



Parshas Kedoshim 2024, Justice for All

**The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers.
May G-d return all the hostages in Gaza immediately.**

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, and in loving memory of Hinda Bas Udl, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with the statement: **"You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d, am holy."** This declaration is followed by many commandments, including charity, Shabbos, morality, honesty in business, honoring and showing awe to one's parents, and the sacredness of life. There are 51 Mitzvahs in our Torah Portion, 13 positive and 38 negative commandments.

One of the notable ones is the commandment of **"Love your fellow as yourself."** According to Rabbi Akiva, this is a cardinal principle of the Torah. The great Hillel once said, **"this commandment is the entire Torah, and the rest is just commentary."**

However, a question comes to mind: One of the 51 Mitzvahs in our Parsha is judging objectively and impartially. We are commanded not to favor a poor person in court or show special deference to a rich person. The Pasuk writes: (19:15) *" You shall not make an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; you must judge your nation fairly."*

But why does the Torah detail two instances of injustice, rather than state: "You may not treat anyone differently; all must be judged the same way?"

How are these examples different? Aren't they the inverse of each other and imply the same thing? Why does the Torah write not to favor the poor or show deference to the rich?!

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator, answers this question. He writes that each instance teaches us a different lesson, hence both need to be written. While we may not favor the poor, we must have compassion for them outside of the court system. We are obligated to give charity and ensure they have what they need to live.

Similarly, we may not show special deference to the rich in the justice system, but they deserve honor for the charity and kindness that they do. Those who use their wealth or fame to benefit the community, deserve to be honored and respected for their generosity.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He agrees with Rashi's notion that each instance is teaching us a different lesson, but takes it a step further. The litigants themselves must not accept a judgment that unjustly favors them.

The Talmud in Sanhedrin (32b) writes that if a litigant feels the trial or judgment was dishonest or unfair, they may ask for another trial. The great sage Reish Lakish notes that this opinion refers to one who received a favorable judgment, but feels that it was obtained unjustly.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the Mitzvah to judge fairly is on each of us as it is on a judge during a trial. If we feel or experience unique deference and preferential treatment, we must speak for our own sake. The integrity of the justice system is the basis that distinguishes thriving societies from those that fail. Upholding the court's impartiality, regardless of one's feelings, ensures that G-d's judgment is fair, with past indiscretions not considered.

The Ohr Hachaim profound lesson is ever more relevant as the war continues and we memorialize soldiers who died protecting our sacred homeland. Their sacrifice only continues to drive a people who just eighty years ago were on the blink of total annihilation. Reminding us that we are each unique part of a greater whole, a nation fulfilling G-d's desire of having a home here on earth.

In our daily life, is imperative that we embrace the entirety of ourselves, the aggregate sum of our intellect, feelings and experience. A task that begins and ends with true self-awareness and reflection. A look at our strengths and weaknesses and their impact on the people around us.

Understanding and then accepting ourselves, flaws and all, makes us confident and better equipped to handle the challenges in this journey called life. We become open to the opportunities and experiences we would have never seen had we not first truly seen ourselves. Succeeding far beyond our imagination, and creating a ripple effect of positivity and happiness for all.

**"Justice is a process, not just a product.
It is not enough for the court to be right.
It must hear both sides of the argument."**

--Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Have a meaningful Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini