

Judges and Officers

18"Judges and officers you are to appoint within all your gates that Adonai your Elohim is giving you, according to your tribes; and they are to judge the people with righteous judgment. 19You are not to twist justice—you must not show partiality or take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts the words of the righteous. 20Justice, justice you must pursue, so that you may live and possess the land that Adonai your Elohim is giving you" (Deut. 16:18-20).

This week's *Parasha* is *Shoftim (Judges)* and derives its name from the very first word in Deuteronomy 16:18. It follows a famous and important section entitled *The Harvest Festivals* at the beginning of the chapter: *"16Three times a year all your males are to appear before Adonai your Elohim in the place He chooses – at the Feast of Matzot, the Feast of Shavuot, and the Feast of Sukkot. No one should appear before Adonai empty-handed – 17the gift of each man's hand according to the blessing Adonai your God has given you" (Deut. 16:16-17).* The *Parasha* concludes with this beautiful prayer: *"8'Grant atonement for Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, Adonai, and do not put innocent blood on Your people Israel.' Then atonement will be granted to them for the blood. 9So you will purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in Adonai's sight" (Deut. 21:8-9).* If there are two countries in the world that need to be *"purged of the guilt of innocent blood"* (the Blood of Abortion), it is the US and Israel – these two countries are (supposedly) led by the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But also, in this *Parasha* we are introduced to the Almighty's system of justice and leadership, mainly, Judges, Levites, Kings, Prophets and the Military. In this *portion* He establishes many principles that are fundamental to the governing of His people. A good example is: *"6By the word of two or three witnesses..." (Deut. 17:6a).* It is no wonder this principle was emphasized by *Yeshua* (e.g., *Matt. 18:16*) and the Apostle Paul (e.g., *2 Cor. 13:1, 1 Tim. 5:19*). How much trouble could we avoid if we followed this two or three witness principle in everything. And again we read: *"15A single witness shall not rise up against a person for any offense or sin that he commits. By the word of two or three witnesses is a case to be established" (Deut. 19:15).*

Husbands who *sit in a place of authority* in their homes are compared to kings in Scripture especially when it comes to *protection and responsibility*. Here is a great example of the working of that responsibility: *18"Now when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll, from what is before the Levitical kohanim. 19It will remain with him, and he will read in it all the days of his life, in order to learn to fear Adonai his Elohim and keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes. 20Then his heart will not be exalted above his brothers, and he will not turn from the commandment to the right or to the left – so that he may prolong his days in his kingship, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel (Deut. 17:18-20).* Do you have a copy of *Adonai's Torah* that is to be with you to *"read in it all the days of your life, in order for you to learn to fear Adonai your Elohim and keep all the words of this Torah and His statutes?"*

Since the theme of this week's *Parasha* is leadership, I would like to take this opportunity to remind us of two guiding principles in our KS Leadership Team (rabbi, elders and *shamashim*). Two items present in any congregation are: (1) the message and (2) the messenger (or leader). These are also no less critical in *Kol Simcha*. I am a person motivated by *balance and integrity* (but so are all members of our Leadership Team). I (we) do not want to be misunderstood. I strive to live by the things that I preach (integrity) and attempt to stay in a centrist position with respect to critical issues, like former IAMCS and President David Chernoff: *"I believe my position with respect to many things in our ministry is a centrist position. Our theology needs to be moderated by pragmatism and the Holy Spirit..." (from Our Unique Messianic Identity by David Chernoff, IAMCS Rabbi's Conference 2001)*, but so do all of our KS Leaders. We are truly developing a congregation that is not based on everyone else's rules but endeavors to *Na'ase V'Nishma*,

respecting one another's rights (even the right to disagree). As I have shared in the past, I am motivated by the character quality consideration. Marilyn is the most considerate person I know. Consideration is an application of the golden rule, and it was evident in *Yeshua*, His apostles (*His talmidim*), and in Rabbi Paul's (*Sha'ul's*) ministry. A guiding verse in the *Psalms* is: "*But I – I will walk in my integrity. Redeem me and be gracious to me*" (*Ps. 26:11*).

Our KS Leadership does not know everything, and we do not claim to do so. I do not claim to be *The Anointed* nor do I fail to recognize that I am flesh and thus, subject to the *Romans 6-7* struggle. Each member of your leadership team has readily admitted before KS some of his/her failures and struggles. But at times, I sense from the congregation reluctance (a slight pushback) to give us the space and confidence to fully lead you. Scripture states that "*without faith (trust) it is impossible to please Adonai*" (*Hebrews 11:6*), and similarly without *trust* it is impossible to lead God's people. You should always ask yourself the question: *Is it possible that God is speaking to me via this imperfect KS leader?* Maybe He is! *Shabbat Shalom!* Let us pray...