

Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities... and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. (16:18)

Titen lecha, “Shall you appoint” (Literal translation: shall you put for you/yourself). The *Kli Yakar* derives from you/yourself that, before one concerns himself with helping others, he must first judge himself. Make absolutely certain that your house is in order before you reach out to others. How true this is. There are some who occupy themselves with reaching out to others as an excuse, in order to delay addressing their own personal issues.

In a similar vein, *Horav Simcha Bunim, zl, m’Peshischa*, explains *Shoftim v’shotrim titen lecha*, “Judges and officers shall you appoint” in the following way: As long as a person constantly judges himself (assures himself of his own/personal appropriateness), if he is looking for – and acknowledges – his own failings and the positive attributes of others, then (and only then) *v’shaftu es ha’am mishpat tzedek*; “they shall judge the pe

ople with righteous judgment.” Only in that case can we be assured that they will judge others with honesty and from a fair and bipartisan perspective. One who sees only the failings of others, but glosses over his own shortcomings, will be unable (or certainly hard-pressed) to render honest judgment.

A woman once came to *Horav Tzvi Hirsch, zl, m’Dinov*, weeping uncontrollably, complaining that the *dayanim*, rabbinic judges at the *bais din*, had issued a faulty ruling against her. *Rav Tzvi Hirsch* peered into the *halachah*, and, after a few moments, he discovered that the woman had spoken the truth. The *dayanim* had, indeed, erred in the judgment they had rendered. He summoned them and showed them their error, which they immediately accepted. Afterwards, one of the judges asked the *Dinover* what had motivated him to reevaluate the judgment. (People would often claim that the judge either ruled against them or had erred. What made this case unique? What was the red flag?) The *Rebbe* replied, “*Toras Hashem temimah meshivas nefesh*; ‘The Torah of Hashem is perfect, it restores the soul’ (*Tehillim* 19:8). Had you issued a correct *psak*, judgment, the woman would not have been able to weep so incessantly. It was only because the judgment had not been *temimah*, perfect, that her emotions were able to get the better of her.”