

"You shall not respect persons in judgment, the small and the great alike, you shall listen to, you shall not fear the face of any man, for the judgment is Hashem's." (1:17)

Rabeinu Yonah in his *Sharei Teshuvah* (3:33) cites this *pasuk* as a reassurance to *Torah* leadership that they should not fear reprisal from any decision they render. Judgment comes from Hashem and He will protect those who stand resolute in executing His imperatives.

We may question the stated rationale for this mandate, "*for judgment is Hashem's*". What relationship exists between the source of judgment and the need for courage in administering legislation? This *pasuk* may be clarified in the following manner. *Chazal* made a very strong statement regarding the character of a *Talmid Chacham* (*Torah* scholar). *Any Talmid Chacham who does not take revenge and bear a grudge as a snake is not worthy of the title, Talmid Chacham*). This statement would be striking had it come from any source. Emanating from *Chazal*, however, who exemplify delicacy of character and nobility in demeanor, the sentiment is especially noteworthy. Does this mean that one who is conciliatory and mild-mannered is not worthy of the title of *Talmid Chacham*? At the end of *Hilchos Talmud Torah* the *Rambam* addresses this idea. He remarks that the statement applies only to "*Kavod Hatorah*", circumstances in which reverence for the *Torah* is demeaned. In this situation, it is incumbent upon a *Talmid Chacham* to fight to uphold the honor of the *Torah*.

Horav Y.L. Bloch Z"l explains the *Talmud's* failure to use a more positive statement. The *Talmud* should have said, "*It is necessary for one to be vigilant and guard the Torah's honor.*" He states that *Chazal* are communicating an important message regarding the manner in which a *Torah* scholar should maintain his relationship with the people. It is important for one to pursue every means of coexisting with all people. There are situations in which one must take a strong hand, however, and even battle to uphold "*Kavod Hatorah*". A *Talmid Chacham* who does not exhibit the strength of character to take issue with those who denigrate the *Torah* indicates that he is not a true student of *Torah* wisdom. One whose actions originate from the source of wisdom does not differentiate between possible processes for reaching his aspiration. The prime focus is on the goal. Nothing stands in the way of achieving his aim. Hence, the *Talmud* emphasizes the notion of waging battle for the sake of the *Torah*.

This is the *Torah's* message: Do not fear anyone when making a decision to execute a *Torah* law, for judgment is Hashem's mandate. Courage should originate from the knowledge of the source of

these laws. The wisdom culled from *Torah* erudition gives one the ability to transcend all fears and the moral stamina to ward off all obstacles.