

Mishpatim: These are the Laws from Sinai
[From Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l
by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

Parshas Mishpatim opens with the phrase 'And these are the laws you should place before them.' Rashi comments, based on Chazal, that the word connects to what is written before. In this case, the previous chapter was about the giving of the Torah by Hashem to Am Yisroel at Har Sinai. If the *vav* meaning 'and' was missing, it would imply a whole new subject, not directly related the immediately preceding subject.

My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt'l commented that there is a very deep message communicated with this phraseology of 'and these are the laws.' Firstly, Rashi states that we are to learn that all of Mishpatim as well as all of the laws of the Torah are from Har Sinai, whether the laws concern man and his/her relationship with Hashem and or his/her relationship with fellow man. The entire Torah is one body and all of it was given to us at Har Sinai. This is a very important concept and is commonly known in our Torah-oriented circles.

Rav Feinstein added another dimension to this concept. He explained that Har Sinai was the collective experience of seeing clearly that Hashem is the creator and complete master of the world. Hashem directs every single detail of the entire universe, from colossal cosmic events to the scattering of dust in the air. Furthermore, Hashem alone portions out every individual's share of what they will receive in this world. If one totally and wholeheartedly believes this, then he/she will not be tempted to violate any facet of theft or monetary law. After all, Hashem portions out what each one will get and there is no need to resort to anything in violation of Hashem's will. So stealing or violating any monetary law of the Torah shows a lack of faith in Hashem and his ability to grant whatever one needs in a legitimate way. [I would humbly add that if one feels that he/she is not getting everything that he/she should, one should ask Hashem for it. In the end, it will certainly accomplish more than trying to acquire it illegitimately.]

This is the meaning of connecting the two parshiyos. Har Sinai as well as the revelation described in Parshas Yisro is about complete faith in Hashem who revealed himself to us at Har Sinai. Mishpatim contains the details of Hashem's laws that we are to follow as his loyal servants.