

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



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When we think of Parshat Mishpatim we think of laws. Those versed in Gemara may view this Parsha as the laws of Masechet Baba Kama coming to life. Yet, if you translate the word Mishpatim to modern day Hebrew, the simple translation is “sentences.”

I have been thinking about how this relates to our upcoming elections. So much of what can make or break a politician or political party are the sentences that come out of their mouths or that are written on their social media accounts. The way someone speaks says volumes about their relationship to the laws and their relationships with others.

In this election we have many parties running for Knesset, and it is beautiful that so many people want to take the difficult yoke of leadership upon themselves. It is also beautiful to recognize that in their heart of hearts each of them is passionate about the Jewish people and wants to help shape the State of Israel. Yet, with so many people and so much passion, we need to

be vigilant to keep the elections on the up and up.

After four elections and endless demonstrations, these elections could lead to animosity or hard feelings between Jews of different views. In the upcoming weeks we will hear a lot about the various parties’ platforms. While a difference of opinion is fine, and even praiseworthy, we need to share our opinions in a respectful manner. As we embark upon this round of elections I challenge all of us to demand of ourselves and the politicians to provide an election which uses positive language and sentiments. Whether you are hosting or attending a parlor meeting, writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, or sharing your thoughts on social media, let’s all focus what is good about the candidates we support as opposed to the negative aspects of their opponents.

As I have written about previously, the OU is apolitical. But, we do encourage everyone to exercise their democratic right and go out to vote. Most people simply say OU when referring to our organization, yet the full name Orthodox Union is derived from the value of unity. At the heart of all of our programs around the world is Jewish unity, and this election provides us – the English-speaking population in Israel – with the opportunity to spread this message. It is important for our voices to be heard and for us to share the needs of



our community with the politicians, but we need to set an example with the tone of voice and sentences we choose to use.

One of the beautiful aspects of election season is the ability to bring the unique needs of the Anglo community to the forefront. A tool that political parties use is having representatives from the different Olim communities on their ballots, and we are included in the mix. Each of us have different wishes and needs. Some feel that the government needs to provide additional help for lone soldiers, others feel that the teens and youth should be at the forefront, and others feel we need more English adult programming in communities throughout Israel. Anglos who had to wait a long time for their academic or vocational degrees to be recognized in Israel will want to share the need for the process to be much faster, while Anglos dealing with medical challenges will want more English services within the Kupot Cholim. Let's take advantage of this election to advocate for our needs while focusing on the positives of the political process, but let's also take advantage of this election to hold our politicians to a high level.

A leader must set a personal example. This can be seen with the Eved Ivri (Hebrew slave). Someone who steals needs to be taken in by a positive role model. He becomes the slave for someone who is tasked with the responsibility of teaching him how to behave properly. When the Eved Ivri stole he acted in a way that demonstrated he did not care about his fellow Jew, and the goal of his servitude is for him to internalize acting in a way that is befitting of an Eved

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Hashem (servant of G-D).

While Mishpatim provides us with the laws for our lives, it also provides us with a reminder that our speech and positive attitude are integral components in our lives. I pray that this reminder leads us and those running for positions of political power to hold elections which integrate both aspects of Mishpatim.

Avi

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