



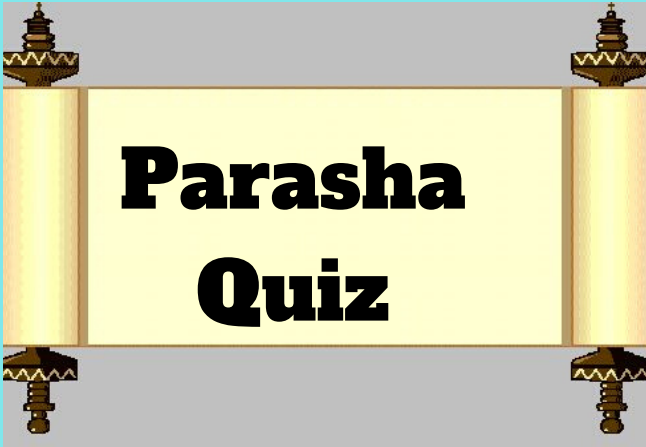
KMS Family Parasha

LEARN ABOUT THE PARASHA WITH THE KMS YOUTH DEPARTMENT

Mishpatim / Shekalim

משפטים

2.15.20



Elementary:

- 1) What is the procedure if an עבד עברי (Jewish servant) wants to keep working for his boss after his 6 years of work are over (21:6)?
- 2) What is the meaning of the mitzvah (23:7) "מְדַבֵּר שֶׁקֶר" "תִּרְחֹק"?
- 3) According to Rashi (23:19) what 3 prohibitions do we learn from the 3x the Torah says "לֹא תִבְשֵׁל גְדִי בְחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ"?
- 4) What two famous words did Bnei Yisrael say when asked if they would accept the Torah (24:7)?
- 5) What special parasha do we read from a 2nd Torah this week?

Middle/High School:

- 1) How does Rashi (21:1) learn that Moshe was supposed to explain the reasons behind the mitzvot like a set table (כְּשֶׁלַחַן הָעֵרוּךְ)?
- 2) What is the meaning of the expression Rashi (22:1) teaches: "אִם בָּא לְהִרְגֵךָ, הִשְׁכַּם לְהִרְגּוֹ"?
- 3) What is the meaning of the expression Rashi (22:20) teaches: "מוֹם שֶׁבָּךְ אֵל תֹּאמֶר לְחִבְרֶךָ"?
- 4) According to Rashi (23:1) which words teach us that it is forbidden not just to speak Lashon Harah, but to hear it as well?
- 5) What detail of Matan Torah does Rashi (24:13) say he does not understand? What possible solution does he offer?

What would you do?

Discussion starter for your Shabbat table..

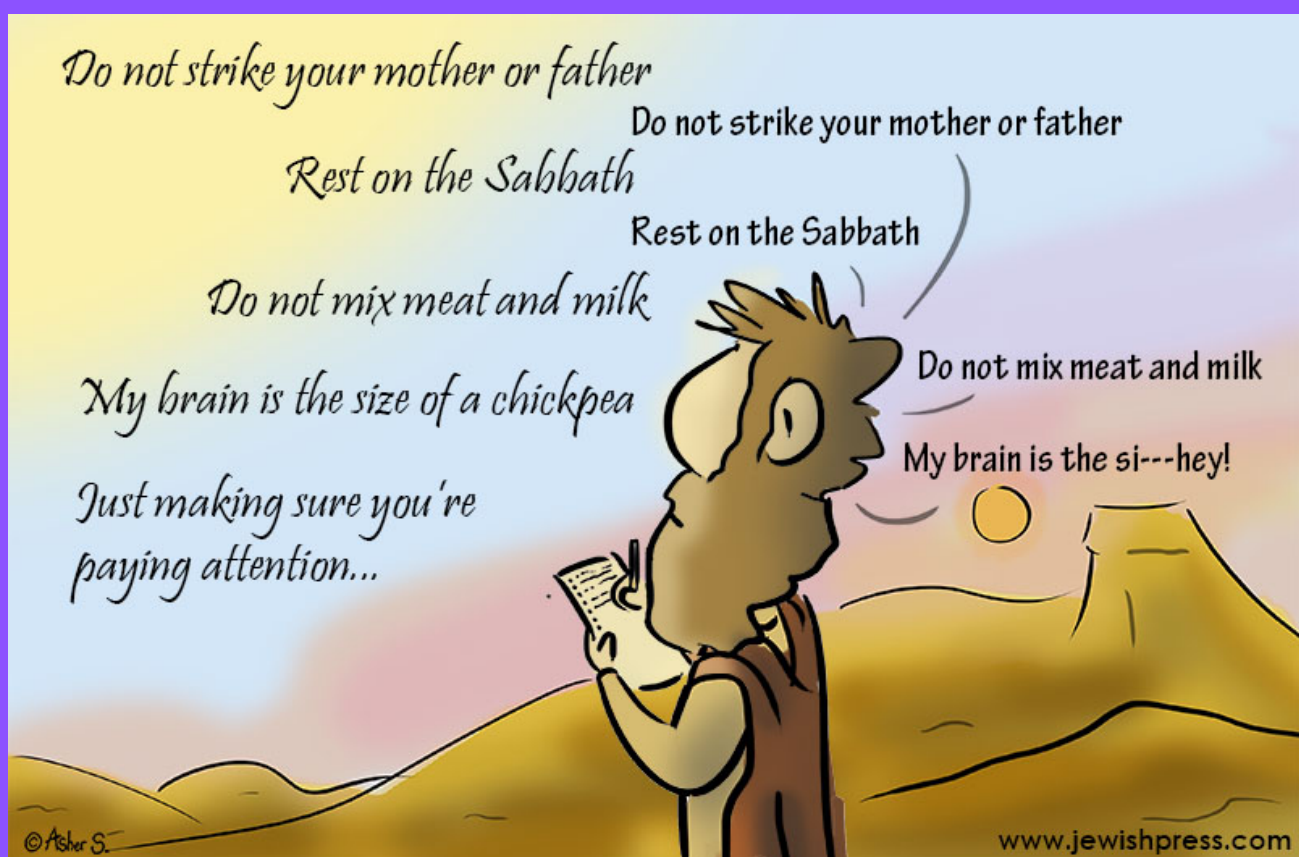
A friend is unknowingly breaking a halacha. Should you tell them about it or mind your own business?

