

# פרשת שופטים *Parashat Shoftim*

*Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9, Isaiah 51:12-52:12,  
Matthew 26:47-27:10*

## **Our Relationship with Yeshua and the Rational for Judges in the Land**

In this week's Torah portion the opening verses state the following, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-20*, יח וְשֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֵּן לָךְ, וְשָׂפְטוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפָּט־בְּכָל-שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשָׂפְטוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפָּט־צְדָק: יט לֹא-תִטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא-תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֹר עֵינַי חֲכָמִים וְיִסְלֹף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקָם: כ צְדָק צְדָק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תַּחֲיֶה וְיִרְנְשָׁתָּ: *16:18 'You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 16:19 'You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 16:20 'Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (NASB)* Here we see the importance of these positive commands to appoint judges (שופטים) and officers (ושטרים) in every town (בכל-שעריך). This imperative is to institute justice in the land, and to prevent corruption by distortion of the truth, being partial, and taking bribes. Moshe states that we are to pursue justice so that we can live and possess the land the Lord

God is giving. (16:20) The idea here is these things refer to corruption, and if the land is corrupted, everyone would be at risk to losing everything they have. While studying the Torah, there are places in the Torah that used the word “*Elohim*” (אלהים) in a way that does not refer to “*God*” but rather to a court of law. The reason is because the place of judgment is a position of power, authority, and is reserved for the Lord God in heaven being a righteous and holy God! The word “*Elohim*” means power, and this is why idols and the false gods of the nations are also called *elohim* in the Masoretic Text. The gods of the nations were regarded as having various powers and so their name is derived from “*el*” meaning power and strength. (*Rashi and Onkelus both explain “el” to mean power or strength.*) In the case of courts of law, the men who have been given this authority are said to have been given power by HaShem to enforce the laws of the Torah. The use of the word *Elohim* in reference to judges is found in *Shemot / Exodus 21:6*.

#### *Shemot / Exodus 21:6*

וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֲדֹנָיו אֶל-הַקְּאֵלִים וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֶל-הַדֹּלֶת אוֹ אֶל-הַמְּזוּזָה  
זֶה וְרָצַע אֲדֹנָיו אֶת-אָזְנוֹ בַּמַּרְצֵעַ וַעֲבָדוּ לְעַלְמִים:

*21:6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges;  
he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door  
post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an  
awl; and he shall serve him for ever.*

In this usage here, the word *Elohim* is given to refer to judges. Note the context, a Jewish man was indentured to work for his master, decided to remain in servitude despite being given the opportunity to be set free. This man is brought before “*elohim*” the judges, and it is ordered that his ear be pierced in order to symbolically bind his life to the life of his master by blood. This name of God that is being used here to refer to judges is based upon the word *el* (אל) meaning power and strength. We understand this from the text of the Torah according to *Bereshit / Genesis 31:29*.

#### *Bereshit / Genesis 31:29*

יֵשׁ-לְיֵאל יָדַי לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּכֶם רַע וְאֵלֵהֶי אֲבִיכֶם אָמַשׁ אָמַר

אֵלַי לֵאמֹר הִשְׁמַר לְךָ מִדַּבֵּר עִם־יַעֲקֹב מִטוֹב עַד־רָע:  
 31:29 *It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. (KJV)*

Here Laben is pursuing Jacob and Laben says יִשְׁלַח יָדַי לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּכֶם רָע *“it is in my power to do you harm”* but the God of your father addressed me last night in a dream saying *“Beware of speaking with Jacob either good or bad.”* The word *“el”* here is used to show the power which is given to a man, and God who is the one who gives and then either allows or restrains that power. The name *“Elohim”* in reference to God, connotes His complete mastership and control over everything. In addition to this, the use of the word *elohim* for the judges, Ibn Ezra states that this represents a relationship with God since the courts are supposed to be involved in carrying out God’s laws on earth for justice and truth. Ramban states that God has put these men into the place of authority and therefore God’s presence and influence rests upon them during their judgements providing them with a divine ruling. This is taken under the context of *Tehillim / Psalms 82:1* which states, *“in the midst of judges (elohim) God will judge.”*

Rashi states the following on *Shemot / Exodus 21:6*.

