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JUDGES FOR MIDDOT AND OFFICERS FOR THOUGHTS

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

It is written, "Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities" (Devarim 16:18).

We need to understand what the Torah is teaching us here that is new. It is clear and obvious that in order to function properly, every country needs judges and officers to enforce the law, and that all its inhabitants must comply with the rules and regulations of the land. Thus logic necessarily requires the institution of judges and officers. Yet in that case, why must the Torah command us to do so?

To me it seems that the Torah is warning us here against the evil inclination. It is asking us to appoint judges and officers for ourselves in order to avoid the advice of our evil inclination. In fact if we fail to place judges over our desires, and if we do not restrain our passions, we are liable to be swept away by the current of our desires and fall into the abyss.

The evil inclination tricks us into following the wrong path, making us feel that there is nothing to fear or worry about. Using sweet words, it subtly leads us toward our downfall. And if we awaken from our stupor and want to repent, it may already be too late: We are already so immersed in the material world, overcome by our desires, that it becomes very difficult to extricate ourselves from it. Hence the Torah demands: "Judges and officers shall you appoint" – they will watch over us and help us remain rational so we do not fall into the traps of the evil inclination and its ticks.

We can now explain the verse, "You shall surely set over yourself a king" (Devarim 17:15). The holy Torah is called a "king;" it is the crown of Creation. Hashem demands that the Torah enlighten our steps. It must guide us in all our ways and be our king and leader. For this to happen, we must appoint judges and officers over ourselves, and we must not let the evil inclination come near. Rabbi Chaim Vital interpreted the verse, "Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities" (Devarim 16:18) in the following way: "We have several gates that open onto the world: That of sight, which corresponds to the eyes; that of odor, which corresponds to the nose; that of hearing, which corresponds to the ears; and that of speech, which corresponds to the mouth. We must lock these gates by placing 'judges and officers' there. We must establish barriers at each of our gates, so that our eyes do not look upon forbidden sights, so that our ears do not listen to gossip or slander, so that our nose does not smell the perfumes of depravity, and so that our mouth does not utter forbidden or frivolous words. Finally, we must watch over all our deeds and not go to any place that leads to sin. Whoever acts in this way and appoints judges and officers over himself to protect all his bodily members from sin is mentioned by the

verse: 'Open the gates so that the righteous nation, keeper of the faith, may enter' [Isaiah 26:2]. G-d will act measure for measure with such a person, for just as he establishes officers for himself to control his gates, likewise Hashem will open the gates of Heaven for him, the 310 worlds."

We must also appoint officers to act against our bad middot in order to prevent us from growing proud or feeling superior to others, for G-d despises pride. Furthermore, whoever acts with self-importance is not accepted by others, and even his closest relatives do not appreciate him. This is a great principle in regard to peace in the home: If a man feels proud and better than his wife, if he feels superior and believes that everyone must listen to him, he ruins the peace in his home and destroys himself. However if he has the wisdom to act with humility toward his wife, and he asks for forgiveness when he hurts her feelings, he thereby establishes his home and builds it in peace. In the latter case, G-d is also pleased and resides among them, as it is written: "If husband [ish] and wife [ishah] merit it, the Shechinah rests upon them" (Sotah 17a). In regard to this subject, at the wedding of my dear son Rabbi Moshe Aharon, I found an answer to a question that I had been asking myself: When we recite the blessing "in Whose abode there is joy," why is there rejoicing in Heaven when people get married? For what reason does joy reside in G-d's abode? I believe that the answer is because there is good reason to rejoice. In fact human nature inclines a person to want to rule over and dominate others, and during the wedding ceremony, when a man declares to his wife: "By this ring you are consecrated to me," she immediately comes under his dominion, entering under his protection and belonging to him. At that very moment, she becomes forbidden to every man except her husband. There is no greater act of submission and self-sacrifice than this. In fact she is annulling herself and submitting to her husband. Likewise, when the groom breaks the glass and says: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill" (Tehillim 137:5), he recalls the destruction of the Temple, which was caused by baseless hatred, and he realizes that if he wants to preserve the integrity of his home and prevent it from being destroyed, he must demonstrate humility and modesty before his wife, distancing himself from pride and hatred. Even if she hurts him, he must make an effort to remain humble, to yield, and to forgive. He must go beyond himself and keep no grudge, harbor no hatred. When Heaven sees that one yields to the other, that both make concessions and agree to live in love, friendship, peace, and harmony, great joy is born in Heaven and extends to all the supernal worlds, for peace is essential to G-d. Hence at a wedding, we recite the blessing "in Whose abode there is joy."

