

Parshat Mishpatim

Shemot 22:21-26

כֹּל-אַלְמָנָה וַיְתוּם לֹא תַעֲנוּן: אִם-עָנָה תַעֲנֶנָּה אֹתוֹ כִּי אִם-צָעַק יִצְעַק אֵלַי שָׁמַע
אֲשַׁמְעֶנּוּ: וְחָרָה אַפִּי וְהִרְגַתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּחָרֵב וְהָיוּ נְשִׁיכֶם אֲלֵמָנוֹת וּבְנֵיכֶם
יְתָמִים: אִם-כֶּסֶף | תַּלְוֶה אֶת-עַמִּי אֶת-הָעֲנִי עִמָּךְ לֹא-תִהְיֶה לוֹ כְּנִשָּׂה לֹא-תִשְׁיָמוּן
עָלָיו נֶשֶׁךְ: אִם-חֶבֶל לִתְחַבֵּל שְׁלֵמַת רֵעֶךָ עַד-בֹּקֶר אֲשַׁמְשֵׁךְ תִּשְׁיָבֵנוּ לוֹ: כִּי הוּא
כֶּסֶף (כְּתִיב כִּסּוּתָהּ) לְבִדּוֹ הוּא שְׁמֵלְתוֹ לַעֲרוֹ בַמָּה יִשְׁכַּב וְהָיָה כִּי-יִצְעַק אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי
כִּי-חֲנוּן אֲנִי:

You shall not oppress any widow or orphan. If you oppress him, [beware,] for if he cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry. My wrath will be kindled, and I will slay you with the sword, and your wives will be widows and your children orphans. When you lend money to My people, to the poor person [who is] with you, you shall not behave toward him as a lender; you shall not impose interest upon him. If you take your neighbor's garment as security, until sunset you shall return it to him, for it is his only covering; it is his garment for his skin. With what shall he lie? And it shall be [that] if he cries out to Me, I will hear because I am gracious.

Yael Passy: Class of 2021- An Original Thought

The pesukim that were picked out for this week's One Text, Many Voices, can be found in the middle of the many different laws and mitzvot that are given to the Jewish people in this week's parsha. This week's parsha includes laws on indentured servants; the penalties for murder, kidnapping, assault, and theft; the granting of loans, and the concept of not eating meat and milk together. Specifically, the pesukim that Mrs. Gelman chose, deal with prohibitions against harassing a widow, or orphan; the mitzvah of lending money to the poor and the prohibition against lending with interest.

In trying to come up with an original commentary, I realized a common thread in these laws and mitzvot, they are all about protecting or helping the little guy. These cases all go to show the moral of not taking advantage of people who are in a situation in which they can't defend themselves or understand that they're being taken advantage of. Specifically, with lending money without interest if you are lending money to a poor person, they are coming to you because they have no money charging them interest is just going to cause a greater spiral into poverty and lack of funds. Looking at the bigger picture in the business world we see that these basic common good practices that are found in this pesukim are often not seen, larger companies are constantly taking advantage of little companies. If we zoom back into our little bubble a lot of times the person who doesn't generally have someone to stick up for them is picked on the most. That's why God gives this law and punishment that's so

severe regarding the harassment of orphans and widows because these people have no one left and no one there to protect them, so God decided to take it into his hands to say these people are protected under me. I think a lesson we can learn from this is whether it's sticking up for the orphan or the little guy who's backed into a corner, or it's giving some tzedakah we should all try to make an effort to stand up for the guy who doesn't have anyone to advocate, stand up for, and protect them.

Aaron Ayach: Class of 2020- Medieval Approaches

This pesukim are almost warnings to anyone who should transgress the specifics, for example, if you oppress a widow or an orphan you will be slain. A couple of lines earlier the same is happening with a thief seized coming out of a tunnel. It gives specifics to bring up in judgments in court.

The first phrase of the set pesukim interested me “כָּל-אַלְמָנָה וַיְתוֹם לֹא תַעֲנוּן”- roughly *translating to you shall not oppress or ill-treat a widow or orphan*. What happens in a case where the widow can fend for herself or even if the orphan can fend for themselves? I thought to myself why those specific groups of people- understandably I reasoned why in most situations there is a specific prohibition against the oppression of them. However, the way the pasuk is written seems all-encompassing and so I turned to the mefarshim. The **Rambam**, a medieval commentator born in Spain around 1130, reasoned that this applies even if the widow is wealthy because she feels vulnerable nevertheless and is easily brought to tears. Although not satisfied, an answer was an answer. I turned again to that same phrase and realized **לֹא תַעֲנוּן** was written in the plural. The **Chizkuni**, a French commentator born in the 13th century, concluded that all the people who witness such exploitation and do not protest it, are included in this prohibition. This is why the penalty for people guilty of this has been written in the plural mode. **וְחָרָה אַפִּי וְהִרְגַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם**

Natanya Ruben: Class of 2021: Modern Commentary

Pesukim summary: you shouldn't afflict a widow or an orphan because Hashem will hear their cries and will kill you so that your wife will be a widow and children, orphans. When you lend money to the needy do not act as if you are lending him money (don't give interest) if you borrow a cloak for security from your friend you have to return it because it's a garment for him and he needs it to cover himself.

Modern commentary: In a dvar torah given by **Rabbi Yaakov Menken**, he focuses on the double phrase עֲנֵה תְּעַנֶּה which he finds interesting because the double expressions are very rare. The question he asks is What is the lesson of these “doubled expressions?” What is the Torah trying to teach us? He quotes Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, the Kotzker Rebbe, saying that the Torah’s message is that the pain of a widow or orphan is not the same as the pain of another person. If someone does something bad to the average person, be it physical damage or monetary loss, the other person feels only the pain of the thing that they did. Whether they feel physical pain, embarrassment, or financial loss, that is all they suffer from. This is not true, however, in the case of a widow or orphan. It is completely natural for such a person to respond to an injury or financial loss by remembering and feeling again the painful loss of spouse or parent. This is why the Torah uses the doubled expression of עֲנֵה תְּעַנֶּה— if indeed you afflict — for the affliction itself is doubled. Thus the cry of the orphan is doubled — “צָעַק! קָצַעַק” And because of this, Hashem warns: עֲשֵׂה אֶשְׁמָע— I will surely hear; I will listen “twice.”

(Rabbi Yaakov Menken 1965- present, is the founder and Director of Project Genesis, and creator of its website Torah.org)

Mrs. Rachel Traxler: Upper School Judaics

Every word in the Torah comes to teach a lesson as do these pesukim. Torah is is milashon ho-raah, meaning teaching/lesson. We need to take from the words of the pesukim and translate it into action.

Hashem created man in His image.

We must strive to be Gd like and emulate His ways.

We see the love Hashem has for His children. We can learn a lesson in parenting and in our interactions with others.

Hashem is saying; I will protect the vulnerable, not only will I protect them , I will ensure no harm comes their way by strongly reacting to those who do.

In this way, we simultaneously protect and nurture and is often referred to as "mama bear"mode.

This can be also translate to the Midot of Chessed and Gevurah.

Hashem is able to have both as is detailed in these very pesukim.

We must strive to treat others with Chessed and the appropriate Gevurah. This means to stand up for our fellow Jew in true Ahavat Yisrael, no matter what the situation and especially to those who need it most.