



## MISHPATIM

LAWS OR LOVE? FINDING G-D AT SINAI

*Turning law into love and duty into connection*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Mishpatim*

Following the revelation at Mount Sinai, G-d legislates a series of laws for the people of Israel. These include the laws of the indentured servant; the penalties for murder, kidnapping, assault, and theft; civil laws pertaining to redress of damages, the granting of loans, and the responsibilities of the "Four Guardians"; and the rules governing the conduct of courts of law in administering justice.

Also included are laws warning against mistreatment

of foreigners; the observance of the seasonal festivals; the agricultural gifts that are to be brought to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem; the prohibition against cooking meat with milk; and the *mitzvah* of prayer. All together, the *parshah* of *Mishpatim* contains fifty-three *mitzvot*: twenty-three imperative commandments and thirty prohibitions.

G-d promises to bring the people of Israel to the Holy Land and warns them against assuming the pagan ways of

its current inhabitants.

The people of Israel proclaim, "We will do and we will hear all that G-d commands us." Leaving Aaron and Hur in charge in the Israelite camp, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and remains there for forty days and forty nights to receive the Torah from G-d.

## RASHI RULES

1. Interpreting events in the Torah out of chronological order isn't out of the question, but it isn't the preferred option, as it doesn't match *peshuto shel Mikra*.
2. Rashi only quotes words from the verse that directly contribute to his explanation.
3. Every word of Rashi is precise. If Rashi uses unusual language, it comes to teach us something.

## EXERCISE: TWO STORIES IN ONE

### RELATIONSHIPS:

- What one *does*
- *Why* they do it

### THE TORAH'S NARRATIVE AT SINAI:

- Judaism's practical rules
- Our personal relationship with G-d

# TEXT 1A

Exodus 19:1-16, 20

SINAI

NARRATIVE #1

א. בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם  
מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי.

ב. וַיֵּסְעוּ מִרֶפְדִּים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי וַיַּחֲנוּ  
בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹגֵד הָהָר.

ג. וּמֹשֶׁה אָלַהּ אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו ה'  
מִן הָהָר לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתֹגִיד  
לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

ד. אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֲשֶׁר  
אַתְּכֶם עַל כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׁרִים וְאָבֹא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי.

ה. וְעַתָּה אִם תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם  
אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְהִיָּיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים כִּי  
לִי כָל הָאֲרֶץ.

ו. וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מְמֻלְכֶת כְּהִנָּם וְגוֹי קֳדוֹשׁ  
אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

1. In the third month of the Children of Israel's departure from Egypt, on this day, they arrived in the desert of Sinai.

2. They journeyed from Rephidim, and they arrived in the desert of Sinai, and they encamped in the desert, and Israel encamped there opposite the mountain.

3. Moses ascended to G-d, and G-d called to him from the mountain, saying, "So shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel,

4. "'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and [how] I bore you on eagles' wings, and I brought you to Me.

5. "'And now, if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be to Me a treasure out of all peoples, for Mine is the entire Earth.

6. "'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of princes and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Children of Israel."

# TEXT 1A

Exodus 19:1-16, 20

SINAI

NARRATIVE #1

ז. וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי הָעָם וַיָּשֶׂם  
לִפְנֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ  
ה'.

ח. וַיַּעֲנוּ כָּל הָעָם יְחִידוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֶחָד  
דְּבַר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע מִשְׁמַע הָאֵל הַזֶּה  
אֵל ה'.

ט. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָּא אֵלֶיךָ  
בְּעָב הָעָנָן בְּעַבּוּר יִשְׁמַע הָעָם בְּדִבְרֵי עֲמֹךָ  
וְגַם בְּךָ יֵאֱמִינוּ לְעוֹלָם וַיַּגֵּד מֹשֶׁה אֵת דְּבָרֵי  
הָעָם אֶל ה'.

י. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵךְ אֵל הָעָם וְקִדְּשָׁתָם  
הַיּוֹם וּמָחָר וּכְבִּסוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָם.

יא. וְהָיוּ נִכְנָיִם לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי בַּיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יֵרֵד ה' לְעֵינֵי כָּל הָעָם עַל הַר סִינַי.