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For Joy to be Complete

It is written, “You shall rejoice before Hashem your G-d – you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, the Levite who is in your cities, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow who are among you” (Devarim 16:11).

There is a well-known Midrash which states that G-d said, “Four of Mine [the Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow], corresponding to four of yours [your son, your daughter, your slave, and your maidservant]. If you rejoice Mine, I will rejoice yours.” The pain of a child growing up in a home where he can hear the voice of his parents cannot be compared to the suffering of orphans and widows. There is no way of comforting the pain and suffering of the latter, who experience pain on a daily basis. This is especially true during holidays, when their loss is felt to an even greater extent and pierces the heart. Hence G-d enjoins us to rejoice “Mine.” In that case, our blessing is guaranteed: “If you rejoice Mine, I will rejoice yours.”

The book Rosh Devarecha recounts the story of Rav Ben Zion Hevron Levi: A yeshiva student was about to be married, but unfortunately he lost his father about two weeks before the wedding. The Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Avraham Shapira, participated in the wedding by dancing much longer than he normally would, doing so in order to rejoice the groom, who was feeling both pain and joy. He therefore brought him joy, and everyone noticed the prolonged presence of the Rav, who then headed toward the elevator in order to leave. Yet as soon as he reached the front door, he suddenly stopped and said: “I didn’t say Mazel Tov to his mother!”

He therefore headed back, took the elevator up to the hall, and asked to speak to the mother of the groom, who was told that Rav Shapira wanted to see her.

Filled with emotion, she quickly went over to see the Rav, and with a face beaming with joy he said to her: “Mazel Tov to the mother! Mazel Tov to the mother!” Of course it is impossible to describe what the groom and his mother, a widow, felt on that night, so happy they were to have merited the Rav’s presence at their celebration, as well as his personal participation in such a fatherly way.

But He’s an Orphan

The Rav of Eilat, Rabbi Yair Hadai, also witnessed a similar incident involving Rav Avraham Shapira:

“I once accompanied Rav Shapira to two weddings that took place on the same day, both scheduled for before nightfall. The Rav was bothered by the fact that both weddings would take place at around the same time, for he would be forced to run from one to another. He therefore warned me that as soon as one Chuppah ended, we would head to the second wedding without delay, which is precisely what we did. At the end of the first Chuppah, we headed for the second wedding, which the Rav was also able to celebrate before nightfall. He then danced a little before the groom prior to heading back home. Before that could happen, however, he suddenly said to me: ‘What if we return to the first wedding?’

“Surprised, I asked why.”

“‘To rejoice the groom,’ he said, ‘since I didn’t have time to do it properly.’

“I replied, ‘But the fact that you participated in the Chuppah made him extremely happy!’

“The Rav then looked at me and said with such sincerity that there was no need for further discussion: ‘But he’s an orphan.’”

Still on this subject, the story is told of an orphan who had grown up in a family of a Torah scholar who was very close to a Rosh Yeshiva and would often visit him. Understanding his situation, Rav Avraham Shapira always welcomed this orphan with a warm and welcoming smile. When the orphan later married and had children, he would customarily bring them to see the Rav and sometimes accompany him to the offices of the Chief Rabbi. Wanting to bring him joy, Rav Shapira asked his driver to take the children “for a tour in the car.”

