

PARASHAT MISHPATIM

Exodus 21:1–24:18

Parashat Mishpatim presents the *mishpatim*, “rules” or “laws,” that govern the ancient Jewish community. The code of law deals with the treatment of slaves; crimes of murder and kidnapping; personal injuries; damages through neglect or theft; offenses against others through lying, witchcraft, idolatry, oppression, unfair business practices; and unjust treatment by judges. This Torah portion also includes a warning against following others to do evil, along with directives to care for the distressed animals of your enemy and to show impartiality in making judgments. Israelites are reminded to demonstrate sensitivity to the stranger because they were strangers in the land of Egypt. Finally, the portion presents rules for the Sabbath, sabbatical year, Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukot. Upon hearing all these laws, Moses gathers the people at Mount Sinai to offer sacrifices and declares, “All the things that God has commanded we will do!”
