



## Understanding the Parsha

Exodus 21:1 – 20:18

We will Learn how to

- 1) **interpret the main theme** (subject) of a Parsha (weekly reading from the Torah),
- 2) **make thematic connections to that Parsha** (study the Scriptures related by a common theme [subject], line upon line and precept upon precept)
- 3) **learn how to gain greater understanding of the Parsha we are looking at through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.**

## Review

I. Parashat Mishpatim includes the list of judgments that Adonai gave to Moses to tell to Israel. Even though Parashat Mishpatim begins in Exodus 21:1, the information in Exodus 20:19-23 was also part of the information now given in Parashat Mishpatim. Even though this section is called Mishpatim, the actual commandments Moses is giving to the people really began in Exodus 20:19 (according to the Parsha divisions). So we begin our study in Exodus 20:19.

## Outline I

II. Let's see if we can make a general outline of the entire Parashat Mishpatim (remember, beginning in Exodus 20:19). This outline will be divided mainly by textual considerations.

**A. Read Exodus 20:19 – 20:23 — What is the general theme of these verses?**

Instructions about how man should a approach Adonai.

**B. Read Exodus 21:1 – 23:9** — Remember, the Torah will many times repeat a word or phrase over and over. Whenever you notice this, the section of Scripture where that word or phrase is used over and over is united by a common theme. **What word is used over and over in this section?**

The word “ i if .”

**Almost every instruction begins with the word if. What is the topic of these laws?**

These laws say what to do if someone does something w wrong to another person, animal, property and Adonai. These are called Case Laws.

**C. Read Exodus 23:10 – 23:19—What is the general theme of these verses?**

S Sabbath's and F Festivals /Holy Days.

**D. Read Exodus 23:20 – 23:33—What is the general topic of these verses?**

Promises concerning entering t the L Land .

### Scripture References -- Topic

Exodus 20:19 – 20:23 How man a approaches Adonai

Exodus 21:1 – 23:9 - How to j judge case laws

Exodus 23:10 – 23:19 - F Festivals and H Holy days d

Exodus 23:20 – 23:33 - Promises upon entering the land

Many people think the Torah is a hodge-podge of laws. As you can see, when you begin to study the Scriptures thematically, you will discover that there is a logical order to the events.

### Outline II

**I. Now, let’s go a little deeper into each section above.**

**A. In Exodus 20:19 – 20:23**, which relationship is being addressed in the commandments, man||man or God||man?

G God || m man

**B. Browse over Exodus 21:1 – 22:16** — Which relationship is being addressed in the commandments, man||man or God||man?

M Man || m man

Remember, most of the instructions in this section begin with if such and such. This section of the Torah is dealing primarily with civil/case/tort (wrongful acts) law.

**Who will make sure of the punishments for those breaking laws in this section of the judgments?**

M\_\_\_\_\_ . According to Exodus 21:6, 22; 22:8, 9; judges in the Beit Din will make decisions

Most of the decisions in this section will need to be made by a **Beit Din** (House of Judgment) as it says in Exodus 21:22. These laws are known for by enforcement by the Beit Din (House of Judgement).

**C. The “if”, instructions stops at Exodus 22:16.**

Adonai now gives three straight forward commands. Exodus 22:17-19 (which are also enforced by a Beit Din) seems to interrupt the flow of “if” commands.

- 17 “You are not to permit a female sorcerer to live.”
- 18 “Whoever has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death.”
- 19 “Anyone who sacrifices to any god other than Adonai alone is to be completely destroyed.”

After these, we see a “thou shall not” statement concerning strangers—Exodus 22:20. In fact, we see a similar statement in Exodus 23:9.

Outlining the Torah based on its themes, will show you that sometimes the Torah will use statements that are similar as bookends to sandwich other verses that are thematically related. **The two statements about mistreating strangers are the two bookends.** The verses in between and including the bookends makes for us a section of thematically related verses.



We learned in B above that the laws in Exodus 21:1 – 22:16 were enforced by the B\_\_\_\_\_

D\_\_\_\_\_

**In Exodus 22:20 – 23:9, who will enforce the punishments?** A\_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 22:22-23, 26** tells us Adonai will enforce these laws Himself!  
The laws in this section tell us about a person’s responsibility to society.

**The laws in Exodus 21:1 - 22:16**, instruct us about what Adonai wants us to do if one person does something to hurt another person.

**D. Exodus 23:10-19.** What relationship is being addressed in these commandments—God||man or man||man?

G\_\_\_\_\_ || m\_\_\_\_\_

Once again, these verses talk about our relationship to Adonai just as the first few instructions (Exodus 20:19 – 23) also talked about our relationship to Adonai.

**II. Thematically, these verses paint a beautiful picture. There are four main topics.**

**A. Fear of Man—Exodus 21:1 – 22:19** deals with case-laws that are enforced by the Beit Din. The reason for obeying these commandments is fear of punishment from the Beit Din (judges). Thematically, we will notice this section by its laws related to the Fear of Man.

**B. Fear of God—Exodus 22:20 – 26** deals with laws that are e enforced by Adonai Himself.

The reason for obeying these laws is fear of punishment from A Adonai. Thematically, we will recognize this section by laws related to the Fear of Adonai.