Along the same lines, it is said that a young man who studied at the Halacha Berurah center unfortunately died. The young man was already fatherless, and only his elderly mother, a widow, was left to mourn for him, broken by the loss of her only son. An avrech took it upon himself to take care of her and ease her pain, but she was inconsolable.

One day, while she was still sitting shiva, this avrech received a telephone call from the widow. She said to him, “I’ll give you a thousand dollars if you can guess who came to see me. Rav Avraham Shapira! His visit meant the world to me!”

At the time, Rav Shapira was in the last year of his life, being more than 90 years old. Despite his advanced age, however, he spared no effort. He traveled to the home of the grieving widow, where he climbed the stairs in order to console and provide her with a little encouragement.

Like I Still Had a Father

One day, an orphan who was a student in the yeshiva of Rabbi Aharon Cohen (a Rosh Yeshiva of Hevron) came to tell him that he had gotten engaged. After wishing him Mazel Tov, the Rav learned that the student’s financial situation was very precarious. He therefore asked him, “Did you offer your fiancée a gift yet?” He replied that he hadn’t.

The Rav then told him outright: “Go to such-and-such a jewelry store, select a gold watch, and offer it to her. I’ll take care of paying for it.”

Afterwards the student confided to someone: “At that point, I felt like I still had a father.”

Guard Your Tongue

He Removes the Evil Inclination

Our Sages have said, “If one comes to purify himself, he is helped” [Shabbat 104a]. In such a case, it is certain that Hashem will help him not to be drawn to forbidden words, just as Jews are not drawn to the consumption of pork. In fact when we make an effort in a given area of Torah, Hashem removes the evil inclination in that very area, as the Midrash states (Parsha Nasso): “If you make a great effort for this, G-d removes the evil inclination from you.”

Let Him Repent

It is written, “By the testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses shall the condemned person be put to death. He shall not be put to death by the testimony of a single witness” (Devarim 17:6).

In the Jerusalem Talmud, it is written: “They asked wisdom, ‘What is the punishment of the sinner?’ Wisdom replied, ‘Evil pursues sinners’ [Mishlei 13:21]. They asked prophecy, ‘What is the punishment of the sinner?’ Prophecy replied, ‘The soul that sins, it shall die’ [Ezekiel 18:4]. Then they asked the Holy One, blessed be He: ‘What is the punishment of the sinner?’ He replied, ‘Let him repent and he will find atonement’” (Makkot 2:6).

It was according to this explanation that Rabbi Avraham of Mikaliev interpreted the verse from this week’s parsha: “By the testimony of two witnesses,” these being the opinions of wisdom and prophesy – or even “three witnesses,” by adding the opinion of the Torah (“the condemned person [shall] be put to death”) – the sinner is to die. Even when he can bring an offering, what can he do when the Temple no longer stands, or when he does not have the means to bring an offering? In that case, “He shall not be put to death by the testimony of a single witness.” According to Hashem, the sinner must not die. He must simply repent: “Let him repent and he will find atonement.”

Without Fear

It is written, “Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted?” (Devarim 20:8).

The Rambam encourages those who go out to wage war for Israel as follows: “To whom does the phrase, ‘Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted’ refer? The phrase should be interpreted simply, as applying to a person whose heart is not brave enough to withstand the throes of battle. Once a soldier enters the throes of battle, he should rely on the hope of Israel and their Savior in times of need. He should realize that he is fighting for the sake of the oneness of G-d’s Name. He should therefore place his soul in His hand and not show fright or fear. He should not worry about his wife or children. On the contrary, he should wipe their memory from his heart, removing all thoughts from his mind except the battle.

