

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

MISHPATIM/SHEKALIM

FEBRUARY 8-9, 2013

29 SHEBAT 5773

Rosh Hodesh Adar will be celebrated on Sunday & Monday, February 10 & 11.

In memory of Isadore Dayan - Ezra Ben Shafiha – one of the builders of the community

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MONIQUE and ELLEN HADDAD – HAPPY ANNIVERSARY ELLEN AND ISAAC

Kiddush this week sponsored by Elisheva Reinheimer

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting – 5:04 pm / Mincha – 5:00 pm

Shacharit - 9:00am – Latest Shema is 8:51

Mincha 12:20 – Amidah after 12:35

Shabbat Ends – 6:05 pm - Return for Arbit at 6:25

Followed by Children's program with Pizza and B'H a class

Daily Services - Shacharit

Sunday- 8:00am / Monday thru Friday - 7:00am SHARP

Class with Rabbi Yenay Monday night at 7PM –

Purim is Saturday night February 23rd

Anyone who wants to volunteer please let Rabbi Colish know

Our Sisterhood dinner this year will be held February 27th at Chosen Island

and our Guest of Honor will be---Lisa Gaon!!Reserve the date and invite your friends -

Remember this dinner is for men too!

On Saturday night, March 2, 2013, The Sephardic Congregation Of Long Beach will host a talk by Dr. Reeva Simon entitled "Jews and Islam: An Inconsistent Relationship. From the Golden Age to Modern Times." Dr. Simon is a former Associate Director of The Middle East Institute at Columbia University and professor of Middle East history at Columbia and Yeshiva Universities and the author of a number of books on the topic

Dr. Simon's talk will begin at 8pm, with a reception to follow. Suggested donation is \$10.

See Newsletter Note that follows

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 5PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Couldn't get a newsletter out this week, but for good reasons. My daughter Aryana is engaged to Steven Ritholtz. Chantelle with lots of help made a beautiful meeting of the family. We hope to make a Kiddush in the near future to celebrate with the entire congregation.

On the newsletter: It's amazing how time flies. We began putting out Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace when Jonah was in third grade. That's 18 years ago. I started printing it at the suggestion of Rabbi Abittan, zsl and my dad. Within weeks it was being distributed in a number of Synagogues and within a couple of years we were faxing out 3000 copies a week using multiple fax servers. And as email became popular, it became easier to send to more and more people around the world to the point where we surpassed 18,000 each week.

The front page of the newsletter was adjusted for our Synagogue to include announcements and scheduled. For a while this page was forwarded to me by the sisterhood president and all I needed to do was copy and paste. But no more. Today, getting the name of who donated the Kiddush or what needs to be announced is not so simple. Sometimes I make mistakes or send something incomplete.

Additionally some of you have suggested we include birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, lists of people who need Refuah and more stories and photos relating to the congregation. It's a great idea, but to do that we need help.

A couple of people have asked that announcements be sent separately from shabbat shalom.

With that in mind, some of you volunteered to take on the project. David Pinto has volunteered to take a shot at it and send out the weekly announcements.

I will still include the basic schedule and information sent to me as part of my mailing to you of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace each week. Additionally I will still send messages as may be needed from time

to time as the rabbi and president even though many of you in this sub list don't pray with us.

The goal of the new Sephardic Congregation newsletter is to give you information that may have been lacking in Shabbat Shalom.

For those who wish to be added to the new Synagogue newsletter, send an email to rabbi@benaiasher.org requesting that you be added to the new list and we will forward your email to David Pinto. Thanks to those who responded already. We have forwarded your requests to David. In the future you can send directly to David Pinto at DavidPinto@SephardicNews.com For those who do not respond you will continue to get Shabbat Shalom as you have in the past.

And remember you can always cancel your Shabbat Shalom subscription by replying with the word cancel.

Let us know your thoughts.

Be safe in the snow. Those close to the Synagogue should try to get there for minyan as we will certainly need you.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

The following Aliya summary will list the numerous laws detailed in Parshas Mishpatim. A total of 53 Mitzvot are commanded.

1st Aliya: The Jewish slave, Jewish maidservant, manslaughter, murder, injuring a parent, kidnapping, cursing a parent.

2nd Aliya: Killing of slaves, personal damages, injury to slaves, the killer ox, a hole in the ground, damage by goring, penalties for stealing.

