



## Mishpatim

*Shemot* (Exodus) 21:1 – 24:18

In *Parshat Yitro*, G-d, in his own voice, shared some of his laws with the entire community of Israel, the 10 Commandments being only several of the 613 *Mitzvot* of the Jewish people. In *Parshat Mishpatim*, Moshe remains on Mt. Sinai, as G-d continues to share with him the laws which would define Judaism.

Moses subsequently sets before the Israelites rules concerning:

1. Slavery - The Israelites are permitted to retain slaves, but they must always bear the dignity of the slave in mind. A slave who does not wish to leave a master shall have an ear pierced and remain a slave for life. It is both interesting and understandable that a code of laws, given to a people enslaved for 400 years, would begin this way.
2. Crimes punishable by death ... Among these are murder, kidnapping, and insulting one's parents.
3. Laws detailing the responsibilities incurred by the owner of an ox. The owner of an ox, known to have previously injured or killed another person or animal, is to be punished along with the animal.
4. Rules and penalties for theft and lending.
5. Laws commanding the Israelites to remain a holy people. Among these are reminders not to curse G-d and to dedicate to G-d firstborn sons, cattle, and the first fruits of a tree. Other laws pertaining to holiness include prohibitions against eating flesh torn by wild beasts and boiling a kid in its mother's milk.
6. The law of Sabbatical year.
7. The observance of the three festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.
8. The principle of just restitution for damages.
9. The slavery of the Israelites in Egypt is recalled to remind the people not to maltreat strangers, widows, or orphans in their midst.



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