



Are You Objective?

There was once a king who was very fond of target shooting. He practiced daily and arranged competitions. With time he felt that he had gotten pretty good at the sport, yet he continued trying to improve.

One day, as he was traveling through the countryside, the king noticed several target boards near a small peasant hut. Looking closely, he was astonished to see that every one of the many darts on the boards was precisely in the center! This simple peasant was apparently an expert; he had hit a bull's-eye with every try!

Curious to learn how the man had done it, the king knocked on the door of the hut.

The peasant who answered laughed heartily at the the king's question. "Why, it's very simple," he replied naively. "Instead of drawing the target and aiming towards it, I throw the darts, and then draw the circles around them. It works every time ..."

The Torah portion of Shoftim (Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9) includes a prohibition for judges to take bribes. The Torah then explains the reason for this commandment: "For bribery blinds the eyes of the wise."



Art by Sefira Lightstone

Now, you're probably thinking, "No kidding, that's the definition of a bribe! What kind of reason is that?"

Good point. But, actually, the Torah is not trying to explain what's wrong with paying off a judge; it's obvious that corrupting fair judgment is immoral. Rather, the Torah seeks to clarify a fact. Often, people say, "I can be objective in this case, despite my connection to it." Recognizing the difficulty of proper judgment when personal concerns are involved, we may nonetheless convince ourselves that we are immune to bribery, intellectually and emotionally capable of separating fact from feeling.

Yet the Torah cautions us that the danger of bribery is not merely a possibility, nor even a probability. It is an automatic effect. Bribery—monetary or otherwise—skews one's perception, literally "blinding" him to reality. No one is immune.

We are all judges, all of the time. There are important decisions to be made constantly, and these require clear thinking and examination of facts. But often, we may be swayed by bribes—personal concerns, interests and feelings. We may have the best of intentions, yet the possibility of a purely objective decision is technically out of our reach, "for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise."

For this reason, it is crucial that every one of us have a mentor, an objective individual upon whom we rely to help us make decisions. Before signing on the dotted line, run it by someone out of the picture. It's a sort of reality check, a way to make sure that we are aiming towards the target, rather than adjusting the goal to suit us.

(by Rabbi Mendy Wolf from www.chabad.org)

Which Gates Will You Open?

Our Parashah, which is always read in the month of Elul preceding the Days of Judgment, begins: "Judges and officers you shall appoint at all your gates—which Hashem, your Elokim, gives you—for your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment." R' Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev z"l (1740-1809; early Chassidic Rebbe) writes that this verse is offering us a recipe for a successful judgment on Rosh Hashanah. Hashem wants to judge us mercifully, but we must allow Him to do so. When we behave with kindness and judge our fellow Jews favorably, we awaken Hashem's kindness, so that He can judge us the same way. Through such behavior, we open the "gates" of Heavenly kindness, allowing blessing to flow to all of the Jewish People.

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This, writes R' Levi Yitzchak, is the lesson of our verse: You will appoint the judges and officers who determine your fate on Rosh Hashanah by choosing your gates, i.e., choosing which gates you will open. How? By judging all of the people with righteous judgment, i.e., by always seeing the righteousness of others and judging them favorably. (Kedushat Levi)

A related thought from the anonymous 13th century work Sefer Ha'chinuch (Mitzvah 171): Our Sages teach that man is measured by his own measuring stick. However, the author continues, this teaching is misunderstood. It does not mean that Hashem looks at how man behaves and responds accordingly. That is a human trait. Rather, through his own actions, man makes himself into a receptacle to receive reward or punishment.

(by Rabbi Shlomo Katz from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)



Sponsorship for two flower displays on the Bima during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are available at \$225 each Yom Tov. Consider sponsoring the flowers in honor or in memory of someone. Please contact the Allan Genut at agenut@gmail.com or 410-486-8435 to make arrangements.

We wish a Mazel Tov to **Mr. Jacob Sidelnikov**
on his Aufruf this Shabbat upcoming marriage to **Emily**.

We welcome them to the neighborhood and the Shul and wish them much happiness.
We invite you to join in any and all activities here, and we encourage all Shul goers to make the Sidelnikovs feel welcome and comfortable.



Please join or renew your membership in
The Shul at the Lubavitch Center.

Also **Yomim Naraim seating reservations** are included on the membership form (for both members and non-members).
These forms and information are available on the shul website at <http://www.chabadshul.org>



Mr. and Mrs. Yehudah Buchwalter are sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat
in memory of Yehudah's mother, **Florette Buchwalter z"l**,
whose yahrzeit is the 6th of Elul.



Yahrzeits This Week:

Yehudah Buchwalter 6 Elul - Friday night / Shabbat for mother Faiga Leba bas Chaim HaCohen

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 8/29 — 5 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8/30 — 6 Elul

Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:48 a.m.
Minchah — 7:10 p.m.
Shkiah — 7:40 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:22 p.m.

Sunday, 8/31 — 7 Elul

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:20 p.m.

Monday — Labor Day, 9/1 — 8 Elul

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:20 p.m.

Tuesday, 9/2 — 9 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:20 p.m.

Wednesday, 9/3 — 10 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:20 p.m.
Tanya Shiur: 2nd part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud
V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation
and the unity of Hashem — 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, 9/4 — 11 Elul

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:20 p.m.

Friday, 9/5 — 12 Elul

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 7:12 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.