3rd Aliya: Damage by grazing, damage by fire, the unpaid custodian, the paid custodian, the borrowed article, seduction, occult practices, idolatry and oppression, lending money.

4th Aliya: Accepting authority, justice, strayed animals, the fallen animal.

5th Aliya: Justice, the Shmitah (7th) year, Shabbos, Pesach, Shavous, Succos, prohibition against milk and meat.

6th Aliya: Hashem (G-d) instructed the nation to respect the authority of His messengers, the Prophets and Rabbis. He promised to chase out the seven nations who inhabited Canaan and forewarned us against making a treaty of peace with them, or being influenced by their practices and values.

7th Aliya: Hashem stated the means by which the seven nations would be chased out of Israel, and promised that if we do as instructed no woman would miscarry. The borders of Eretz Yisroel (The Land of Israel) were defined. The conclusion of the Parsha returns to the aftermath of Revelation. Moshe built an altar, offered a sacrifice, and in 24:7 the nation proclaimed "we will first obey Hashem's commands and then attempt to understand". Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and the 70 elders have a shared vision in 24:10 and then Moshe is told to ascend Sinai where he would remain for 40 days and nights.

This week, in addition to the regular Parsha, we read Parshas Shekalim. Parshas Shekalim is the first of the four special Shabbosim preceding Pesach when additional portions from the Torah are read. Shekalim is read on the Shabbos that precedes the month of Adar, or the Shabbos of Rosh Chodesh Adar (when Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos coincide).

A key function of the Bais Hamikdash (Temple) was the offering of the daily, korban - public sacrifices. The designation of "public" was because every male adult, 20 years and older, donated a 1/2 Shekel toward the purchase of the communal sacrifices. These moneys were gathered and used to purchase the daily public offerings.

The law demands that all sacrifices must be purchased from moneys collected for that year. The fiscal year for public offerings was from Nissan to Nissan. Therefore, the Rabbi's ordained that the portion of the Torah describing the first giving of the 1/2 Shekel be read on the Shabbos of or before Rosh Chodesh Adar, one month before the 1/2 shekel was due, as a reminder that everyone should send in their money to the Temple.

In honor of Shabbos Shekalim, the Haftorah is designated to reflect the theme of Shekalim rather than the weekly portion of Mishpatim. Chapter 12 of II Kings relates how the young Yeho'ash collected the funds for the rededication of the Bais Hamikdash.

In the year 3084 - 677b.c.e., Yeho'ash, the King of Yehudah, decided to strengthen and redecorate the 155 year old Bais Hamikdash. Yeho'ash instituted a simple system of collection, known today as the "Pushka." A special box was designated next to the Mizbeach where all collected moneys were deposited. The money was then counted and given to the contractors who dispersed the funds, as needed, to the workmen. The Navi specifically states that no accounting was made with the contractors, because they were men of integrity.

Yeho'ash was the sole survivor from the House of Dovid Hamelech following their massacre by the hands of Queen Athalya, the daughter of Achav and Ezevel, and Yeho'ash's own grandmother! (just think what the media would have done with a story like this) He was saved by his aunt, Yehosheva, the wife of Yehoyada the Kohein Gadol, who hid him in the Bais Hamikdash for six years.

After those six years, At the age of seven, Yehoyada revealed Yeho'ash's existence, and coronated him the King of Yehudah to the delight of the people. Yehoyada was the disciple of Elisha the Navi.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"And these are the judgments that you shall place before them." (Shemot 21:1)

The town had just appointed a new Rabbi; and the local scholars were determined to test the Torah knowledge of the new leader. They thought of a hypothetical monetary dispute which entailed a complicated halachic question and presented themselves to the new Rabbi as litigants seeking a ruling from him as a bet din. The Rav carefully weighed the details of the case and rendered his verdict.

The two scholars then made their way to the famed Rav of Kovna, who was considered one of the greatest poskim (halachic authority) of his era. They presented their case to the Rav. He listened to both sides and ruled precisely the opposite. But when both "litigants," including the party that lost, according to his ruling, reacted with glee, it aroused his suspicion. He promptly probed the matter and was shaken to discover the truth.

The Rav instructed the two men to wait, and withdrew into an inner room. An hour later he returned holding a copy of the book "Netivot," written by the Rav of Lisa. "Your Rav is a great scholar," he informed them, adding that they were fortunate to

have his as their spiritual leader. He ruled according to the ruling of the Netivot, a fact that eluded me.”

