

Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9

Shoftim | שפטים

“judges”

Torah often links the qualities of truth (*emet*) and lovingkindness (*chesed*). This reminds us that truth must be tempered with love. Paul's well-known exhortation is a clear example: "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the Head, into Messiah" (Ephesians 4:15). Similarly, the Psalmist emphasizes this same connection: "I bow down toward Your holy temple and give thanks to Your name for your grace and truth; for You have made Your word greater than the whole of Your reputation" (Psalm 138:2). Likewise, the concept of justice (*tzedek*) is often linked with compassion or mercy (*rachamim*): "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; grace and truth attend You" (Psalm 89:14).

Additional
Resources:

BT:
2021

Rabbi
Jonathan
Sacks

Alph-
Beta

Community Questions:

1. Why is it important to have two or three witnesses to a crime rather than just one?
2. What is justice? Why is justice so important to God and humanity? Do we live in a just world?
3. Have you ever felt you were a victim of injustice?
4. Is it fair to state that Western-style democracies are biblically based?
5. Compare some of the ancient systems of justice to the Torah.
6. Do you see in our own culture the same alarming signs of disintegration found in the ancient (and not so ancient) cultures and nations?
7. How can we strive to produce a more fair and just society?
8. Do you believe that societies that follow a biblically-based social order are freer and more joyful? Why or why not?
9. This passage speaks of God's appointment of kings and prophets. Do you think God still appoints kings/ leaders?
10. How can you learn to be more just toward your family and friends?
11. Would you welcome participating in a jury for a criminal trial?
12. Do you believe when we are quick to judge ourselves and to guard our eyes, thoughts, words and actions, we will be more favorably disposed to judge others with compassion?

