



פרשת שופטים / Parshas Shoftim

“...לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל” דברים יז:יא

“...Do not stray from the thing that they shall tell you right or left” Devarim 17:11

This pasuk is the source for the commandment to hearken to the words of our *Chachamim* (scholars). Rashi explains that this mitzvah applies even if the *Chachamim* tell us that right is left or that left is right, and all the more so if they tell us that the right is indeed right and vice versa.

The Ramban puts an added emphasis on the importance of this commandment. He explains that Rashi means that even if one feels in his heart that the *Chachamim* are mistaken and the fact that they are wrong is as clear to the person as his ability to differentiate between his right and his left, he still must listen to the words of the *Chachamim*. He should say, “this is what my master has commanded me, that I must do as all that the scholars who stand before Hashem may say, for through their wisdom the Torah has been passed on to me even if they may be mistaken.” The Ramban continues to stress the great importance of this mitzvah. The Torah was given in writing; hence opinions will inevitably differ regarding how to manage new situations that may arise in our times. Naturally, argument will follow and the Torah will become divided. Therefore Hashem has commanded us to listen to Beis Din in the way that they will guide us in the explanation of the Torah, whether they received their understanding mouth to mouth in a direct line from Moshe Rabbeinu or they came to their conclusion based off of their own Torah knowledge. Through their wisdom we were given the Torah, therefore even if it may appear that they have swapped their right with their left, all the more so we must believe them that this right is really “right”, for the spirit of Hashem rests on those who serve Him and Hashem’s kindness does not leave them. They are forever protected from mistakes and missteps.

The Maharal in Be’er Hagolah makes the point all the more timely. He explains that all of the protective measures, guidelines and rituals drawn out of the Oral Torah by the *Chachamim* are the direct will of Hashem. Hashem reveals his will at the appropriate time through the leaders of the current generation. The *Chachamim* and *Tzaddikim* of each generation enable the further revelation of the Torah as it applies in their times, for as we have explained it is through their hands that Hashem makes His will known. This is why listening to the *Chachamim* is of the utmost importance. Their words are a direct revelation of the Torah that is necessary in our lives. They are not attempting to revive archaic and inapplicable laws. Hashem reveals to them the keys to thriving in this very day and age. So hearken! It is in the best interest of us all.