

# PARASHAT SHOFTIM

## שום תשים עליך מלך

כתוב בפסוק (יז:טו) "שום תשים עליך מלך אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו מקרב אחיך". מפרשי התורה שואלים, למה כעס שמואל הנביא על בני ישראל כשאמרו (שמואל א' ח:ו) "תנה לנו מלך", הרי זו ממצוות התורה? הכתב סופר פירש, שלכך כעס שמואל על ישראל' כי כשביקשו תנה לנו מלך, אמרו (שם פסוק ה') "עתה שימה לנו מלך לשפטנו ככל הגוים". הרי שלא רצו מלך לקיים מצוות התורה, אלא כוונתם היתה להיות "ככל הגוים", ולכך כעס עליהם שמואל.

## Judging Fairly

The Pasuk at the beginning of this week's Parashah states: "You shall place judges and policemen in all your gates, and they shall judge the people justly". This Pasuk is a command directed at the Beit Din [Jewish Court]. That being the case, the grammatical structure of the Pesukim seems odd. The Torah begins by saying that you (the nation) should appoint judges. We would expect the continuation to be "They (the appointed judges) should not show favoritism, take bribes, etc." Instead the Torah continues to use the second person: "You should not show favoritism, you should not take bribes, etc." Rav Nissan Alpert zt"l suggests the following interpretation. The Torah is not just talking to official judges on the Beit Din, it is talking to each and every Jew. Everyone in life is a judge. We are almost constantly judging. When we meet someone, the first thing that we do is judge him. We are confident based on the way a person looks or dresses -- that we are 100% accurate in our judgment. We tend to think we have him pegged perfectly. The Torah is acknowledging this phenomenon and telling us "You -- all of you -- are inevitably going to judge; but just like judges have an obligation to judge fairly, not take bribes or be influenced by outside events -- every Jew has that obligation. We are all judges charged with being fair, and not jumping to conclusions.

## A Different Perspective

In this week's Parashah the Torah teaches us a very important concept regarding our approach to what our Rabbi's tell us. The Pasuk states (17:11): "according to the teaching that they will teach you and according to the judgment that they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left." Rashi quotes the words of the Sifri: "even if he says to you about right that it is left, and about left that it is right." Every person is required to listen to the Torah sages of his generation. Even if at times it may seem to us that their advice isn't correct, nevertheless we are supposed to have Emunat Chachamim – faith in our Torah sages. We need to believe that they see things from a different perspective, a clearer perspective, and they are correct. Rav Yechezkel Abramsky zt"l explains this idea with a parable: There was a man who wanted to test the eyesight of his friends, he took a board made a mark on it and placed it one hundred feet away. "Who can see what is on this board?" he asked them. The first person looked at the board and saw nothing, because he had very poor eyesight and could only see thirty feet away. The second friend also saw nothing, because although his eyesight was better than the first man, he could only see eighty feet away. Finally one of his friends who had stronger vision and could see over a hundred feet away was able to

see the mark on the board. So it is with our Torah sages, Hashem has granted them special vision, yes we may be able to see clearly, but they can see even clearer.