### ***Rashi on Shemot / Exodus 21:6 Part 2***

אל הדלת או אל המזוזה *TO THE DOOR OR TO THE DOORPOST — From this statement you might think that the doorpost is also a proper thing upon which the servant’s ear may be pierced! Scripture, however, states, (Deuteronomy 15:17) “[Then thou shalt take an awl], and thrust it through his ear and into the door” — into the door but not into the doorpost. If this be so, what is the purpose of Scripture stating here “[to the door] or to the doorpost?” By this juxtaposition it only compares the door with the doorpost. What is the characteristic of the doorpost? It is something perpendicular! So, too, the door must during the act of perforation be in a perpendicular position (on its hinges),*

*not detached as, for instance, lying on the ground (Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 21:6:2; Kiddushin 22b).*

The significance of this interpretation is on the doorpost in which one's ear is pierced. The doorpost is to be upright, and not laying down. This is an allusion to the uprightness of one's heart, to righteousness, to justice, to truth, and to waking in God's ways. Rashi's comments on the doorpost in this way is compared to their both being in the upright position (living according to the Word of God). Chizkuni points out this is paralleled in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 15:17 then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant... (NASB)* when comparing the Jerusalem Targum, the Targum translates the word או in the verse as meaning אשר, "which is" and there are a similar constructions in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 21:36 או נודע כי שור נגזו הוא*, where the word או also means אשר, i.e. "an ox which is known to be aggressive." Rashi makes an allegorical explanation based on the Mechilta which states the ear which had heard God say at the Mountain of Sinai "do not steal," that is coupled to the same ear that had heard God say "the Children of Israel are My slaves," the person becoming a permanent slave needs to be reminded of this by being pierced after having opted to ignore both of these statements by God. The comparison to the ten commandments of not stealing is given, and the command "do not steal" is referred to as stealing persons (*kidnapping, i.e. Vayikra / Leviticus 19:11 on theft of objects*). So this idea of theft is a display of greater fear in the sense that a thief does his stealing in secret, and then he hides from or is more afraid of the police and the court than of the Lord God Almighty seeing him.

The call to place courts as a rule of law in every city throughout the land is a reminder of what the Lord God requires of us as we live our lives each day, to live with justice, truth, and mercy towards others. This follows full circle back to the intention of one's heart. What is the real purpose of bringing the sacrifice if it is done so in a cheapened way (with blemish, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 17:1*) Are we to go before the Lord with corrupted hearts by both perverting justice, and/or perverting the form of worship He has chosen? Sin, wickedness, evil brings death (*17:4-5*) and evidence for injustice shall be estab-

lished by two or three witnesses, in order to prevent corruption and perversion of justice. If something is too difficult to discern between truth and a lie, one is to bring the matter before the Lord at the place He has established His name.

The verses we are looking at for this week are from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-17:3*.

***Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-17:3***

*16:18 'You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 16:19 'You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 16:20 'Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you. 16:21 'You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord your God, which you shall make for yourself. 16:22 'You shall not set up for yourself a sacred pillar which the Lord your God hates. 17:1 'You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God. 17:2 'If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the Lord your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, by transgressing His covenant, 17:3 and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded, 17:4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, 17:5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death. 17:6 'On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. 17:7 'The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.*

17:8 'If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses. 17:9 'So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case. 17:10 'You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the Lord chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you. 17:11 'According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. 17:12 'The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the Lord your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. 17:13 'Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again. (NASB)