7. Moses came and summoned the elders of Israel and placed before them all these words that G-d had commanded him.

8. And all the people replied in unison and said, "All that G-d has spoken we shall do!" and Moses took the words of the people back to G-d.

9. And G-d said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in the thickness of the cloud, in order that the people hear when I speak to you, and they will also believe in you forever." And Moses relayed the words of the people to G-d.

10. And G-d said to Moses, "Go to the people and prepare them today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their garments.

11. "And they shall be prepared for the third day, for on the third day, G-d will descend before the eyes of all the people upon Mount Sinai.

# TEXT 1A

Exodus 19:1-16, 20

SINAI

NARRATIVE #1

יב. וְהִגַּבְלָתָ אֶת הָעָם סָבִיב לֵאמֹר הִשְׁמְרוּ  
לָכֶם עֲלוֹת בְּהָר וּנְגַע בְּקַצְּהוּ כֹל הַנֹּגַע בְּהָר  
מוֹת יוּמָת.

יג. לֹא תִגַע בּוֹ יָד כִּי סָקוֹל יִסָּקֵל אוֹ יָרֶה  
יִיָּרֶה אִם בְּהֶמָּה אִם אִישׁ לֹא יִחְיֶה בְּמִשְׁךָ  
הַיֵּבֶל הַמָּה יַעֲלוּ בְּהָר.

יד. וַיֵּרֵד מֹשֶׁה מִן הַהָר אֶל הָעָם וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת  
הָעָם וַיְכַבְּסוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָם.

טו. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל הָעָם הָיוּ נֹכְנִים לַשְּׁלֵשֶׁת יָמִים  
אֶל תִּגְשׁוּ אֶל אִשָּׁה.

טז. וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בִּהְיוֹת הַבֶּקָר וַיְהִי  
קֹלֶת וּבִרְקִים וַעֲנָן כָּבֵד עַל הַהָר וְקֹל שֹׁפָר  
חֲזָק מְאֹד וַיִּחַרַד כָּל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּחֲנֶה. . .

כ. וַיֵּרֵד ה' עַל הַר סִינַי אֶל רֹאשׁ הַהָר וַיִּקְרָא  
ה' לְמֹשֶׁה אֶל רֹאשׁ הַהָר וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה. . .

12. "And you shall set boundaries for the people around, saying, 'Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.'

13. "No hand shall touch it, for he shall be stoned or cast down; whether man or beast, he shall not live. When the ram's horn sounds a long, drawn-out blast, they may ascend the mountain."

14. So Moses descended from the mountain to the people, and he prepared the people, and they washed their garments.

15. He said to the people, "Be ready for three days; do not go near a woman."

16. It came to pass on the third day when it was morning, that there were thunderclaps and lightning flashes, and a thick cloud was upon the mountain, and a very powerful blast of a shofar, and the entire nation that was in the camp shuddered. . . .

20. G-d descended upon Mount Sinai, to the peak of the mountain, and G-d summoned Moses to the peak of the mountain, and Moses ascended.

# TEXT 1B

Exodus 20:1-2, 14,  
18-21

## SINAI NARRATIVE

### #1, CONTINUED

א. וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים  
הָאֵלֶּה לְאַמֹּר.

ב. אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ  
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים לֹא  
יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פָּנָי. . .

יד. וְכָל הָעָם רֹאִים אֶת הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת  
הַלְפִידִם וְאֶת קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת הַהָר  
עֹשֶׂן וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וַיִּגְעוּ וַיַּעֲמֻדוּ  
מֵרָחֶק. . .

יח. וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם מֵרָחֶק וּמֹשֶׁה נִגַּשׁ  
אֶל הָעֲרָפֶל אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא הָאֱלֹקִים.

## *The Ten Commandments*

1. G-d spoke all these words, to respond:

2. "I am G-d, your G-d, Who took you out  
of the land of Egypt, out of the house of  
bondage." . . .

14. And all the people saw the voices and  
the torches, the sound of the shofar, and  
the smoking mountain, and the people  
saw and trembled, so they stood from  
afar. . . .

18. The people remained far off, but  
Moses drew near to the opaque  
darkness, where G-d was.



# TEXT 1B

Exodus 20:1-2, 14,  
18-21

## SINAI NARRATIVE

### #1, CONTINUED

יט. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר  
אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם כִּי  
מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם דִּבַּרְתִּי עִמָּכֶם.

כ. לֹא תַעֲשֹׂן אֱלֹהִי כֶסֶף  
וְאֱלֹהִי זָהָב לֹא תַעֲשֹׂוּ לָכֶם.

כא. מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדָמָה תַעֲשֶׂה לִּי  
וְזִבְחָתָּ עָלָיו אֶת עֹלֹתֶיךָ וְאֶת  
שְׁלָמֶיךָ אֶת צֹאנְךָ וְאֶת בְּקָרְךָ  
בְּכֹל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכִּיר אֶת  
שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ וַיְבָרֶכְתִּיךָ.

19. G-d said to Moses, "So shall you say to the Children of Israel, 'You have seen that from the Heavens I have spoken with you.

20. "'You shall not make [images of anything that is] with Me; gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.

21. "'An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall slaughter beside it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. Wherever I allow My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.'"

# THE TORAH TIMELINE

## SINAI NARRATIVE #1: EXODUS 19:1-16, 20

- *The events leading up to Matan Torah*
- *The Divine revelation on Sinai*
- *G-d's caution against the use of any idols to represent G-d*

## PARSHAT MISHPATIM: EXODUS 21-23

- *Laws regarding damages and the Jewish calendar cycle*
- *Promises of Divine blessing and protection if the people adhere to G-d's commandments*

## SINAI NARRATIVE #2: EXODUS 24

- *The events leading up to Matan Torah*
- *Moshe relayed G-d's words to the people*
- *The Jewish people's commitment to observe the mitzvot*
- *Moshe's ascent*

# TEXT 2

Exodus 24:1-15, 18

SINAI

NARRATIVE #2

א. וְאֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר יְהוָה אֵל ה' אֲתָה וְאַהֲרֹן  
נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם מֵרָחֵק.

ב. וְנֹגֵשׁ מֹשֶׁה לָּבֹדוֹ אֵל ה' וְהֵם לֹא יִגָּשׁוּ  
וְהָעָם לֹא יַעֲלוּ עִמּוֹ.

ג. וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיְסַפֵּר לָעָם אֵת כָּל דְּבָרֵי ה'  
וְאֵת כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וַיַּעַן כָּל הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה.

ד. וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֵת כָּל דְּבָרֵי ה' וַיִּשְׁכֹּם  
בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ פֶּתַח הָהָר וּשְׁתֵּי  
עֶשְׂרֵה מִצְבֵּה לְשִׁנָּיִם עֶשֶׂר שְׁבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

ה. וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת נְעָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלוּ  
עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זִבְחִים שְׁלָמִים לַה' פָּרִים.

1. And to Moses G-d said, "Come up to G-d, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and prostrate yourselves from afar.

2. "And Moses alone shall approach G-d, but they shall not approach, and the people shall not ascend with him."

3. So Moses came and told the people all the words of G-d and all the ordinances, and all the people answered in unison and said, "All the words that G-d has spoken we will do."

4. And Moses wrote all the words of G-d, and he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve monuments for the twelve tribes of Israel.

5. And he sent the youths of the Children of Israel, and they offered up burnt offerings, and they slaughtered peace offerings to G-d, bulls.

# TEXT 2

Exodus 24:1-15, 18

SINAI

NARRATIVE #2

ו. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה חֲצִי הַדָּם וַיָּשֶׂם בַּאֲגָנֹת וְחֲצִי הַדָּם זָרַק עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

ז. וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע.

ח. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַדָּם וַיִּזְרֹק עַל הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה דַם הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת ה' עִמָּכֶם עַל כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה.

ט. וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

י. וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת רַגְלֵי כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לִבְנֵת הַסַּפִּיר וּכְעָצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר.

יא. וְאֵל אֲצִילֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא נָשַׁלַּח יָדוֹ וַיַּחֲזִיזוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ.

6. And Moses took half the blood and put it into the basins, and half the blood he cast onto the altar.

7. And he took the Book of the Covenant and read it within the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that G-d spoke we will do and we will hear."

8. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled [it] on the people, and he said, "Behold, the blood of the covenant that G-d has formed with you concerning these words."

9. And Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended,

10. And they perceived the G-d of Israel, and beneath His feet was like the forming of a sapphire brick and like the appearance of the heavens for clarity.

11. And upon the nobles of the Children of Israel He did not lay His hand, and they perceived G-d, and they ate and drank.

# TEXT 2

Exodus 24:1-15, 18

SINAI

NARRATIVE #2

יב. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה עֲלֵה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וְהָיִה שָׁם וְאֶתְנָה לְךָ אֶת לַחַת הָאֵבֶן וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי לְהוֹרֹתָם.

יג. וַיָּקָם מֹשֶׁה וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִשְׁרָתוֹ וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה אֶל הַר הָאֱלֹקִים.

יד. וְאֵל הַזִּקְנִים אָמַר שִׁבוּ לָנוּ בְּזֶה עַד אֲשֶׁר נָשׁוּב אֲלֵיכֶם וְהָיָה אֶהְרֹן וְחֹוּר עִמָּכֶם מִי בַעַל דְּבָרִים יִגֵּשׁ אֲלֵהֶם.

טו. וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָהָר וַיָּכַס הָעָנָן אֶת הָהָר. . .

יז. וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הָעָנָן וַיַּעַל אֶל הָהָר וַיְהִי מֹשֶׁה בְּהָר אֲרֶבְעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה.

12. And G-d said to Moses, "Come up to Me to the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets, the law and the commandments, which I have written to instruct them."

13. So Moses and Joshua, his servant, arose, and Moses ascended to the mount of G-d.

14. And to the elders he said, "Wait for us here until we return to you, and here Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a case, let him go to them."

15. And Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. . . .

18. And Moses came within the cloud, and he went up to the mountain, and Moses was upon the mountain forty days and forty nights.

# THE TORAH TIMELINE

SINAI NARRATIVE #1: EXODUS 19:1–16, 20

PARSHAT MISHPATIM: EXODUS 21–23

SINAI NARRATIVE #2: EXODUS 24

TERUMAH & TETZAVEH: EXODUS 25–31

- *Instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle*
- *The design of the Tabernacle's vessels*
- *The design of the garments to be worn by the priests*

PARSHAT KI TISA: EXODUS 32–34

- *The aftermath of the Giving of the Torah*
- *Moshe's descent from the mountain and seeing the Golden Calf*
- *Moshe shattering the tablets*
- *Moshe receiving the second set of tablets*

## QUESTIONS

Why does the Torah repeat the story of *Matan Torah* twice?

Why does it do so out of order?

## TEXT 3A

*Exodus 24:1*

וְאֵל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר עֲלֵה אֵלַי ה' אֶתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן נָדָב  
וְאַבִּיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם מֵרָחֵק.

And to Moses G-d said, "Come up to G-d, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and prostrate yourselves from afar."



## TEXT 3A

*Rashi, ad loc.*

### THE RASHI

"וַאֲלֵ מֹשֶׁה אָמַר עֲלֵה". פֶּרֶשָׁה זוֹ נֶאֱמָרָה  
קֹדֶם עֲשֻׁרַת הַדְּבָרוֹת. בְּרַבִּיעֵי בְּסִיּוֹן נֶאֱמָרָה  
לוֹ "עֲלֵה".

"And to Moses G-d said, 'Come up.'" This section was said before the Ten Commandments. Moses was given the instruction "come up" on the fourth day of the month of Sivan.

The Torah does not follow a structured chronological order of events.



## TEXT 4

*Talmud, Pesachim 6b*

אמר רב מנשיא בר תחליפא משמיה דרב  
זאת אומרת אין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה.

Rav Menashiya bar Tachlifa said in the name of Rav, "There is no chronological order of earlier and later in the Torah."

## RASHI'S APPROACH

We only state that the Torah is breaking from chronological order when this is absolutely clear, and there is no other way to read the text.

# TEXT 5

*Nachmanides,  
Numbers 16:1*

דעתו של רבי אברהם שהוא אומר במקומות רבים אין מוקדם  
ומאוחר בתורה לרצונו . . .  
על דעתי כל התורה כסדר זולתי במקום אשר יפרש הכתוב  
ההקדמה והאחור וגם שם לצורך ענין ולטעם נכון.

