



“I am not religious, but I try to be a very good person”.

It is quite amazing how many people have given that sentiment to me about themselves.

But I have a message for them.

They might think that they are not religious and indeed they are not totally religious, but they are far more religious than they think.

And why do I say that?

Well, it all goes back to a single letter at the beginning of the portion of Mishpatim.

‘V’ele hamishpatim asher tasim lifneihem’ – and these are the ordinances that you must place before the people.

That’s what Moses was commanded to do by Hashem.

It is so unusual for a sentence to start with ‘and’. Here an entire portion is starting with ‘and’.

And why is that the case?

Rashi brings the words of our sages who explain last week’s portion which is behind us of Yitro, was all about our encounter with God at Mount Sinai.

There we were given the Ten Commandments – and this week’s portion of Mishpatim ahead of us is all about our responsibility to our fellow human beings.

How to be upright, how to be honest, how to be a person of integrity – a decent human being.

The ‘Vav’ – that ‘and’ – in the middle brings them all together to show, ‘mah-ellu missinai af ellu missinai’.

Just as in Yitro, our relationship with God was given to us at Mount Sinai, so too, the expectations the Almighty has of us, with regard to our responsibility to others, that too was given at Mount Sinai.

Sometimes people say, ‘oh there are two categories of Jewish Law’, Bein adam la-makom and Bein adam la-chavero, between ourselves and God and between ourselves and others.

It’s not really the case.

There is just one single code, because our responsibility towards others, the compassion we should have and our decency within society – that is an integral part of our relationship with Hashem.

So, if you are one of those people who says that you are not religious, but you try to be a very good person, there are two things I would like to say to you.

First of all, you are far more religious than you think you are.

And secondly, why not try the rest?

Be fully religious and I promise, you will discover that it will be absolutely life changing.

You will have a pathway towards happy, fulfilling, and meaningful living.

Shabbat Shalom.