

שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך (טז:יח)
לא תטע לך אשרה כל עץ (טז:כא)

"Judges and officers, you shall appoint for yourselves" (16:18)

"You shall not plant for yourselves an Asherah tree" (16:21)

Why are these two commandments near one another?

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 7a) the proximity of these commands to teach that if one appointed a non-competent judge, it is as if he has planted a tree used for idolatry (Ashera). What is this connection?

Rabbi Cham Halevi Soloveitchik (Rav Chaim from Brisk 1853—1918) explains that by an idol or forbidden image, it is immediately recognized by all that this is abominable. On the other hand, when gazing upon an Asherah tree, it seems as magnificent as another other tree in a forest. Only after further questioning and evaluation, one reveals its true immoral purpose. Similarly, appointing an incapable judge is compared to planting an Asherah tree. On the surface the individual may seem competent. Only after further review can one realize how his mistakes can lead to lack of integrity as a judge.

Shabbat Shalom