יח שִׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן-לָהֶם בְּכָל-שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן  
לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט-צֶדֶק: יט לֹא-תִטֶּה מִשְׁפַּט לֹא  
תִּפְרֹר פָּנִים וְלֹא-תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֹר עֵינַי חֲכָמִים וְיִסְלַף דְּבָרֵי  
צְדִיקָם: כ צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה וְיִרְשָׁתָּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ: ס כֹּא לֹא-תִטֶּע לָךְ אֲשֶׁרָה כָּל-עֵץ אֲצִל  
מִזִּבְחַי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה-לָךְ: כב וְלֹא-תִקִּים לָךְ מִצֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר  
שָׂא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ס

ספר דברים פרק יז

א לֹא-תִזְבַּח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שׁוֹר וְשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה בּוֹ מוֹם כָּל דָּבָר  
רַע כִּי תוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא: ס ב כִּי-יִמָּצֵא בְּקִרְבְּךָ בְּאֶחָד  
שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ אִישׁ אוֹ-אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה  
אֶת-הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה-אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲבֹר בְּרִיתוֹ: ג וַיִּלָּךְ וַיַּעֲבֹד אֱלֹהִים  
אֲחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלַשָּׁמַשׁ | או לַיָּרֵחַ או לְכָל-צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא-צִוִּיתִי: ד וְהִגַּד-לָךְ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ וְדִרְשָׁתָּ הֵיטֵב וְהִנֵּה אָמַת נְכוֹן הַדָּבָר  
נַעֲשֶׂתָה הַתּוֹעֵבָה הַזֹּאת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: ה וְהוֹצֵאתָ אֶת-הָאִישׁ הַהוּא או  
אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה הַהוּא אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַרַע הַזֶּה אֶל-שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֶת-

הָאִישׁ אוֹתָהּ-הָאִשָּׁה וְסִקְלֹתָם בְּאֲבָנִים וּמָתוּ: ו על-פי | שְׁנַיִם עֵדִים  
 אוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה עֵדִים יוֹמֵת הֵמֶת לֹא יוֹמֵת עַל-פִּי עֵד אֶחָד: ז יְד הָעֵדִים  
 תִּהְיֶה-בוֹ בְּרֵאשֹׁנָה לְהַמִּיתוֹ וְיָד כָּל-הָעָם בְּאַחֲרֹנָה וּבַעֲרַת הָרֶעַ  
 מִקֶּרְבָּה: פ ח פִּי יִפְלֹא מִמָּה דָבָר לְמִשְׁפָּט בֵּין-דָּם | לְדָם בֵּין-דִּין  
 לְדִין וּבֵין נֹגַע לְנֹגַע דְּבָרֵי רִיבֹת בְּשַׁעֲרֵיהָ וְקִמַּת וְעֲלִיתָ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם  
 אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיהָ בוֹ: ט וּבָאתָ אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם וְאֶל-  
 הַשֹּׁפֵט אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַּיָּמִים הֵהֵם וְדַרְשָׁתָּ וְהִגִּידוּ לְךָ אֵת דְּבַר הַמִּשְׁפָּט:  
 י וְעָשִׂיתָ עַל-פִּי הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יִגִּידוּ לְךָ מִן-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר  
 יְהוָה וְשִׁמְרָתָ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר יֹרֹוּ: יא עַל-פִּי הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר  
 יֹרֹוּ וְעַל-הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר-יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ תַּעֲשֶׂה לֹא תִסּוּר מִן-הַדָּבָר  
 אֲשֶׁר-יִגִּידוּ לְךָ יָמִין וּשְׂמָאל: יב וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה בְּזָדוֹן לְבַלְתִּי  
 שְׁמַע אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן הַעֲמִיד לְשָׁרֵת שָׁם אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיהָ אוֹ אֶל-הַשֹּׁפֵט  
 וּמָת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא וּבַעֲרַת הָרֶעַ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: יג וְכָל-הָעָם יִשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּרְאוּ  
 וְלֹא יִזְדוּן עוֹד:

In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 17* we read the following, 17:9 ‘So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case. 17:10 ‘You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the Lord chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you. 17:11 ‘According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. 17:12 ‘The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the Lord your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. 17:13 ‘Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again. (NASB) The interesting aspect about this is how a person is to listen to the Levite (Cohen, Priest) both in the teaching of instruction in Torah, and the verdict that is given upon legal issues. These instructions on creating courts, judges, and officers (law enforcement) comes juxtaposed from the previous Torah portion on the festivals related to the pilgrimage festivals when one would travel to the location of the Tabernacle. The idea is the text was written in this way so one could be taught on how to conduct one’s self during the festivals, what exactly one should do, etc. (*Rabbeinu*

*Bahya, Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18 Parts 3-5*) The judges are appointed on the basis of their knowledge of the law. The people called שוטרים are those who ensure that the judges' decisions are carried out. Basically, the שוטרים are policemen, they are the law enforcement meant to keep order and peace and patrol the cities, etc.

The judicial system is divided into three levels: there is a court comprising 71 judges, known as the Sanhedrin. There are courts comprising twenty three judges. Finally, there are courts comprising three judges. The courts of only three judges were instituted for communities numbering fewer than 120 people. (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 2*). The sages have said that a court cannot have fewer than three judges in order to enable there to be a majority and a minority and in order to prevent a tie vote between the judges. (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 3*). The sages deduced all this from the mention of the word *elohim* three times in *Shemot / Exodus 22:7, 22:8* and *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:15* when courts and judges are mentioned. Even though, a learned individual may hand down rulings by himself as a Biblical law, seeing that the Torah (*Vayikra / Leviticus 19:15*) wrote בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתָךְ, “judge your people fairly,” (singular) the Rabbis conclude that one is not to judge matters single-handedly. It is considered arrogant to shoulder the entire burden of justice by oneself, something reserved only for God Who is alone and does not need advice. The court of three persons is for rulings on financial damages. The court of 23 judges, known as the small Sanhedrin, is allowed to try cases involving capital punishment. This may have been the court proceedings that convicted Yeshua to death on the cross. The Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin haGadol, consisted of 71 of the finest scholars of the nation. The wisest of them was appointed president of this court, known as נָשִׂיא, “prince” according to the language of the Mishnah and Gemara. He functioned in the seat of Moshe in his time. The point is justice is to be established in the country.

According to *Midrash Tehillim 62*, “when justice is not practiced on earth, it will be practiced in heaven.” This means that when men do not practice justice on earth, setting up courts of law, and officers, God will have to exercise His vocation of being a Judge. This is said to be the deeper meaning of *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3*: “if you will walk in My statutes... I will give your rain at its appropriate time.” This



draws us back to the idea of what our responsibility is before God to remain faithful to Him.

There are many references in the Tanach and the Apostolic Writings on the importance of righteousness and the consequences of living a life of unrighteousness (unfaithfulness).

***Tehillim / Psalms 73:27***

*73:27 Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. (NASB)*

***Nehemiah 1:8***

*1:8 “Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples;*

***Mishley / Proverbs 2:22***

*2:22 But the wicked will be cut off from the land And the treacherous will be uprooted from it.*

***Ezekiel 14:13***

*14:13 “Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast,*

***Ezekiel 15:8***

*15:8 ‘Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully, ’” declares the Lord GOD.*

***1 Corinthians 3:16-17***

*3:16 Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? 3:17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. (NASB)*

The psalmist writes of the destruction of the unfaithful before the Lord.

