



פרשת מְשֻׁפְּטִים / 5781 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Mishpatim 5781

## Freeing Yerushalayim

This week's parsha is brimming with case studies in monetary law. The Torah discusses the laws of damages, deposits, loans and other such cases. At first glance these laws might appear as a dull follow up to the Giving of the Torah at Sinai and the Ten Commandments. There, God himself appeared to the Jewish people and taught them many of the fundamentals of Judaism such the need to believe in one God, the prohibition against idolatry and the laws of Shabbat.

In our parsha, however, it is Moshe, and not God, teaching the Jewish people who teaches the people a detailed system of interpersonal laws, seemingly just to keep the peace. While this system is clearly necessary to enable the proper ordering of society, it can seem a little deflating after the great events of last week's parsha.

Our Sages, though, consistently argued against this sort of reaction to our parsha. They highlight how lofty God considers the laws of our parsha and how observing them brings blessing into the world by actualizing and concretizing the great and lofty concepts and experiences of Sinai.<sup>1</sup>

This uplifting of the detailed legal system of our parsha is highlighted by a Midrash that finds allusions to redemption scattered throughout our parsha:

“At that time, I will search (*achapeis*) Jerusalem with candles:”<sup>2</sup> Rav Acha says that one should read “*achapeis*” as “I will free.” The Holy One Blessed be He says: ‘I will send Yerushalayim to freedom just as I wrote in my Torah that if one knocks out the eye or tooth of his servant that he must send him to freedom. I hit both eyes of my children... is it not just that they go out to freedom....’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Ramban at the beginning of of the parsha.

<sup>2</sup> Tzefaniah 1:12.

<sup>3</sup> Pesika Rabbati, pesikta 5.



## 5781 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Mishpatim 5781 / פרשת משפטים

The midrash goes onto compare Yerushalayim to the Jewish servant who goes to freedom in the seventh year.

At first glance these allusions seem out of place. What is the connection between the laws of the parsha and the redemption of Yerushalayim? Why would the midrash find Yerushalayim in the small details of our parsha?

Perhaps the Midrash is precisely highlighting the importance of these laws. One might think that these laws are just to keep a certain baseline in society, but, in truth, there is a direct line between these laws and the redemption of Yerushalayim. As Yeshayahu says: “Zion will be redeemed with justice.” The Torah connects the smallest and seemingly insignificant of details with the highest of our aspirations and dreams – the redemption of Yerushalayim.