



February 21-22, 2025

כד שבט תשפ"ה

Candle Lighting 5:27 PM

Parashat Mishpatim משפטים Exodus 21:1-24:18
Stone - p 416 Hertz - p 306 Etz Hayim - p 456

Haftarah Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26
Stone - p 1156 Hertz - p 323 Etz Hayim - p 482

Kiddush following services
is sponsored by the congregation

Shabbat ends 6:28 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon - Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director - traditionalcong@gmail.com

WEEKDAY AND SHABBAT SERVICES

Sunday - 8:30 AM

Tuesday - 6:30 PM

Shabbat - 9:30 AM

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We welcome new members!

If you or someone you know would like to receive membership information,
please contact our office at 314-576-5230
or traditionalcong@gmail.com

On This Week's Torah Portion - Mishpatim

When I was in kindergarten at a Jewish preschool, anytime a student would find a toy or snack of unknown provenance, they would stand up in the middle of the room and announce, “*Hashavat avedah! Hashavat avedah!*” in an attempt to return it to its rightful owner. This practice impressed upon me the importance of the mitzvah of returning lost property (called hashavat avedah), which is first delineated in Parashat Mishpatim, not about Koosh balls or a pack of Dunkaroos but with respect to one’s enemy’s load-bearing animal: “*When you encounter your enemy’s ox or ass wandering, you must take it back.*” (Exod. 23:4)

There is no obligation in the common law to retrieve someone’s lost property and return it. So why does the Torah make a point of establishing such a requirement? Why does the Torah specify that the owner of the lost animal is the finder’s enemy, and what is the scope of the finder’s responsibilities?

The Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael connects Exodus 23:4 with the lost property law of Deuteronomy 22:1-3, which adds more details about what to do upon finding lost property and relates not only to animals but to other inanimate, movable objects. According to Deuteronomy, the finder should not ignore the lost property, but rather return it to its owner (who is called “your brother” rather than “your enemy”). But what if the owner lives far away, or if the finder does not know who owns the property? In that case, the finder must bring the property home and wait for its owner to come and claim it (“until your brother seeks it”; Deut. 32:2). The Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael elaborates upon these words, “until your brother seeks it” (עַד דְּרִשׁ אֶחָיִךְ אֹתוֹ), with three statements:

Until your brother seeks: Until you seek out your brother.

Until your brother seeks: Until the public crier has gone around [announcing the discovery of the lost property].

Until your brother seeks it: You must investigate whether “your brother” is a deceiver or not a deceiver.

The most obvious interpretation of the words “until your brother seeks it” would take “your brother” as the subject of the action signified by “seeks,” so that the person doing the seeking is “your brother,” i.e., the owner. In this plain-sense reading of the text, the finder should keep the lost property in their home until the owner comes to seek it. The Mekhilta’s first statement, however, instead reads “your brother” as the object of seeking, and understands the finder as the subject: “until you (the finder) seek out your brother.” This reading becomes difficult when one tries to include the next word—“it”— in the translation, but the Mekhilta brackets that word for the purpose of this particular derash. Instead, the Mekhilta makes a point, insisting that the finder actively seek out the owner. What is the scope of this requirement? The Mekhilta elaborates further in its second and third comments: the finder must arrange for a public proclamation about the property, and once someone comes and alleges to be the owner, the finder is obligated to verify that that person is truly the owner and not a fraud. These obligations, which the Mekhilta states rather concisely, receive ample elaboration in the Mishnah and Tosefta, and even more in the Talmud, addressing details such as where, when, and how a finder ought to fulfill the obligation of public proclamation, and under what circumstances a person is considered a “deceiver.”

When compared to the Mekhilta and other rabbinic literature, the Torah’s laws of lost property place a relatively small burden of responsibility on the finder. According to Deuteronomy, the finder should either return the property directly, or hold onto it until the owner comes. The law in Parashat Mishpatim is even more succinct and specific: The finder must return their enemy’s lost property, with no further elaboration. There is no mention whatsoever in the Torah of public proclamation, nor does the Torah demand that the finder assess the credentials of a person claiming to be the owner. Rabbinic law gives the finder a good deal of work to do, well beyond what the Torah appears to envision. And beyond this, rabbinic law addresses a whole host of other questions that the Torah does not entertain: What kind of property should be returned? Can the finder ever keep the property? How long does the obligation to return lost property apply?

In order to arrive at a workable system for dealing with lost property, it is clear that one must look to halakhah, and not only at the law of the Torah. What, then, is the point of the Torah’s law here, if it is so incomprehensive with regard to details of how one might carry out its obligations in practice?