The two men were flabbergasted. It seemed unthinkable that the great Kovna Rav would issue a mistaken halachic ruling. Noticing their wonderment, the Rav explained what had just occurred. “There is nothing to wonder about. Had this been a real case, I would have had the siyata dishmaya (Heavenly assistance) to rule correctly. But since the question was theoretical, there are different ways to approach the question.”

The Hafess Hayim teaches us an additional important point: That even when parties do go to bet din, their intent must be not to pursue their personal interests but to discover what the halachah is. In such cases, the Rav or the bet din judges are indeed granted siyata dishmaya to rule justly.

On a daily basis we see Jews who take their disputes to a bet din and graciously accept and abide by what is decided. It is our collective responsibility to do everything possible to see that all others choose to emulate them. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And Yitro heard." (Shemot 18:1)

This is the perashah which tells us about the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, perhaps the greatest event that ever took place in the world. Wouldn't it be proper to have the entire perashah devoted to that special occurrence, rather than begin with Yitro joining the Jewish? What was so important about Yitro that this had to precede Matan Torah?

The answer is the first word - גִּוְיָוִי - and he heard! The Torah is teaching us that if we don't hear, we will not be able to receive the Torah. Hearing means being able to concentrate and focus on someone else and not only on ourselves. It means to accept that we're not perfect and we can hear advice and criticism. The whole world was aware that the Jews came out of Egypt with great miracles but did nothing about it. Yitro, however, heard and came. Because he was willing to truly hear and understand, he changed his own life and ultimately gave some very useful advice to Moshe. That is why the giving of the Torah must be preceded by the story of Yitro, to teach us what hearing can bring.

We often ask others how they are, but do we really hear their answers? Our kids are constantly talking to us, but are we truly listening? Even if we do allow the words of others to enter our ears, do we hear "between the lines"? Let us learn from Yitro to

truly hear and listen to what's around us and this will make our lives a little bit better. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

THOUGHTS COUNT

When the alarm clock rang at the usual time, your head was still aching. You sneezed as you lifted your heavy head off the pillow.

“I think I should stay home today and get some rest. My allergies are really acting up. I hardly slept, I feel weak, and I can't think straight,” you mused as you staggered to the sink, ever so slowly, to wash up. But then you remembered the project you were working on and knew that your boss was counting on you to meet the deadline. If you missed work today you knew you could never complete the project on time. So you struggled and made it to your desk – by nine o'clock!

At lunchtime, instead of eating at your desk as usual, you went out to eat and took an extra few minutes to sip a cup of tea. What you really wanted to do was go home and crawl back into bed and catch up on sleep, but you did not want to let your boss down, so you returned to work. How upset you were when your boss – of all people – gave you a funny look as you came back from lunch ten minutes late! Didn't he realize how much you were pushing yourself to perform for him? You knew of the heroism

and extra effort that you put in today and you wanted him to know about it as well, and to appreciate it.

Well, since nobody can read your mind, people judge you by the results of your actions, not by your intentions.

When judging the performance of others, we must factor their possible motives and intentions into our evaluation. It is important to negate our natural, automatic reaction. We regularly judge others according to the result of their actions, but we expect them to judge us by our good intentions. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, M.D.
Edmond J Safra Synagogue Manhattan

Rabbi's Corner: Perashat Mishpatim - Shekalim
One of the most endearing statements the Children of Israel uttered was: "עֲמַשְׁנוּ הַשֶּׁעַן - we will do and we will listen". It is the statement they responded when Moshe told them he has the Torah to give them. Without asking what was in it or what were

their obligations, they responded "Yes - we will do and we will listen." It is this response that the A-mighty holds very dearly and remembers very fondly.

The Torah contains many laws and many statues. Some of them are not very understandable, many of them are applicable today, most of them are just in our eyes, but all of them are Divine. We committed ourselves standing at the foothills of Mt. Sinai to obey and observe all of them, because they were given by the A-mighty Himself.

Although many of the Torah laws may appear to be deduced from reason, and other laws may be present in other nations and other societies, only the ones in the Torah were given by the A-mighty. This makes them just, reasonable, morally and ethically correct.