Nehemiah reiterates what is written in the Torah regarding those who are unfaithful to God, this is connected to the idea of not living according to God's ways of righteousness, justice, and truth, and to the creation of the courts, if men fail to do so, the Lord God Himself (the heavenly court) will take action causing the people to go into exile. King Solomon said in Proverbs that the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the one who sins in unfaithfulness, Ezekiel states that the Lord will work in such a way so as to send famine, drought, and despair in order to draw the hearts of men back to faithfulness. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians of the body being the temple of God in which the Spirit of God dwells, and the Lord God will destroy the person who destroys God's temple. This is consistent with what we read in *2 Thessalonians 1* which states the following:

### ***2 Thessalonians 1:1-12***

*1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 1:2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 1:5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints,*

*and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 1:12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

Paul writes that persecutions, sufferings, and afflictions, are indicators that one is worthy of the kingdom of heaven, that Yeshua will return to destroy those who do not obey the gospel, and praying that we would be counted worthy of this calling. Paul's words reveal a few things, (i) concerning the gospel message, it is something to be obeyed, and (ii) there is something we must do to be considered worthy, and that is to bear the testimony of God before the nations and remaining faithful to the Lord! In the Torah command the phrase בְּכָל-נְשָׂאֵיֶיךָ, "*in all your cities*" (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18*) the reason the Torah writes כָּל, "*all,*" is to tell us that every single city and town in the land of Israel must have its own judiciary. This may be paralleled to each one of us, that every man, woman, and child is to judiciously examine his or her life to ascertain whether one's life lines up with God's word, and if not, to repent, and seek the Lord's help to overcome sin and unfaithfulness. According to *2 Thessalonians 1*, Yeshua will be given authority to met out justice, and at this time, we have the opportunity to accept what He has done on our behalf, in order to deal with the capital offences of sin in our lives.

In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18*, יח שֹׁפְטִים וְנֹשְׂטֵיִם תִּתֶּן-לָךְ, בְּכָל-נְשָׂאֵיֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפָּט-בְּכָל-נְשָׂאֵיֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ, "*for your tribes,*" has a special purpose in its position in the text, according to Sifri these words belong to the previous words, i.e. שֹׁפְטִים לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ, "*judges for your tribes.*" If this

were so, the Torah would have written **תתן לך לשבטיך בכל שפטיך**, “*you shall appoint for your tribes in all your towns.*” Moshe wanted to ensure that the word **לשבטיך** appears next to the words **ושפטו את-**, **העם משפט-צדק**, “*and they will then be able to judge the people with righteousness*” in order to provide the rationale for the legislation. If a city is inhabited by people of more than one tribe it requires two courts in order to satisfy the Torah’s demand for fair judgment, **משפט-** **צדק**. The Torah was careful to write **את-העם**, to instruct us that two courts should not apply different yardsticks but that the whole people must be judged according to a uniform system of laws. (*Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 16:18 Part 6*) This is paralleled to our lives as pertaining to the Jew and the Gentile who joins with Israel, we do not keep separate laws, there is only one law! The text is making it clear that though Israel is comprised of 12 tribes, this does not mean that there are only twelve states, and each has its own set of laws, note how in the USA this concept may be confused because there are both Federal and State laws. The Torah is saying there is only one Law for all! This is why the Torah writes **ושפטו** in the third person instead of **ותשפטו** in direct speech just as the words **תתן לך**, or when the Torah continues **לא תפיר פנים** addressing the judges directly. In addition to this, Rashi explains that the words **את-העם** are an instruction that the judges must both be experts in their field and that they must be known to be righteous. This parallels the need for us, each and every one of us, are to be well versed in the Scriptures, to know God’s Word, to have His Words written upon our hearts! The warning that is being given here is to those who do the appointing, to appoint only righteous people. This is what the Lord is looking for in our lives, to have faith and to be faithful. Yeshua laid his life down for us, such that believing in Him, in what He has done, the Lord God Almighty will send His Spirit to dwell in our hearts, enabling and empowering us to overcome this world by the means of faithfulness. This seems to be the rational behind the command to appoint judges and officials for law enforcement. The Lord God working in our hearts so that we will live for Him, and His showing us mercy (grace) on account of His son, such that we would not be partakers with the destruction of the wicked!