The very brevity of the lost property laws in the Torah, which the detailed character of our rabbinic sources throws into relief, may help us focus our attention on what the Torah does emphasize. Exodus 23:4 establishes a requirement to return property, specifically the property of one’s enemy (which one might be inclined not to return), amid a series of laws relating to the theme of justice; Deuteronomy states twice within three verses that one may not ignore the lost property, capping off the law with the statement that “you must not remain indifferent” (לֹא תִוָּקֵל לְהִתְעַלֵּם; Deut. 22:3). This, ultimately, is the Torah’s warning and plea: Even when it’s hard, whether because the owner of lost property is the finder’s enemy (as in Exodus) or because the owner lives far away (as in Deuteronomy), there is a right thing to do, and we are charged to do it.

It is easy to ignore lost property; after all, no one would ever know. But the Torah and Jewish law require a finder to go out of their way, even if it is difficult or inconvenient, and even if no one would ever know the difference. This is perhaps the crux of the Torah’s lost property law: though it would be easy to do nothing, we must not remain indifferent.

***Shabbat shalom,
Yael Landman***

*Dr. Yael Landman is assistant professor of Bible
at the Jewish Theological Seminary*

A TASTE OF SOUP 2025! SUNDAY
February 23
5:30 - 7:15 PM



ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT SOUP BUFFET!
MEAT & VEGETARIAN OPTIONS
GARLIC BREAD
SWEET TREATS

\$20/person registered by 2/12/25
\$22/person walk-ins
Kids under 5 are free!

[Register here](https://bit.ly/4hwumVV) by 2/12/25 or go to:
<https://bit.ly/4hwumVV>

or send payment with names attending to:
Traditional Congregation
12437 Ladue Road St Louis MO 63141
314-576-5230 www.traditional-congregation.org

Don't go home empty-handed!
\$5 per additional carry-out container

Walk-ins are welcome for
A Taste of Soup!
\$22/person
This Sunday, 5:30 PM!

Sunday, 3/2/25, 9:30 AM CST
UTJ Presents:
SACRED DUTY -
Spiritual Care in the 21st Century
Register at:
<https://utj.org/events/spiritual/>



The Union for Traditional Judaism

SACRED DUTY:
PROVIDING SPIRITUAL CARE
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Register at
www.utj.org/utj-events/spiritual

 Sunday March 2nd  10:30 AM EST
5:30 PM ISRAEL

Rabbi Andy Schultz Chaplain Margo Heda Rabbi Ben Vineburg



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Traditional Congregation Adult Education Committee presents:



IT AIN'T CHOPPED LIVER!!

Join us on **Sunday, March 9 at 10:00 AM** for bagels, cream cheese, etc., followed by a presentation regarding state of the art knowledge of Liver Diseases with **Dr. Mauricio Lisker**, Director of Hepatology at John Cochran VA Medical Center.



LEARN ABOUT:

Understanding Viral Hepatitis

Fatty Liver Disease: Conundrum between body weight and alcohol abuse

Impact of End-Stage Liver disease

Growing out of Control: Liver Cancer

Liver Transplantation: a realistic option

No charge;
share-the-fare donations appreciated

Please RSVP to Marian by 3/5:
314-576-5230 or traditionalcong@gmail.com

www.traditional-congregation.org
12437 Ladue Rd, St Louis MO 63141



2025 Florence Gaponoff Mother's Day Gift Bag Project

The greatest need is monetary donations
to purchase items.

- To donate, send check to Traditional Congregation
or go to:
<https://www.traditional-congregation.org/donate>
- Donate travel-size shampoo, conditioner, lotion,
soap/body wash, deodorant,
toothpaste, toothbrush, dental floss.
- Women's necklaces and bracelets in good, wearable
condition. *NO earrings, rings, watches, tarnished or
broken jewelry, please.*
- To donate the above items, bring to Traditional and
place in the wicker bin near the office door.
- Assembly date will be provided soon.

- *THANK YOU!*



PRAYER

All Israelites are siblings, responsible for one another.

If there be among you a needy person, do not harden your heart.

Shut not your hand to your needy siblings,
But surely open your hand to them.

*Blessed are they who consider the poor;
God will deliver them in days of evil.*

Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves,
For all who are threatened with destruction.

*They who shut their ears to the cry of the needy,
Shall one day cry themselves, and not be answered.*

They who give to the poor shall be blessed with abundance,
But they that hide their eyes shall themselves be in need.

*They that are gracious to the needy, honor their Maker,
But they that oppress the poor, blaspheme God.*

Let the poor rejoice in your joy; Share with them your blessings.

*Generous hearts shall be enriched, And they that
satisfy others shall be satisfied themselves.*

They who give when well, their gift is gold;
They who give only when ill, their gift is silver;
They who give only in their wills, their gift is copper.

*From You O God, comes our wealth,
And from Your own do we give You.*

Unknown

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Today I bent the truth to be kind and I have no regret, for I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true.

Robert Brault