“Anyone who begins to feel anxious and worry in the midst of battle, to the point where he frightens himself, violates a negative commandment, as it is written: ‘Let your heart not be faint. Do not be afraid. Do not panic, and do not be broken before them’ [Devarim 20:3]. Furthermore, he is responsible for the blood of the entire Jewish nation. If he is not valiant – if he does not wage war with all his heart and soul – it is considered as if he shed the blood of the entire people, as it states: ‘Let him go and return to his house, and let him not melt the heart of his fellows, like his heart’ [v.8]. ... In contrast, anyone who fights with his entire heart, without fear, with the intention of sanctifying G-d’s Name alone, can be assured that he will find no harm, nor will evil overtake him. He will be granted a proper family in Israel and gather merit for himself and his children forever” (Hilchot Melachim 7:15).

Loving What is Good

It is written, “Do not destroy its trees” (Devarim 20:19).

The Sefer HaChinuch explains the meaning of this mitzvah: It comes “to teach our souls to love what is good and useful, and to subsequently cleave to it. Through this, good will cleave to us and we will distance ourselves from all evil and waste. This is the way of people of good deeds, who love peace, rejoice in the good of creation, and bring everyone closer to Torah. They do not destroy anything – not even a mustard seed – and it troubles them to encounter any waste or harm. If they can act to save anything from destruction, they use their entire strength to do so.

“The wicked on the other hand – like the forces of destruction – do not act in this way. They rejoice in ruining the world and causing destruction. Yet G-d deals with man measure for measure, and this for always, as it is written: ‘One who rejoices in misfortune will not be exonerated’ [Proverbs 17:5]. One

who seeks good and rejoices in it, his soul will cleave to good for eternity” (Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 529).

Tam and Tamim

It is written, “You shall be wholehearted [tamim] with Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 18:13).

Rabbi Ilai asks, “What is the difference between tam and tamim?” He responds, “With Abraham it is written, ‘Walk before Me and be tamim [wholehearted]’ [Bereshith 17:1]. With Jacob, who was already perfect, it is written: ‘And Jacob was a tam [innocent] man’ [ibid. 25:27]. Why was he called an innocent man? Because no waste was left with him.”

The Rosh Yeshiva said, “Each time that the term tamim is used, it is mentioned in regard to the sacred [covenant of] circumcision. Since Noah observed the covenant, he was called ‘tamim in his generation’ [Bereshith 6:9], which was the not the case for his peers, who had corrupted themselves. It was for this reason that ‘Noah walked with G-d’ [ibid.]. Now who can walk with Hashem? The Divine Presence allies itself and dwells with one who guards the sacred covenant. Thus, ‘You shall be wholehearted [tamim] with Hashem your G-d’ – be tamim, and then you will be united with Hashem. When a person observes the covenant, he will be with G-d and not part from Him.”

In the Light of the Parsha

Hashem is King

It is written, “You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem your G-d will choose” (Devarim 17:15).

Why did G-d command the Children of Israel to appoint a king? If one were to say, “in order to administer justice to them,” we would respond that administering justice was for the judges and elders, not for the king. Furthermore, have we ever seen the servant of one king yielding to another king? Whoever does so would be considered a traitor and condemned to death. Why then are the Jewish people allowed to set a human king over themselves, since G-d already told them: “I am Hashem your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery” (Shemot 20:2), and “For the Children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants, whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt – I am Hashem your G-d” (Vayikra 25:55)? In reality, the Torah wants G-d to reign over us, which is why it uses the singular: “You shall surely set over yourself a king.” In other words, it is up to each individual to establish a master – Who happens to be Hashem – over himself, not that the entire Jewish people should yield to a king other than Hashem. In fact Hashem commanded the Children of Israel to establish a king in order to serve as an example of a king in this world, so they would learn to fear Hashem as they feared their king. As Rabbi Yochanan said to his disciples, “May the fear of Heaven be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood” (Berachot 28b). In fact the Ralbag states that in the time of Samuel, Hashem became angry with the Children of Israel because they wanted to appoint a king for themselves and institute new laws as they saw fit. The Ralbag writes, “All the elders of Israel gathered together and went to see Samuel at Rama, where they asked him to give them a king who would rule over them, like all the other nations. However they erred, for the Children of Israel are not like the other nations, which are ruled by kings who establish laws according to their whims. Hence the Torah demands, ‘If the Children of Israel want to be ruled by a king like all the surrounding nations, let them choose one of their brothers who is committed to the fulfillment of Torah and acts in accordance with it, not with other standards.’ Hence the Torah commands the king to write a Sefer Torah for himself, in addition to the one he already possessed prior to being appointed king, so it is constantly with him and he regularly studies from it in order to govern his attitude according to Torah laws. It is for this reason that Samuel was upset by the request of the elders, and it is why he told them that the Jewish people have one and only King: G-d Himself. Even Hashem told Samuel that the Children of Israel were attempting to distance themselves from the ways of Torah, telling him: ‘They have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them’ [I Samuel 8:7].”

