

"And these are the laws which you shall place before them." (21:1)

Rashi notes the juxtaposition of the beginning of this *parsha*, dealing with the laws of judges and civil law, with the end of the previous *parsha*, which is devoted to the laws regarding the *mizbei'ach*, altar. He explains that the *Torah* teaches us that the *Sanhedrin* should be located adjacent to the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. What is the spirit behind this law and what message does it communicate?

Horav Mordechai Rogov z.l., suggests the following insight. The *Sanhedrin*, or the judges and *Torah* leaders of *Am Yisrael*, must be dedicated to uphold *Torah* law to the point of self-sacrifice. This concept is represented by the proximity of the *Sanhedrin* to the *mizbei'ach*, the symbol of sacrifice. In order to uphold the sacredness of *Torah*, so that it is esteemed by all, it is crucial that its administrators remain determined and resolute.

We may offer another approach to explain *Rashi's* comment. The judge, or anyone who is about to make a decision regarding an individual, must take certain ideas into consideration. Although it is necessary for him to make this evaluation, the manner in which he performs it will determine its credibility. When we judge someone, we are playing with the lives of entire families. The decision we render regarding an individual can determine his entire future. Indeed a judge must arbitrate, but his intentions must be noble. Should he be obligated to censure someone, the censure should be executed with dignity. We have learned that one who offers a sacrifice on the *mizbei'ach* must have the appropriate intentions, or the *korban* is rendered *pigul*, invalid. Similarly, the judge must exercise extreme caution in rendering decisions concerning human lives, so that his decision will be valid.