

## And these are the ordinances that you shall place before them. (21:1)

The *parsha* dealing primarily with civil and tort law is juxtaposed on the end of the previous *parsha*, which details the laws of the *Mizbayach*, Altar. *Chazal* derive from here that the *Sanhedrin*, the court which is the supreme authority of Jewish law, should be located on *Har Habayis*, near the *Bais Hamikdash*. *Horav Nissan Alpert, zl*, explains the reason for this. *Avodas Hashem*, serving the Almighty in a Jewish way, is different from other religions, whose religious service revolves around prayer, ritual and sacrifice. Their theology consists of a code of beliefs geared towards inculcating the people to an acceptance of the rule of the Almighty and belief in Him. The *Torah's* code of law is different. Ours is a living *Torah* which covers every aspect of human endeavor, whether it is in regard to man's relationship with the Almighty or man's relationship with his fellow man. One who conducts business with integrity, pays his damages according to Jewish law, or follows the *Torah's* dictate for purchasing an *eved Ivri* is actually serving Hashem. The first of the Ten Commandments is the *mitzvah* of belief in Hashem; the last is the prohibition against desiring another person's property.

Our laws are G-d given. They comprise our theology. Thus, the *Sanhedrin* sits next to the *Bais Hamikdash* in order to imply that adjudicating the laws concerning one's relationship with his fellow-man is similar to offering *korbanos*. They both constitute a form of service to the Almighty.

Perhaps this is the reason that the *Torah* prohibits us from litigating our monetary disputes in a secular court of law - even if the rulings will be similar to that of the *Torah*. Furthermore, we do not accept gentile witnesses. As was mentioned above, rendering *halachic* justice is a form of *avodas Hashem*. It is a service reserved only for the Almighty. Accepting justice from any other source would be paying homage to a foreign deity and, as such, an affront to Hashem *Yisborach*.