I had the opportunity to visit the Louvre, the famous museum in Paris during my last trip to France. I stood in awe as I saw the stone where the famous Code of Hammurabi was carved. He lived and ruled Ur over 3700 year ago. Many of the business laws inscribed in that stone are similar to the laws of damages and liabilities written in our Perashat Mishpatim. But I asked myself, where is Hammurabi today? Where is his city and culture? All disappeared into the dustbin of history. His stone and laws belong to a museum, nothing else.

Our Torah, on the other hand, since it is Divine, is alive and well. It is being studied in the classrooms of the Yeshivot, in the study halls of synagogues and in universities. It is being applied to a living society in Israel and all over the world. It is eternal and immutable. It is the coveted prize that only our People received and nobody else.

We are a nation of laws and traditions, and it is incumbent upon us to cherish the precious gift that the A-mighty Himself has given us...for it is everlasting.

Rabbi Wein

The full acceptance – the naaseh v'nishma – we will do and we will hearken – of the Torah by the Jewish people appears in this week's parsha rather than in last week's parsha where the actual description of the revelation at Mount Sinai is recorded. We are all quite aware that the maxim that the devil lies in the details is incontrovertibly and unerringly correct. General acceptance of the ideas and values of the Torah is relatively easy to obtain from the people. Acceptance of and commitment to the nitty-gritty details of Torah

and Halacha is another more complicated matter entirely.

The Torah does not record for us the full and unconditional acceptance by the Jewish people until this week's parsha, until after many of the details of the Torah have been spelled out and published. Only when details of the covenant are known can there be a true acceptance and agreement between the parties here, so to speak.

Moshe, here, serves as the true advocate and attorney for Israel in explaining, teaching and clarifying the laws of the Torah to the people. We are witness on a daily basis of how general agreement on issues in commerce, diplomacy and social relationships break down when put to the detailed test of practical enforcement and behavior.

Everyone is in favor of peace, equal opportunity for all, tranquility at home and in the family, national unity and other such noble ideas and values. It is the details of practicality that are the cause of these goals being unfulfilled for many people and nations. The Torah therefore advances these details first before there can be a full acceptance of naaseh v'nishma by the people of Israel.

This idea goes to the heart of the discussion regarding conversions to Judaism. Merely proclaiming that one wishes to be a Jew, without realizing what that really entails, is pretty much of a sham. What are the details of this covenant that one now wishes to enter into? Is it merely a warm hearted, even sincere, embrace of very general principles of monotheism and morality without knowledge of or commitment to the halachic details that govern daily Jewish living?

Halacha does not demand that the prospective convert know everything about Judaism before being accepted into the fold of Israel. But it does demand that the prospective convert know a great deal about Jewish law and life. Just being a "good person" or serving in the Israeli army, noble as these accomplishments truly are, do not yet qualify for one to be easily converted. Without knowing the details inherent in becoming a Jew, how can one enter into an eternal agreement with binding commitments that remain irrevocable?

The conversion process, which is a tactical and bureaucratic, and which certainly can be improved upon, is a matter of acceptance, sincerity, devotion and honest commitment. It should not be subverted by political pressures, demographic considerations or misplaced compassion. Only in knowledge and

adherence to the details of the covenant of Sinai can the survival and growth of the Jewish people and its spiritual advancement be guaranteed

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables

Conversion Aversion

This week's portion is filled with commandments. Indeed throughout the Torah, Hashem sets forth for us commandments. There are positive commandments, (mitzvos aseil) laws that tell us what to actively do, e.g. lay tefillin, learn Torah, eat matzah of Passover. Then there are laws that tell us what not to do, (mitzvos lo sa'aseil), to observe by restraint - e.g. do not eat chametz on Passover, do not eat non-kosher, do not wear shatnez (a mixture of wool and linen), and to not eat chametz on Passover.

Most of the time, the Torah does not specify reasons for the commands, especially the negative commandments. But this week, the Torah explains one of its commandments, no less than two times. "Do not taunt or oppress a Ger (newcomer) because you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:20). "And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, since you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

According to most commentators, the verse refers to the Ger -- a convert to Judaism. Rashi explains that the Torah forewarns the Jewish nation from being cocky toward anyone who would join our people. "After all," Rashi expounds, "the stranger can easily remind us of our since-forgotten experience in Egypt, where we, too, were strangers."