Did You Know?

The Torah instructs every man to give half a shekel (known as machasit hashekel) towards the communal offering given in the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Since the destruction of the Temple, we no longer merit to have this mitzvah, however, we remember it every year when we read Parshat Shekalim. Accordingly, there still remain valuable lessons that can be derived from the machsit hashekel.

The Midrash Rabbah offers a surprising reason for the mitzvah, and in particular, why the specific value of half a shekel, must be given. The Midrash explains that the giving of the half shekel is an atonement for the sale of Joseph by his brothers. The brothers sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver. This is equivalent to five shekel. Ten of the brothers sold Joseph, each one receiving one tenth of this value, making a half shekel each. Accordingly, since each brother gained half a shekel in the sale, their descendants were instructed to give half a shekel as an atonement.

The commentaries note the significance of the fact that one must give half a shekel as opposed to a full shekel. Many explain that it comes to teach us about the importance of unity amongst the Jewish people by showing that each person is only 'half a person' without combining with the strengths of his fellow man. One should not think that he can separate from his fellow Jews and be unaffected. A person who has this attitude he will be incomplete. In this way, the mitzvah of giving half a shekel can act as an atonement for the sale of Joseph. Joseph's brothers thought that they could get along fine without Joseph's contribution to the Jewish people. Their mistake was that even if they believed him to be erring, he was still an essential part of the Jewish people. By giving half a shekel we remind ourselves that this is not the correct attitude - all Jews are part of a unified whole, and everyone needs to combine with their fellow. (Aish.com)



God's Nudge - Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

If God does not want slavery, if He regards it as an affront to the human condition, why did He not abolish it immediately? Why did He allow it to continue, albeit in a restricted and regulated way? Is it conceivable that God, who can produce water from a rock, manna from heaven, and turn sea into dry land, cannot change human behavior? Are there areas where the All-Powerful is, so to speak, powerless?

In 2008 economist Richard Thaler and law professor Cass Sunstein published a fascinating book called *Nudge*. In it they addressed a fundamental problem in the logic of freedom. On the one hand freedom depends on not over-legislating. It means creating space within which people have the right to choose for themselves. On the other hand, we know that people will not always make the right choices. The old model on which classical economics was based, that left to themselves people will make rational choices, turns out not to be true. We are deeply irrational, a discovery to which several Jewish academics made major contributions. The psychologists Solomon Asch and Stanley Milgram showed how much we are influenced by the desire to conform, even when we know that other people have got it wrong. The Israeli economists, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, showed how even when making economic decisions we frequently miscalculate their effects and fail to recognise our motivations, a finding for which Kahneman won the Nobel Prize. How then do you stop people doing harmful things without taking away their freedom? Thaler and Sunstein's answer is that there are oblique ways in which you can influence people. In a cafeteria, for example, you can put healthy food at eye level and junk food in a more inaccessible and less noticeable place. You can subtly adjust what they call people's "choice architecture."

That is exactly what God does in the case of slavery. He does not abolish it, but He so circumscribes it that He sets in motion a process that will foreseeably, even if only after many centuries, lead people to abandon it of their own accord... God can change nature, said Maimonides, but He cannot, or chooses not to, change human nature, precisely because Judaism is built on the principle of human freedom. So He could not abolish slavery overnight, but He could change our choice architecture, or in plain words, give us a nudge, signalling that slavery is wrong but that we must be the ones to abolish it, in our own time, through our own understanding. It took a very long time indeed, and in America, not without a civil war, but it happened.

There are some issues on which God gives us a nudge. The rest is up to us.