



לקוטי שיחות  
PROJECT  
LIKKUTEI  
SICHOS

## All for the People

### Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Shoftim | Sichah 1

#### **The Context:**

*Parshas Shoftim* contains the commandment to appoint a king over the Jewish people. (*Devarim* 17:15)

In describing the role of the king, Rambam writes, “His heart is the heart of the entire congregation of Israel.” (*Hilchos Melachim* 3:6)

Seemingly, the metaphor of the heart suggests that just as the heart gives life to the entire body, so does the king give life to “the entire congregation of Israel.”

#### **The Question:**

However, “the head” or “the brain” would seem to be a more apt metaphor for a king. Granted, the heart provides life, but it is the brain that truly directs and orchestrates every part of the body. The head is the “king” of the body, so why is the king likened to the heart and not the head?

#### **The Explanation:**

In Rabbinic writings, we find two distinct roles: The king was the undisputed authority of all matters of state. The *nasi* was the leader of the *Sanhedrin* and the authority on all matters pertaining to the spiritual and religious life of the people.

As the authority and provider of all material goods, the king had unlimited license to levy taxes to support himself. The people were obligated to

provide for the king according to his needs. (*Rambam, ibid*, ch. 4) The *nasi*, on the other hand, received a standard salary.

The unchecked authority of the king results in a paradox: On the one hand, it expresses his immense power. On the other hand, it is evidence of his frailty — for he has nothing of his own; everything that he has, was given by the people. Because the king’s entire identity is that of a “servant of the people,” he receives everything from the people.

For this reason, the king is referred to as the “heart” of the Jewish people. The heart’s frenzied beating provides vital blood to the body, and as a result, it is frail and prone to injury. The king, too, is intimately involved in the daily affairs of the people, and is “frail” in the sense of his dependence on the people.

The *nasi*, on the other hand, is referred to as the “head” of the generation. The head directs and controls every movement of the body, but it is more distant and removed from the rest of the body than the heart is. The brain is “collected and aloof.”

The *nasi* guides and teaches the people, but he is not as invested in the daily life of the people.

### **Head and Heart:**

Moses was the rare leader who combined both roles. He was a king who fought the people’s wars and provided them with every physical need. And he was their teacher, who taught them Torah and guided them in their spiritual lives. He was both their “heart” and their “head.”