However, something bothers me. The Torah's set of values is pure and unmitigated by personal partiality. So let us ask. Does it truly matter that we were once strangers? Isn't taunting a newcomer, any type of ger? Why must the Torah add our Egyptian experience to the equation? We were in Egypt 210 years! This commandment was given to an entire nation. Even if the average age of the receivers of the Torah, were 50 years old, that would mean their family had been in Egypt 160 years, before they were born! That's the equivalent of an American who was born in 1950 being told to understand the feelings even if family had emigrated in 1790! What's going on?

The Story

A friend told me the sad story of a convert to Judaism who had lived in a large, very religious community for quite a number of years, yet he somehow did not fit in. When his children got older it was difficult to get

them into a school that felt would be appropriate for them.

For some reason, each school to which he had applied told him that they felt their school would not be appropriate, and that he should look at a different institution.

He turned to a lay person to help, and despite all the man's entreats, no school would accept him. Together the convert and his friend went from school to school, each time hearing another excuse. Finally, he decided to move to a more accepting community. Before he left, he lamented. "Before I converted, everyone warned me how hard it is to be to be a Jew. But," he sighed, "no one told me how hard it would be to be a convert!"
The Message

Maybe the Torah is trying to tell us how long a person remains a convert. Even after 210 years we were still treated as newcomers, slaves, and lower-class. We were derided and mocked despite being in Egypt for more than 200 years. Indeed, we may be told to be cautious of the ger, but the torah tells us, how deep those feelings run. And how long it may take until one is accepted.

Sir Jonathan Sacks Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth In The Details

On the opening phrase of Mishpatim - "And these are the laws you are to set before them" - Rashi comments: "And these are the laws" – Wherever uses the word "these" it signals a discontinuity with what has been stated previously. Wherever it uses the term "and these" it signals a continuity. Just as the former commands were given at Sinai, so these were given at Sinai. Why then are the civil laws placed in juxtaposition to the laws concerning the altar ? To tell you to place the Sanhedrin near to the Temple. "Which you shall set before them" - G-d said to Moses: You should not think, I will teach them a section or law two or three times until they know the words verbatim but I will not take the trouble to make them understand the reason and its significance. Therefore the Torah states "which you shall set before them" like a fully laid table with everything ready for eating. (Rashi on Shemot 23:1)

Three remarkable propositions are being set out here, which have shaped the contours of Judaism ever since.

The first is that just as the general principles of Judaism (aseret hadibrot means not "ten commandments" but "ten utterances" or overarching principles) are Divine, so are the details. In the 1960s the Danish architect Arne Jacobson designed a new college campus in Oxford. Not content with designing the building, he went on to design the cutlery and crockery to be used in the dining hall, and supervised the planting of every shrub in the college garden. When asked why, he replied in the words of another architect, Mies van der Rohe: "G-d is in the details".

That is a Jewish sentiment. There are those who believe that what is holy in Judaism is its broad vision, never so compellingly expressed as in the Decalogue at Sinai. The truth however is that G-d is in the details: "Just as the former were given at Sinai, so these were given at Sinai." The greatness of Judaism is not simply in its noble vision of a free, just and compassionate society, but in the way it brings this vision down to earth in detailed legislation. Freedom is more than an abstract idea. It means (in an age in which slavery was taken for granted - it was not abolished in Britain or the United States until the nineteenth century) letting a slave go free after seven years, or immediately if his master has injured him. It means granting slaves complete rest and freedom one day in seven. These laws do not abolish slavery, but they do create the conditions under which people will eventually learn to abolish it. Not less importantly, they turn slavery from an existential fate to a temporary condition. Slavery is not what you are or how you were born, but some thing that has happened to you for a while and from which you will one day be liberated. That is what these laws - especially the law of Shabbat - achieve, not in theory only, but in living practice. In this, as in virtually every other aspect of Judaism, G-d is in the details.

