

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



**Parsha:** Mishpatim

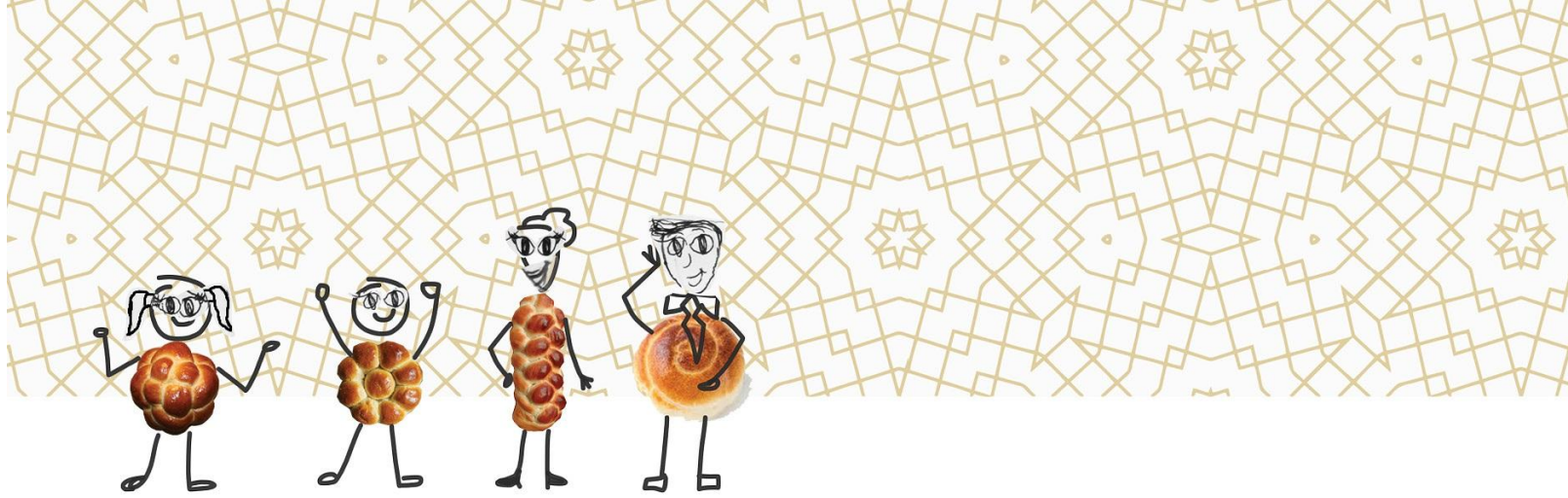
**Title:** Building a Society

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## The Parsha at First Glance

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

After receiving the Ten Commandments in last week's parsha, *Bnei Yisrael* are now ready to learn even more of God's laws/*mitzvot* - 53 new mitzvot to be exact! The parsha opens with this long list of mitzvot on a variety of different topics ranging from how to deal with damaged property to holiday observance. We then



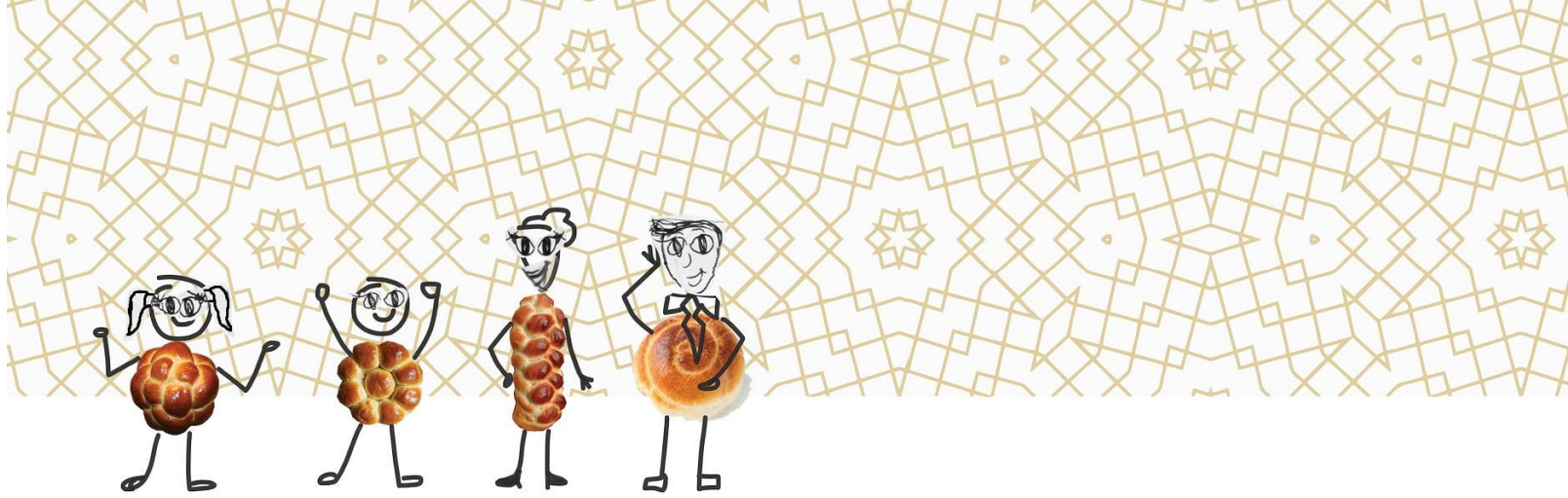
see that Moshe tells all these new laws to Bnei Yisrael and they reply: “All the words that God has spoken, we will do.” At this point Moshe writes down all the words of God in a book referred to as the *Sefer HaBrit*, the Book of the Covenant. Again, Moshe teaches all of God’s words to Bnei Yisrael but this time reading it from the book he wrote. To this, Bnei Yisrael reply: “Everything that God has spoken, we will do and we will listen/obey!”

### Zooming In:

The majority of the new laws presented in Parshat Mishpatim teach Bnei Yisrael how to interact with each other, *mitzvot bein adam l’chavero*. From laws about slavery, murder, honoring your parents and lending money to prohibitions about lying, stealing and mistreating animals, these mitzvot begin to lay out the groundwork for a functioning society. While there are many more mitzvot to come in later *parshiyot*, this is the longest list so far that we’ve seen and our first major glimpse into God’s plan for and expectations of the lives Bnei Yisrael will lead as a free people. For example: we learn in this parsha that if a person borrows something from another person and the object gets lost or damaged, the borrower is responsible to pay back the owner. Through mitzvot like these we start to see how God wants us to behave amongst each other, how we are expected to treat each other, even in complicated social situations, and how we’re meant to live our lives with one another on a daily basis.

### Questions for Consideration:

- Why is it important to have clear interpersonal laws when setting up a new society?
- What laws do you think are most important for teaching a big group of people how to live with each other?



## The Parsha Through Another Lens

### Game On:

PLEASE NOTE: This activity requires writing.

Imagine you had to lay the groundwork for creating a functional home/community. Where would you begin? What kind of community would you try to build? What laws would you choose?

With your family/group, create a list of at least 10 laws *bein adam l'chavero* that you think are fundamental for creating your society. Each person should cut a piece of paper into strips and write down each law onto a strip of paper. Everyone will then arrange their laws in order of importance. Afterwards, each person will share their list. How are the lists similar? How are they different? Is there any law that you would personally add, remove or change from the list?

## Shabbat Shalom!