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra invokes the principle “there is no chronological order of earlier and later in the Torah” very often, at will.

In my opinion, the entire Torah follows chronological order, aside from when the Torah makes the departure explicit. And any such departure must have a good reason.

## TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 26, p. 154*

אף על פי אז רש"י ברענגט (בכמה  
מקומות) דעם כלל "אין מוקדם  
ומאוחר בתורה", איז אבער  
פארשטאנדיק, אז מען זאגט דאס  
נאר—וואו ס'איז ניטא קיין  
ברירה, און עס דארף זיין עפעס א  
טעם אויף דעם שינוי. . . .

דארך מען פארשטיין בנידון דידן:  
פארוואס זאל די פרשה "ואל משה  
אמר עלה"—וואס איז געזאגט  
געווארן "קודם עשרת הדברות בד'  
סיון"—שטיין שלא במקומה,  
ערשט בסוף פרשת משפטים?

Rashi cites the rule "there is no chronological order of earlier and later in the Torah" a number of times. However, it is clear that this principle can only be invoked when there is no alternative explanation, and there must also be a reason for this departure.

In our case, we need to explain: The section beginning "And to Moses G-d said, 'Come up'" was actually said on the fourth of Sivan, before the Ten Commandments. Why then does it appear only at the end of *Parshat Mishpatim*, out of its place?

## QUESTIONS ON RASHI

1. What led Rashi to link chapters 19 and 24 as the same events and interpret them out of order? Why not simply say chapter 24 occurred after the Torah was given?
2. Why does Rashi quote the words “come up” in the title for his comments?
3. Why does Rashi say that this section was stated “before the Ten Commandments”? Wouldn’t it have been better to use a broader, more accurate term, such as “the Giving of the Torah”?

## THE GIVING OF THE TORAH

- A. G-d gave us a manual for how to lead a Jewish life.
- B. G-d forged a relationship with us and set us apart as His chosen people.



## TEXT 7

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 26, p. 155*

ביי מתן תורה האבן זיך אויפגעטאן צוויי ענינים: א) דער אויבערשטער האט געגעבן תורה—די מצוות והלכות התורה—צו אידן. ב) אידן זיינען דורך דעם געווארן עבדי ה' וכמו שנאמר "תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה". ובלשון רש"י, אז אידן זיינען געווארען "משועבדים לי".

The Giving of the Torah achieved two objectives. First, G-d gave the Jewish people the commandments and laws of the Torah. Second, through receiving the Torah, the Jewish people became G-d's servants, as the verse states, "You will serve G-d on this mountain" (Exodus 3:12).

# THE TORAH TIMELINE

## SINAI NARRATIVE #1: EXODUS 19

- *The Jewish people's preparation to receive G-d's **instructions** and keep His **laws**.*
- *The commandments given to the people at Sinai.*
- *Command against the construction of idols.*

## PARSHAT MISHPATIM: EXODUS 21-23

- ***The continuation** of giving the Jewish people the laws and instructions for how to live their lives.*

## SINAI NARRATIVE #2: EXODUS 24

- *Focuses on the **relationship between G-d and His chosen people**.*
- *G-d makes a covenant with the Jewish people.*
- *The Jewish people make a collective commitment that "all that G-d spoke we will do and we will hear."*



The second story of Mount Sinai isn't about specific laws; it's about a deep, overarching relationship.

# TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 26, p. 156*

אין פרשת יתרו רעדט זיך (בעיקר) וועגן  
נתינת (מצות) התורה—עשרת הדברות . . .  
און דעריבער, אויך אין דעם סיפור ההכנות  
צו מתן תורה רעדט זיך בעיקר וועגן די  
מצוות וועלכע דער אויבערשטער האט  
געגעבן אידן אלס הכנה צו מתן תורה—מצות  
פרישה והגבלה . . .

