



דרכים בפרשה

שפטים



שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך לשבטיך ושפטו את העם משפט צדק. לא תטה משפט לא תכיר פנים ולא תקח שחד *You shall appoint judges and officials for yourself, in all the gates that the Hashem your G-d is giving you for your tribes, and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no partiality; and you shall not take bribes.*

The parsha begins with the mitzvah to appoint judges and the establishment of a court system. The pesukim go on to give various *halachos* about how a *dayan* is meant to *pasken*: fairly, impartial, and without accepting bribery. In the first possuk, the Torah uses the words **תתן לך** – “for yourself” which is a singular term/ *lashon yachid*. But are we not talking about everyone here?

The Beis Yisroel and the Darash Moshe both explain that the possuk is not only talking about the appointment of judges for all but also for each and every person, that everyone must judge himself. We must ask ourselves the following question: Do all of my actions align with the will of HaShem? Are they good or not, do they meet with the Torah's expectations or not? Just as a judge hears both sides of a case, so too must he judge himself from both angles, good or no good. The first step is **שפטים** - be a judge! The possuk then continues to the next step and that is **שטרים** - be a police man. After we decide what must be done and the proper actions to follow, we must now become a policeman and make sure to carry it out.

לא תטה משפט - *You shall not judge unfairly*- many things can alter a person's judgement – make sure you decide correctly. **לא תכיר פנים** - No favoritism. Just as in judgement both people are looked at evenly irrespective of what the status is of Reuven or Shimon, so too a person shouldn't look at himself and say, because I am a talmid chacham; askan; baal tzedakka; doctor; lawyer etc. you name it, therefore I can cut myself some slack. **לא**

תכיר - break down every din, and rule without *negiyus* (personal bias).

ולא תקח שחד - *I cannot take a bribe*- I must look away from the pleasures and benefits that these actions promise to bring which seem to try and entice me to sway my moral compass. We must be a *dayan*, *shofeit* and *shoter* on ourselves in the purest sense.

Returning now to the first possuk, **בכל שעריך** - *shaar* can be a reference to the Mishna in avos (4:16) - רבי יעקב אומר, העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני - העולם הבא. התקן עצמך בפרוזדור, כדי שתכנס לטרקלין - Rabi Yaacov said: this world is like a vestibule before the world to come; prepare yourself in the vestibule, so that you may enter the banqueting-hall. The Mishna is referring to life in *olam hazeh* which is preparation for *olam haba*, but the problem is that we tend to forget about the main reason why we came. This world is just a *prosdor*. Therefore says our possuk, **בכל שעריך**, with all your actions in the entrance chamber, appoint a guard there at the gate, to see to it that it shall grant us admission into *olam haba*.

The Beis yisroel continues that this is especially important and relevant here at the beginning of the month of Elul because the month of Elul is actually the *prosdor* that can prepare us and lead us to that *traklin* which in our case now is Rosh Hashana. This mitzvah of *shoftim* is so important now because Elul is the preparatory ground needed to stand in front of HaShem on Rosh Hashana, taking a *cheshbon hanefesh* on our actions from the previous year, thus ensuring that

we can in fact enter properly into the *traklin* of Rosh Hashana. In this manner, we will surely be zoche to be granted a good year.

The Sfas Emes develops this thought a step further: a *shofet*- He must judge his own actions to see if they sit with the *ratzon* of the torah. A *shoter*- he must become a policeman. At times, our intelligence does not agree with the Torah and our minds seem to contradict it, thereby making it tough to commit. So the *shoter* steps up and acts like a policeman to enforce the litigants to follow the law. A person must force themselves to follow even when not in agreement for whatever the reason.

In recent times, we all had the opportunity to observe how certain officials would act. Many things did not make sense and still don't, but those that faithfully performed their jobs did not differentiate; they had a job to do. So too, if the Torah says something, we must be that policeman that doesn't waver and enforces the rules.

These two details represent two aspects of the way in which we relate to HaShem. סור מרע ועשה - stray from evil and do good. The first step is טוב מרע - often our body and physical needs are at odds with the will of HaShem. *Shoter* is the part of the *avoda* which is to take the body and force it against the will to adapt and subjugate one's self to the will of HaShem. The second part is the עשה טוב - *do good*- I may not be able to agree yet, but I do see the beauty of the torah and that the correct way is by following *ratzon Hashem*. The *asei tov* is the *shofet* getting to the bottom of the *halacha* to see that HaShem agrees.

This month is called אלול - Elul, which can be broken up into two words - לא and לו - "to him" and "no".

In מזמור לתודה (Tehillim 100) we say- דעו כי ה' הוא אלקים הוא עשנו ולא [ולו] אנהנו עמו וצאן מרעיתו. The possuk has a *kri and kesiv* (the reading and writing are inconsistent), ולא [ולו] - no and to him.

The Sfas Emes so beautifully explains that both are true. ולא [ולו] אנהנו - as much as I manage to pull myself away from being only for me, myself and I, in exactly that measure this person is for HaShem- to Him. ולא אנהנו - by demonstrating that the focus is not on us, we are actually simultaneously showing that the focus instead is on HaShem, therefore ולו אנהנו - we are to Him.

That is the month of Elul. One must be *mevateil* himself when it comes to the will of HaShem; he must completely take himself out of the picture. As much as a person can manage to take himself out of the picture that is the amount that he is for Hashem.

Elul is about- the "double lo"- לא and לו. In order to employ both, - first is the לא - *bittul* of one's self, and the לו - raising ourselves up to for HaShem will be an automatic.

עמו וצאן מרעיתו - *His people, the flock he tends*. Chazal say (Tana d'bei Eliyahu) אשרי אדם שמשחק - עצמו בד"ת ויושב והורש בהם כבהמה שחורשת בשדה - Praiseworthy is a person that sits and delves into the torah like an animal that is plowing the fields. Just as an animal, while doing the work for his master, knows only one thing, and that is the will of his master, so too Klal Yisroel- when we learn Torah, when we daven, we are taking ourselves out of the equation and then we can be totally to HaShem.

Finally, we find this concept of Elul also expressed in that which Chazal tell us, אני לדודי, ודודי לי. As much as one fulfills the first half, אני לדודי - I am to my Beloved, then, ודודי לי. As much as I develop my existence to be here for HaShem, then I can be zoche to be elevated and feel totally for HaShem.,

That is the focus of Elul leading up to the *traklin* of the *yomim noraim*. May we be zoche to utilize the combination of לא and לו thus causing לי לדודי.

מרדכי אפפעל, Good Shabbos,



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