem's will, and this way of thinking is not accepting His will; rather, it is relying on another's understanding. What we are meant to do, is to get to a point where the mind is totally on board and fully accepts that it is good to do Hashem's will, even without understanding. Because of his simple faith, his mind doesn't even question the reasons behind the *Chukkim*.

It turns out that to do *Chukkim* in a way that permeates all of the person's faculties, one would have to reach deep inside, to the depths of his Neshama. And if he does, he will find pleasure in doing *Chukkim*, which don't seem to have any purpose. He will take pleasure in doing Hashem's will. So it seems more important "to show him the *Panim*" of the laws, to give him a deeper understanding, in order that he could attain this great level of service. However, since *Mishpatim* make sense to us, we don't need to reach deep inside or have a deep understanding to find pleasure in doing them.

The question now becomes stronger. Why is the teaching of *Lifnayhem* specifically by *Mishpatim*?

To understand this, let's take a look at another teaching on this verse, "And these are the laws that you should set before them," Our sages say, "And these (means), in addition to the first (laws)." In other words, these laws are in addition to the Ten Commandments in the previous Parsha. Just as the Ten Commandments were said at Sinai, also these *Mishpatim* were said at Sinai.

The Ten Commandments are made up of the most sublime ideas, "I Am Hashem your G-d..." and "you shall

not have any other gods before Me." And at the same time, it has "do not murder." and "do not steal." The fact that these laws of stark contrast, the most holy and the most base, are together in the Ten Commandments shows us that we should bring the two ideas together. The laws that even the simplest of people understand on their own, like "do not murder" and "do not steal," we shouldn't keep because they make sense, but because of the "I Am Hashem your G-d," that is hidden in them, that they are Hashem's deepest will.

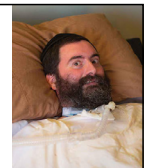
The same is true for *Mishpatim*, the simple laws that make sense to everyone. They have to be "in addition," and similar to the Ten Commandments, meaning that we shouldn't keep them because they make sense but because they are Hashem's deepest will.

And this is the connection between the three explanations. First, the *Mishpatim* should reach the innermost hidden recesses of our Neshamas. That, for a Jew, is step number one. Step two, therefore, we shouldn't take our disputes to a non-Jewish court because although they may rule the same as the Torah, they are not ruling that way because it is Hashem's will. Step three, Hashem also wants us to understand them with our minds, but the understanding works like this: I understand that it is Hashem's will; therefore, it makes sense.

And now we can understand why the teaching of *Lifnayhem* is specifically by *Mishpatim*. For *Eidus* and *Chukkim*, we don't have to apply ourselves to know that they are Hashem's will first. On the other hand, *Mishpatim*, we need to put in the effort to see them as Hashem's will. They need to reach the innermost depths of our Neshamas.

May we see Hashem's will in the simplest and most mundane of laws, bringing Him into every aspect of our lives. This way, we will make a home for Hashem in ourselves, our homes, and our place in the world. This will usher in the time of Moshiach when the whole world will be a home for Hashem. The time has come.

Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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