

For the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise. (16:19)

We must endeavor to understand the necessity of a Biblical prohibition against accepting a bribe. Anyone with a modicum of intelligence understands that accepting a bribe is unethical. It perverts one's thought process, encouraging partiality in favor of the one who offers him the bribe. The *Chazon Ish*, *zi* (*Emunah U'Bitachon* 3:30), teaches otherwise, explaining that the prohibition of *shochad* is a special decree from Hashem. It has nothing whatsoever to do with rationale. Proof positive is the fact that the Torah does not prohibit a person from issuing a *halachic* ruling for himself. A Jew may inspect a newly-slaughtered animal to examine whether it has any *treifah*, unkosher blemishes, lesions, holes, etc. One may rule concerning *chametz* which was in his possession during *Pesach*, that he had sold. Is there not a question of bribery? Are we that objective? Absolutely not. When it involves our possessions, we tend to have a less than discriminating perspective. No one wants to take a monetary loss. If that is not a bribe – what is? Furthermore, during a litigation between two parties, the Torah's prohibition against accepting a bribe applies only concerning such a bribe that is given during litigation. If one gives the money before the case goes to court – all is well. The Torah does not prohibit a judge from ruling in a case involving his close friend or even his enemy. Why? What happened to ethics and morals? Have we forgotten about the prohibition against bribery?

The *Chazon Ish* explains that *shochad* is a despicable act which the Torah reviles. While it is true that any ethical person has a dim view of *shochad*, designating it as engendering *tumah*, ritual contamination, within a person; it blinds a person, taking away his ability to see objectively. This applies only to such *shochad* Torah law prohibits. *Shochad* that precedes litigation does not carry a spiritual stigma, and, as a result, it does not affect or contaminate a person. In other words, the only *shochad* which blinds and contaminates is Biblically prohibited bribery. *Shochad* which does not fall under the Torah's rubric of *shochad* does not affect the person in the same manner.