

Cong. Etz Chaim's
Torah at the Table
Parshat Mishpatim

This weeks Parsha is the first of its kind in the Torah. It deals less with a storyline, and more with the intricate details of Jewish law.

A major discussion is the penalties for certain crimes committed, such as murder, stealing, damaging others property, physically harming others, etc.

When discussing stealing, the Torah differentiates between those who steal in private (thief) and those who steal publicly (robber). The one who steals in private is given a harsher punishment, which leads to this discussion in the Gemara:

His students asked Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai: For what reason was the Torah stricter with a thief than with a robber? Only a thief is required to pay the double, fourfold, or fivefold payment, not a robber. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to them in response: This one, the robber, equated the honor of the servant to the honor of his Master, and that one, the thief, did not equate the honor of the servant to the honor of his Master. The robber fears neither God nor people, as he is not afraid to rob in public. The thief does not fear God but he does fear other people, which demonstrates that he is more concerned about humans than God.

We are constantly worrying about how people perceive us and our actions. How does that affect our religious lives?

Our relationship with Hashem can manifest itself in communal ways, but at its core it is a private relationship. We have great relationships with people, but do you find that you have a private relationship with Hashem?

What ways (large or small) can you invest in a personal relationship with Hashem? Is there time in your day to stop and thank Hashem for all He has given you? To stop and ask Hashem for x, y, or z that is missing in life? What else can help foster that relationship?