

Parsha Plug: Parshat Mishpatim

<p>Shemot 24:1-8</p>	<p>שמות כד:א-ח</p>
<p>1 And to Moshe He said, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and prostrate yourselves from afar. 2 And Moshe alone shall approach the Lord but they shall not approach, and the people shall not ascend with him." 3 So Moshe came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances, and all the people answered in unison and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." 4 And Moshe wrote all the words of the Lord, and he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve monuments for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 And he sent the youths of the children of Israel, and they offered up burnt offerings, and they slaughtered peace offerings to the Lord, bulls. 6 And Moshe took half the blood and put it into the basins, and half the blood he cast onto the altar. 7 And he took the Book of the Covenant and read it within the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear." 8 And Moshe took the blood and sprinkled [it] on the people, and he said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has formed with you concerning these words."</p>	<p>(א) וְאֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר עֲלֵה אֵלַי יְקֹנֵךְ וְאַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם מֵרֶחֶק: (ב) וּגְשׁ מֹשֶׁה לְבָדּוֹ אֶל־יְקֹנֵךְ וְהֵם לֹא יִגְשׁוּ וְהָעָם לֹא יַעֲלוּ עִמּוֹ: (ג) וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיְסַפֵּר לָעָם אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יְקֹנֵךְ וְאֵת כָּל־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וַיַּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְקֹנֵךְ נַעֲשֶׂה: (ד) וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יְקֹנֵךְ וַיִּשְׁכַּם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הָהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר מִצְבֵּה לְשִׁנָּיִם עֶשֶׂר שְׁבֻטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (ה) וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־נְעָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זְבָחִים שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה פָּרִים: (ו) וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה חֲצֵי הַדָּם וַיִּשֶׂם בְּאֵגוֹת וְחֲצֵי הַדָּם זָרַק עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: (ז) וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְקֹנֵךְ נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע: (ח) וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַדָּם וַיִּזְרַק עַל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה דַם־הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת יְקֹנֵךְ עִמָּכֶם עַל כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה:</p>

<p>Chizkuni on Shemot 24:7</p>	<p>חזקוני על שמות כד:ז</p>
<p>“We will do and we will hear”: We will do what is written here and also we will listen if You want to command more.</p>	<p>נעשה ונשמע, נעשה מה שכתוב כאן ועוד נשמע אם ירצה לצוות יותר.</p>

<p>Seforno on Shemot 24:7</p>	<p>ספורנו שמות כד:ז</p>
<p>“We will do and we will hear”: We will do in order that we will hear His voice, like servants who serve the teacher without the intention of receiving reward.</p>	<p>נעשה ונשמע. נעשה לתכלית שנשמע בקולו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס.</p>

<p>Masechet Shabbat 88a</p>	<p>מסכת שבת פח.</p>
<p>(1) Rebbe Simlai lectured: When the Israelites gave precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hear,' six hundred thousand ministering angels came and set two crowns upon each Israelite, one as a reward for 'we will do,' and the other as a reward for 'we will hear.' But as soon as Israel sinned, one million two hundred thousand destroying angels descended and removed them, as it is said, “And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Horev.” Rebbe Hama son of Rebbe Hanina</p>	<p>דרש רבי סימאי: בשעה שהקדימו ישראל נעשה לנשמע, באו ששים ריבוא של מלאכי השרת, לכל אחד ואחד מִישראל קשרו לו שני כתרִים, אחד כנגד נעשה ואחד כנגד נשמע. וכיון שחטאו ישראל, ירדו מאה ועשרים ריבוא מלאכי חבלה, ופירקום. שנאמר ויתנצלו בני ישראל את עדים מהר חורב.</p>

said: At Horev they put them on and at Horev they took them off....Resh Lakish said: [Yet] the Holy One, blessed be He, will return them to us in the future, for it is said, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads"--the joy from of old shall be upon their heads.

(2) Rebbe Eleazar said: When the Israelites gave precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hearken,' a Heavenly Voice went forth and exclaimed to them, "Who revealed to My children this secret, which is employed by the Ministering Angels, as it is written, 'Bless the Lord, you angels of His. You mighty in strength, that fulfill His word, that hearken unto the voice of His word'-- first they fulfill and then they hearken?"

(3) Rebbe Hama son of Rebbe Hanina said: What is meant by, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, [So is my beloved among the sons]": Why were the Israelites compared to an apple tree? To teach you: just as the fruit of the apple tree precedes its leaves, so did the Israelites give precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hearken'.

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא: בחורב טענו, בחורב פרקו...אמר ריש לקיש: עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להחזירן לנו, שנאמר ופדויי ה' ישבון ובאו ציון ברנה ושמחת עולם על ראשם - שמחה שמעולם על ראשם.

אמר רבי אלעזר: בשעה שהקדימו ישראל נעשה לנשמע יצתה בת קול ואמרה להן: מי גילה לבני רז זה שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בו? דכתיב ברכו ה' מלאכיו גברי כח עשי דברו לשמע בקול דברו, ברישא עשי, והדר לשמע.

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא: מאי דכתיב כתפוח בעצי היער וגו' למה נמשלו ישראל לתפוח - לומר לך: מה תפוח זה פריו קודם לעליו, אף ישראל - הקדימו נעשה לנשמע

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Doing and Hearing: Mishpatim 5776*

[Another] interpretation – not the plain sense of the text but important nonetheless – has been given often in modern Jewish thought. On this view *na'aseh venishma* means, "We will do and we will *understand*." From this they derive the conclusion that we can only understand Judaism by doing it, by performing the commands and living a Jewish life. In the beginning is the deed. Only then comes the grasp, the insight, the comprehension. This is a signal and substantive point. The modern Western mind tends to put things in the opposite order. We seek to understand what we are committing ourselves to before making the commitment. That is fine when what is at stake is signing a contract, buying a new mobile phone, or purchasing a subscription, but not when making a deep existential commitment. The only way to understand leadership is to lead. The only way to understand marriage is to get married. The only way to understand whether a certain career path is right for you is to actually try it for an extended period. Those who hover on the edge of a commitment, reluctant to make a decision until all the facts are in, will eventually find that life has passed them by. The only way to understand a way of life is to take the risk of living it. So: *na'aseh venishma*, "We will do and eventually, through extended practice and long exposure, we will understand."

[Alternatively] There is a normative way of doing the holy deed, but there are many ways of hearing the holy voice, encountering the sacred presence, feeling at one and the same time how small we are yet how great the universe we inhabit, how insignificant we must seem when set against the vastness of space and the myriads of stars, yet how momentously significant we are, knowing that God has set His image and likeness upon us and placed us here, in this place, at this time, with these gifts, in these circumstances, with a task to perform if we are able to discern it. We can find God on the heights and in the depths, in loneliness and togetherness, in love and fear, in gratitude and need, in dazzling light and in the midst of deep darkness. We can find God by seeking Him, but sometimes He finds us when we least expect it. That is the difference between *na'aseh* and *nishma*. We do the Godly deed "together". We respond to His commands "with one voice". But we hear God's presence in many ways, for though God is One, we are all different, and we encounter Him each in our own way.