

Bribes

Ref: *Sefer Shoftim, Hilchot Sanhedrin, Chapter 23*

📖 | Judge not to accept a bribe.²⁶

Both giver and receiver of bribe are guilty.

There are also subtle forms of bribes which are unacceptable e.g. if a litigant is about to be involved in a case, he may not do the judge even a tiny favour i.e. remove a feather from the judges' scarf. If he does, that judge must resign from the case.

Similarly, a judge may not judge a friend, nor one he hates.

If two Torah scholars hate each other, they should not act as judges together.

At the outset a judge should always look upon the litigants as if they are both wicked. At the end he should see them both as righteous.

When a judge does not render true judgement he causes the *Shechinah* (Divine presence) to depart from Israel. And when he adjudicates in truth, even for one moment, it is as if he has corrected the whole world, and causes the *Shechinah* to rest within Israel.

However a judge should not refrain from adjudicating out of concern that he might make a mistake. He should know that *Hashem* is with him in the judgement and that he (the judge) is only responsible for what his eyes see.