מה שאין כן אין פרשת משפטים רעדט זיך  
וועגן דעם צווייטן ענין אין מתן תורה—דער  
כריתת ברית צווישן דעם אויבערשטן מיט די  
אידן, דורך וועלכן אידן זיינען געווארן  
"משועבדים לי". וואס דאס איז געווארן דורך  
די פרטים (פעולות) וואס ווערן דערציילט  
דא: אמירת נעשה (און נעשה ונשמע)—די  
קבלה פון אידן, כתיבת ספר הברית, בנין  
מזבח און הקרבת קרבנות, הזאת דמים.

The account in the Torah portion of Yitro focuses primarily on the Giving of the Torah and its commandments, the Ten Commandments. . . . Therefore, the account of the preparations for the Giving of the Torah focuses on the commandments given to prepare the Jews for this event: abstinence and keeping a distance from the mountain. . . .

By contrast, the account in the Torah portion of Mishpatim focuses on the second aspect of the Giving of the Torah—the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people, through which the Jews became G-d's servants. The covenant was forged through the series of actions described in this account: the people's accepting the Torah by saying "we will do and we will hear"; writing the "Book of the Covenant"; and the construction of an altar, sacrifices, and sprinkling blood.

## ANSWERS

1. The two stories are about a single event, but each one highlights a different aspect of the event.
2. “come up” is an integral part of the narrative: this story is all about Moshe “ascending”—that process of breaking away from the previous reality and climbing into a new, more elevated relationship with G-d.
3. The Ten Commandments are the centerpiece of Story #1, the account of G-d’s practical commands and guidance for us. But our *parshah* is telling a different “story,” the story of how we entered a covenant with G-d, which took place before the Ten Commandments.

The Tabernacle, a physical home for G-d, embodies the ethos of containing and manifesting the great G-dly revelation at Sinai in a **permanent space.**



# TEXT 9

Midrash, Bamidbar  
Rabah 12:6

אמר רבי יהושע תנאים עשה הקדוש  
ברוך הוא עם ישראל עד שהם  
במצרים, שאינו מוציאם משם אלא  
על מנת שיעשו לו משכן וישקו  
שכינתו ביניהם, כמו שנאמר (שמות  
כט, מו): וידעו כי אני ה' אלקיהם  
אשר הוצאתי אתם מארץ מצרים  
לשכני בתוכם, על מנת לשכני  
בתוכם, וכיון שהיוקם המשכן וירדה  
השכינה ושרתה בתוכם.

ויהי, רב אמר דבר שלא היה משנבנה  
העולם עד עכשיו נעשה באותו היום,  
שמשנבנה העולם ועד אותה שעה לא  
שרתה שכינה בפתחונם, אלא  
משהיוקם המשכן ואילך.

Rabbi Yehoshua said, "G-d told the Jewish people while they were still in Egypt that their redemption was conditioned on their construction of a sanctuary for Him, in which He could rest His presence in the midst of the people. This is the meaning of the verse, 'They will know that I, the L-rd, am their G-d, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt in order that I may dwell in their midst.' When the Tabernacle was erected, the Divine Presence descended and rested in their midst."

Rav said, "When the Tabernacle was built, something unprecedented in the history of the world occurred. From the time of creation until that day, G-d's presence hadn't rested in the lower realms of the world. This began only after the Tabernacle was built."

# THE TORAH TIMELINE



SINAI NARRATIVE #1: EXODUS 19

SINAI NARRATIVE #2: EXODUS 24

TERUMAH & TETZAVEH: EXODUS 25-31





Like a human relationship,  
our relationship with G-d  
must include both the  
practical framework and the  
deeper connection itself.

G-d wants us to integrate the two layers of the Sinai narrative into our lives. We're encouraged to balance *mitzvah* observance with emotional and spiritual investment.



## KEY POINTS

1. The Torah's narrative of *Matan Torah* is scattered and non-linear, raising questions about its structure.
2. Narrative One focuses on G-d delivering instructions and commandments as a manual for life, including preparations for the revelation, the Ten Commandments, and civil and religious laws.
3. Narrative Two highlights the relational aspect, emphasizing the Jewish people's acceptance of the covenant, including Moshe's ascent, sacrifices, and the blood-sprinkling ceremony to symbolize the bond.
4. The Torah separates these narratives to distinguish their distinct messages—lawgiving versus relationship.
5. Both aspects are essential: Judaism is both a set of laws and a profound, personal relationship with G-d, and we are encouraged to integrate both into our lives.