The Faithful Ones - Accounts from the Tzaddikim of the Pinto Family

The Hilloula of the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto

For the Hilloula of Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto, the father of our teacher Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita, we shall cite some amazing stories that highlight the character and conduct of the tzaddik. These stories have been drawn from the lectures of our teacher, lectures in which he shared the light of the Torah and exceptional character traits of his father, may his merit protect us.

From Heaven, it was decided that the Hilloula of my father, Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto – a man accustomed to miracles, and a symbol and example of the saying, “Who are the true kings? The rabbis” – should occur in this week’s parsha. My father always reigned over his desires and completely mastered them, and he was far removed from the pleasures of this world.

The Torah gives a detailed description of how a Jewish king must conduct himself: “Vehaya [And it shall be] when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this Torah” (Devarim 17:18). The term Vehaya is formed by the same letters as the Tetragrammaton. This means that only the Holy One, blessed be He, has the right to glorify Himself of His throne, not a king of flesh and blood, who is alive today but in the grave tomorrow.

Now just as a king must set an example and serve as a symbol for his people, likewise every Rav who leads his community and every talmid chacham who guides those around him must set an example for them, an example through his pleasing conduct, which conforms to the way of the Torah. Thus by his elevated character traits, he will serve as a symbol that the faithful aspire to, and they will yearn to walk in the right path as well. I have heard that when the Germans led the holy Rebbe of Alexander Zatzal and his students to the ovens, he arose and spoke with great emotion to them, saying: “Know that we shall now sanctify the Name of G-d in this world, which is why you must concentrate in purity solely upon the cause of all causes. Be very careful not to let any strange ideas enter your mind – ideas that would render them impure as an offering – so that our bodies may ascend as an offering worthy of being a pleasing odor to Hashem.” This is how they headed toward death, with the Rebbe at their lead.

The holy Rebbe thus led his followers on the path of holiness. This is, “You shall surely set over yourself a king” (Devarim 17:15), namely that a king should know how to lead the people at all times and every moment, and that he should always stand at the head of the camp to lead and show them the way. Whether it be in times of joy or tragedy, the eyes of the entire community should turn to him and anticipate his every word.

True, today we no longer have kings or prophets, much to our regret. Yet in His great kindness, Hashem has not abandoned His heritage. In each generation, He has placed righteous and pious men of great moral standing, men from whom we can learn the right path to follow. The talmidei chachamim are also called kings, as it is written: ‘From where do you learn that the rabbis are called kings?’ [Gittin 62a]. In fact they also know how to reign and govern, which is demonstrated by the fact that they dominate and master their evil inclination. We can all learn from their example and understand which path to follow in serving Hashem.

