

Rush Not to Judgment

written by Ozer Bergman
February 6, 2024



Generally speaking, we don't think to connect the end of one *parshah* (weekly Torah reading) with the beginning of the next. The Midrash, however, does. The end of *Parshat Yitro* teaches us that the *mizbeach* (Altar) was to be ascended by a ramp rather than by steps. The beginning of *Parshat Mishpatim* begins with, and deals throughout, with civil and criminal law. Life being what it is, both will require learned judgment for *mishpat* (justice) to be served. What lesson is to be learned from the juxtaposition of these disparate areas of Torah life?

The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Mishpatim* #6) tells us that walking up (or down) a ramp takes more time than walking steps. Just as walking a ramp is slower and takes more patience than walking stairs, so too, judges must be patient and deliberate before deciding the verdict in a court case.

And each of us as well, in the courtroom of his mind, needs to be careful and deliberate before making a judgment about himself or a fellow Jew.