

And you shall discern from the entire people, men of accomplishment, G-d-fearing people, men of truth, people who despise money. (18:21)

Yisro presented Moshe *Rabbeinu* with a tall order to be used as the criteria for selecting the nation's judges. He identified four qualities, which, following meticulous consideration, were to become one: *anshei chayil*, men of accomplishment. Veritably, the commentators, each in his inimitable style, define these four qualities as they see them. *Ralbag* explains *anshei chayil* as men who fear no man. They have strong characters, believe in what they are doing, and have robust self-confidence. *Yirei Elokim*, G-d-fearing, refers to those leaders who have the fear of Hashem written all over their faces. They do not for a moment lose sight of before Whom they stand. *Anshei emes* are men that love the truth, understanding that anything less than one hundred per cent true is one hundred per cent false. Truth is an absolute which cannot be restricted/limited. *Sonei betza*, says *Ralbag*, cannot mean that they hate money, because this is an unnecessary trait. It goes without saying that a judge does not qualify if he is on "the take." Therefore, he explains *sonei betza* as men whose love of the truth impels them to despise what money can do to a person. They understand that an inordinate love of money leads to a convenient, inaccurate interpretation of the law.

Let us step back and analyze the people concerning to whom Yisro is speaking. The generation that left Egypt and experienced the Splitting of the Red Sea was a people who were exposed to the greatest miracles and revelations of Hashem's powers, more so than any other people in history. The Torah attests to their elevated level of *emunah* when it writes: "They had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant (*Shemos* 14:31). After their experience at the Red Sea, their spiritual level rose once again, as they neared *Har Sinai* and the seminal event of Jewish history: the Giving of the Torah. They reached the forty-ninth level of holiness akin to the level achieved by Adam *HaRishon* prior to the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge. They saw the Heavens part as Hashem's voice declared the first two *dibros*, commandments.

Having all this in mind, we return to Yisro who suggested that Moshe select judges who were G-d-fearing. This means men who have reached the epitome of Heavenly fear in accordance with the level achieved by the simplest Jew of that time – which is light years beyond our perception of G-d-fearing. Yet, Yisro asserted that *yirei Elokim* was insufficient. They needed also to be *sonei betza*, not manifest inordinate love of money. Indeed, they should hate it due to its hold on the human psyche.

Horav A. Henoch Leibowitz, zl, derives from here that achieving the highest standard of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Hashem, does not protect a person from falling into the clutches of the *yetzer hora* and, consequently, plummeting to the nadir of depravity. Without the perfection of one's *middos*, character traits, he has no protection from sin.