The second principle, no less fundamental, is that civil law is not secular law. We do not believe in the idea "render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to G-d what belongs to G-d". We believe in the separation of powers but not in the secularisation of law or the spiritualisation of faith. The Sanhedrin or Supreme Court must be placed near the Temple to teach that law itself must be driven by a religious vision. The greatest of these visions, stated in this week's sedra, is: "Do not oppress a stranger, because you yourself know how it feels like to be a stranger: you were strangers in Egypt." (Shemot 23:9)

The Jewish vision of justice, given its detailed articulation here for the first time, is based not on expediency or pragmatism, nor even on abstract philosophical principles, but on the concrete historical memories of the Jewish people as "one nation under

G-d." Centuries earlier, G-d has chosen Abraham so that he would "teach his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, by doing what is right and just." (Bereishith 18:19) Justice in Judaism flows from the experience of injustice at the hands of the Egyptians, and the G-d-given challenge to create a radically different form of society in Israel.

This is already foreshadowed in the first chapter of the Torah with its statement of the equal and absolute dignity of the human person as the image of G-d. That is why society must be based on the rule of law, impartially administered, treating all alike - "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favouritism to a poor man in his lawsuit." (Shemot 23:2-3)

To be sure, at the highest levels of mysticism, G-d is to be found in the innermost depths of the human soul, but G-d is equally to be found in the public square and in the structures of society: the marketplace, the corridors of power, and courts of law. There must be no gap, no dissociation of sensibilities, between the court of justice (the meeting-place of man and man) and the Temple (the meeting-place of man and G-d).

The third principle and the most remarkable of all is the idea that law does not belong to lawyers. It is the heritage of every Jew. "Do not think, I will teach them a section or law two or three times until they know the words verbatim but I will not take the trouble to make them understand the reason and significance of the law. The Torah states 'which you shall set before them' like a fully laid table with everything ready for eating." This is the origin of the name of the most famous of all Jewish codes of law, R. Joseph Karo's Shulkhan Arukh.

From earliest times, Judaism expected everyone to know and understand the law. Legal knowledge is not the closely guarded property of an elite. It is - in the famous phrase - "the heritage of the congregation of Jacob." (Devarim 33:4) Already in the first century CE Josephus could write that "should any one of our nation be asked about our laws, he will repeat them as readily as his own name. The result of our thorough education in our laws from the very dawn of intelligence is that they are, as it were, engraved on our souls. Hence to break them is rare, and no one can evade punishment by the excuse of ignorance" (Contra Apionem, ii, 177-8). That is why there are so many Jewish lawyers. Judaism is a religion of law - not because it does not believe in love ("You shall love the Lord your G-d", "You shall love your neighbour as yourself") but because, without justice,

neither love nor liberty nor human life itself can flourish. Love alone does not free a slave from his or her chains.

The sedra of Mishpatim, with its detailed rules and regulations, can sometimes seem a let-down after the breathtaking grandeur of the revelation at Sinai. It should not be. Yitro contains the vision, but G-d is in the details. Without the vision, law is blind. But without the details, the vision floats in heaven. With them the divine presence is brought down to earth, where we need it most.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And he must heal (him)” (21:19)

The double expression “V'Rapo Y'Rape' ” is for emphasis. “He must surely heal (him).” “From here we learn that the physician is permitted to heal” (Berachot 60A).

Healing is a wondrous process beyond human understanding, and it would seem presumptuous to permit a bungling human to attempt to participate in the performance of the healing miracle. When a complicated mechanical computer breaks down, we would not permit a simple handyman to tinker with it. And even the most competent physician knows less of the true healing process than does the handyman who approaches the computer.

But Hashem wishes that men earn the merit of attempting to heal. Even in the days gone by when men knew much less, and in some instances might do more harm than good, nevertheless Hashem desires men to attempt according to their ability, and they are rewarded by Him.

The true Healer is Hashem, yet “permission is given” to the physician; and he is even commanded to heal: V'Rapo Y'Repe'.

“And if he strikes out the tooth of his slave or his slave woman, he must send him out free in place of his tooth” (21:27)

The loss of a single tooth could gain for the slave his complete freedom from slavery. Here we have an outstanding example of the benefits of misfortune, which serves as a general lesson for us to learn. The misfortunes are sent by Hashem, the Master of all men, and thereby the recipient is redeemed from some guilt which he had been born hitherto.

When even a free man loses a tooth, he should consider himself set free from some impending

disaster, whether in this life or the Afterlife, in place of the lost tooth.

“Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakob said: As long as a man continues in peace, he gains no atonement for his sins; but by means of misfortunes he becomes acceptable by Hashem' (Sifri, Debarim 32).

This is one of the instances where a law of the Torah is a parallel to some great general principle.

Quoted from "A Nation Is Born" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller

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