**C. Love Your Neighbor—Exodus 23:1-9** involves O obedience on a higher plane because there is no mention of any punishment!

**D. Love Adonai—Exodus 23:10 – 17** is about our r relationship with Adonai. The reason for our appearing before Him three times a year is our love for Him and His appointed times. This section also involves obedience on a higher plane because there is no mention of any punishment!

### Scripture References - Topic

Exodus 21:1 – 22:19 Fear of Man

Exodus 22:20 – 22:26 Fear of Adonai

Exodus 23:1 – 23:9 Love Your Neighbor

Exodus 23:10 – 23:19 Love Adonai

**E. Exodus 23:20 – 33** tells about the promise of protection by the angel. This is appropriate since they are about to go inherit the land.



### Outline III

**I. This last outline will be the most revealing.** Jewish people see their redemption (salvation, rebirth, rescue) as having happened in three different steps.

The first step is called **Yetziat Mitzrayim**, the redemption (salvation, rebirth, rescue) from Egypt (Ex 1-17).

The second step is called **Ma'amad Har Sinai**, the revelation (to discover Divine Truth) at Mount Sinai.

The last step will be **the inheritance of the land**.

We are right now in our lesson we are at the second step, **Ma'amad Har Sinai**. This step includes the giving of the Torah, known as **Matan Torah**, along with the events that immediately happen before and follow it. These events happened from Exodus 19:1 – 24:11. Now let's see what is so special about this part of Scripture. Why did the sages of Israel see these passages as a unit?

**A. The Ten Commandments are a foundation upon which all of the other commandments rest.** In order to see this better, let's first outline the progression of commandments from Exodus 19:1 – 24:11. Draw a line to connect the right Scripture reference to the right subject:

A) The Covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai - Exodus 19:1-20:18

COLOR GREEN

B) Commandments about the relationship between God and man - Exodus 20:19-23

COLOR YELLOW

C) Commandments relating to the Sabbath (Hebrew bondservant) - Exodus 21:1-6

COLOR ORANGE

COLOR RED

D) Miscellaneous commandments - Exodus 21:7-23:9

C) Commandments relating to the concept of the Sabbath

COLOR ORANGE

(Jubilee, Shabbat and Pilgrimage Festivals)—Exodus 23:10-19

B) Commandments governing the relationship between God and man —Exodus 23:20-33

COLOR YELLOW

A) The Covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai—Exodus 24:1-11

COLOR GREEN

You just colored a **chiastic structure**. We will find them in many portions of Scripture. This structure is obviously inspired for a reason. Thanks to the Jewish sages of Israel, this structure has been made clear to us through thematic analysis. But there's more. Each section of the chiastic structure above **relates to the Ten Commandments**. Try to match the Commandment with its theme by drawing a line to each one below:

**Commandment #1**

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

**Commandment #2**

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

**Commandment #3**

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

**Commandment #4**

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

**Commandment #5**

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you



**Theme**

The number seven and a time for man to rest

**Theme**

Respect for authority

**Theme**

Know Adonai, Believe in Him, Remember what He has done for us

**Theme**

Sanctification of Adonai's Name

**Theme**

Idolatry Forbidden

**Commandment #6**  
You shall not murder.

**Theme**  
Sanctification of property

**Commandment #7**  
You shall not commit adultery.

**Theme**  
Sanctification of truth

**Commandment #8**  
You shall not steal.

**Theme**  
Contentment

**Commandment #9**  
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

**Theme**  
Sanctification of sexual intimacy

**Commandment #10**  
You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

**Theme**  
Sanctification of life

#6 Sanctification of property, #7 Sexual intimacy, #8 Sanctification of truth, #9 Contentment

Each section of the chiastic structure **relates to the Ten Commandments** as follows! Get out your crayons!

- |    |  |              |
|----|--|--------------|
| A) | A Covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai—  | COLOR GREEN  |
| B) | Commandments governing the relationship between God and man— Commandments I, II & III                          | COLOR YELLOW |
| C) | Commandments relating to the concept of the Sabbath (Hebrew bondservant)—<br>Commandment IV                    | COLOR ORANGE |
| D) | Miscellaneous commandments—Commandments V - X  | COLOR RED    |
| C) | Commandments relating to the concept of the Sabbath (Jubilee, Shabbat and Pilgrimage Festivals)—Commandment IV | COLOR ORANGE |
| B) | Commandments governing the relationship between God and man—Commandments III, II, I                            | COLOR YELLOW |
| A) | A Covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai—Exodus 24:1-11  | COLOR GREEN  |

**Now isn't that is truly amazing.** Only Adonai could do this! So much for Bible critics who think the Torah is just a hodge-podge of commandments. These chiastic structures pop up everywhere in the Torah. But you will only be able to see them when you study the Scriptures thematically. **They will help your understanding of the big picture.**

**Now you know the reason why the Jewish sages view Exodus 19:1 – 24:18 (Ma'amad Har Sinai) as one complete story!** It is step two of the process of Adonai fulfilling His promise to Abraham.