Rabbi Shimon’s Response

My father, may his merit protect us, lived his entire life in extreme poverty. He was so poor, in fact, that my older sister told me that as a child, she had to be satisfied with a slice of bread and a little tea, for my father had no way of purchasing milk or dairy products. One day, when her hunger pangs were particularly severe, she asked my father for something to eat. He then sent her to the neighbor to ask for food. Yet despite the great poverty in the house, he was always happy with his lot and thanked Hashem for all that He gave him. As we know, my father did not leave his house for 40 years, being completely detached from material concerns.

My father’s greatest trait was his humility, which was truly a crown upon his head. May his merit protect us, my father never considered himself as important in the spiritual realm. Throughout his life, he was very careful in regard to pride, acting humbly and modestly with everyone. That is why he merited seeing the prophet Eliyahu several times and possessing Ruach Hakodesh.

In fact humility is incredibly valuable, for through humility a person reaches the heights of spirituality, to the point of possessing Ruach Hakodesh.

I would like to recount a story about my father Zatzal that I heard from Mr. Shlomo Weitzman. Around the year 5728, my father traveled to Israel and stayed with Mr. Weitzman. One night my father said to his host, “I want to travel to Meron now, to the grave of Rabbi Shimon, may his merit protect us. I want to ask him for permission to move from Morocco and live in Israel.”

Mr. Weitzman replied, “But you were already there 15 days ago.”

My father said, “That’s true. However I haven’t received an answer from Rabbi Shimon, and I have to return to Morocco soon. That’s why it’s urgent that I find out what I must do.” Mr. Weitzman said, “It’s raining tonight. Perhaps you can go tomorrow?” However my father was adamant: “I must go there right away.”

Mr. Weitzman asked his neighbor, Mr. Peretz, if he wanted to join them. He accepted, after which they all took a taxi to Meron. They still didn’t know if they were going to find the place open or closed, for in those days the gates of the mausoleum weren’t open day and night, as they are today. When they arrived, they found that the gates were in fact closed. True, it was possible to pray around the place where tradition says that Rabbi Shimon is buried, but my father absolutely wanted to go inside. He stood outside, immersed in thought, when suddenly he approached Mr. Weitzman and said to him: “I want to go to Moshav Safsufa now.”

Mr. Weitzman was surprised by the request: “It’s not very far from here, granted, but what do you want to do there?” My father replied, “A few years ago, I gave a certain Mr. Bensoussan a blessing that he would have a son. I think that his wife gave birth and they’re now preparing for the circumcision. It’s worth the effort to go for the circumcision, and from there we’ll determine what we should do.” He replied, “Alright, but how will we get there?” My father answered quite simply, “Let’s go down and see. Maybe we’ll find a taxi to bring us there.”

Once they got down from the mountain, it happened that a Sussita [Israeli-made car] was passing by and stopped next to them. The driver

asked them where they were headed, and they replied, “To Moshav Safsufa.” He told them to get in, and when they reached their destination, they could hear people singing. At that point they realized that my father was right, for it appeared that a circumcision was about to get underway. They got out of the car and then, to their utter amazement, as soon as Mr. Weitzman closed the door, the car vanished – as if it had never been there! He began to cry out, “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai!” My father turned to him, as if to tell him to keep quiet, and said: “I order you not to tell anyone what you’ve seen as long as I’m alive. Once I leave this world, you can tell people. But for now, don’t ask me any questions.”

Mr. Weitzman recounted this story at the end of the seven days of mourning for my father. When I thought about the significance of this story, I asked myself why my father had done everything to conceal this miracle. The answer is that throughout his life, my father distanced himself from pride as much as possible, fleeing from honor as if running from a fire. Hence he feared that if this incredible miracle were known, he might grow proud, and a slight trace of pride – which he

abhorred – would cleave to him. That is why he preferred to conceal this miracle until after his death.

In fact such is the path of the righteous (“Who are the kings? The rabbis”), who meticulously fulfill Torah mitzvot in the spirit of, “You shall surely set over yourself a king,” meaning that they master their faults and govern their bad instincts, thereby taming the evil inclination in honor of Hashem and in honor of Torah.

To a person who controls himself, the Torah promises to “prolong his days over his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel” (Devarim 17:20). And if someone knows how to master the negative aspects of his character and completely dominate them, he is promised that his children will also be kings over their evil inclination, and that they too will dominate their desires and faults. This is because the sacred path adopted by the fathers will be transmitted to the sons as a heritage.

May it be Hashem’s will for us to control our evil inclination and all our desires, us and our children after us, and may all our deeds be performed for the sake of Heaven. Amen and Amen.

In the Footsteps of our Fathers

The Judgment of the Beit Din

Bribes

A true pearl of wisdom is brought in the name of the Chazon Ish: The Torah’s warning against corruption is not part of the mishpatim – social laws that are easy to understand, such as those dealing with money, laws whose rationale we fully understand – but rather part of the chukim, laws whose rationale completely escape us. Logically speaking, there is no reason to suspect wise men, righteous individuals, and men of great piety to pervert the law for personal gain. Yet here we have a chuk, a decree of the Torah against bribes, which have the power to blind those who accept them. Even if a judge who accepts gifts has great character traits, meaning that he is a righteous man with no intention of rendering a false verdict, nevertheless because the Torah has decreed that bribes have the power to deform and corrupt, the judge is therefore straying from justice. The commentators say that just as a bribe from another person exerts influence, a person can also bribe himself with gifts, meaning that he becomes no longer capable of seeing the truth when he has personal interests at stake.

This is how we can resolve a great question put forward by Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman Zatzal. As we know, science has developed in leaps in bounds, and today there exists, for example, radar technology that can detect things that we can’t even imagine, all because of educated men and scientists. In studying the brain, scientists have discovered that it contains multiple billions of neurons. There are other wonders of the brain, which is more complex than even the most powerful computer in the world. Hence the question arises as to how scientists, when confronted by all this evidence, still fail to grasp the greatness of the Creator and remain atheists. According to what we have said, however, this is not even a question: Scientists invest all their efforts and thoughts into material pursuits alone. Hence even when we try to interest them in Judaism, they distance themselves from it. Even when faced with proof that the world has a Creator, they come up with various false excuses, saying things such as “that’s not what we think,” or “that’s not the case.” And if they think that they possess proofs against Judaism, it’s not because

they’re right, but because they have not opened the Rambam’s Guide to the Perplexed, Duties of the Heart, The Kuzari, or other such books. If they had studied these books, the truth would have become clear and they would have repented.

This is why, during the Amidah, we ask the Creator: “Cause us to return, our Father, to Your Torah,” which is followed by “Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned,” even though it seems that we should have first asked for forgiveness. The reason is that a person must first take the Torah upon himself – meaning that he must first accept that all his ideas should be based upon the Torah, without letting his thoughts be warped by other ideas – and only then can he be asked to repent.

Desired in Heaven

The greatest expression of divine justice in this world is when judges express the will of Heaven and demonstrate it on earth. This consists solely of the judgment of the Torah, pure and devoid of all bribery and personal interests, and which represents Hashem’s will in completely regulating life in society.

One day, several students went to see the gaon Rabbi Avraham Shapira Zatzal to ask him to intervene in a dispute that had broken out between two parties in a certain organization. The students explained the situation to the Rav, as well as the various arguments on each side. After having listened to them, the Rav decided that they had to proceed to a din Torah. They tried to explain to him that in a din Torah, one side would win and the other side would feel that it had suffered an injustice. If the Rav would intervene, however, both parties would have to compromise. Upon hearing this, the Rav briefly repeated, “Let them go to a din Torah.” The students tried for a third time to convince the Rav that it was preferable for him to intervene, but at that point he sent them packing – telling them that they hadn’t understood his intentions.

What he had tried to explain is that if something is decreed by the Beit Din, then that is what is desired in Heaven! And he repeated this phrase: “That is what is desired in Heaven!”