

# Justice, justice you must pursue

Parashat Shoftim ([D'varim/Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9](#)) 5782 B"H

## Justice in the Land of Israel

This passage in D'varim (Deuteronomy) details how the nation of Israel should achieve justice for its inhabitants.

Here we find instructions regarding the appointing of judges, the process through which legal claims should be investigated, as well as the necessity for legitimate witnesses to be present at trial.

## Even among God's chosen people, there would be criminals.

There would be those who would intentionally cheat others.

And surely there would be an Israelite or two who would steal from others.

In extreme cases, one would end up murdering another and undoubtedly a few would turn from the God of Israel to seek after false gods using sorcery and witchcraft.

So the Word of God addresses all of this:

["So you are to purge the evil from your midst." Deuteronomy 17:7b](#)

## Rebellion does not have to be the future for your family

Samuel told Saul in [1 Samuel 15:23](#) that rebellion is as bad as

witchcraft and that stubbornness is like idolatry.

**The world applauds rebellion and even expects it in *their* teenagers.**

Dear reader, if you are a disciple of Messiah, rebellion does *not* have to be the future for your children.

Do not accept society's norms.

**Align your lifestyle to the Word of the LORD. Train your children to love the LORD with all their heart.**

**Show them the calamity that rebellion brings and pray that they will choose obedience and grace over chaos and self-destruction.**

## **Biblical Justice**

Sadly, today, the very term "justice" has become obfuscated by those who would pervert justice to suit their own desires and agendas. Some even *worship* the goddess "justice."

Yet real Biblical justice is intended to be at the core of our faith!

So we need to understand true Biblical justice.

Biblical justice is about fairness. In the United States, we enjoy a special legal system which attempts to ensure fairness when one is accused. The system is not perfect and those who run the system are certainly fallible, but a high precedent is set and the expectation in our country is that justice can be served.

In many other countries, this is not the case. Tyrants and dictators do not favor due process and corruption prevails. Those of us who live in free nations ought be very grateful, and we must pray for those in authority so that the legal system can be trusted and fair trials ensured.

# American Jurisprudence

Did you know that our legal system in the U.S. and procedures for due process are based on Torah?

Indeed, the American legal system was profoundly shaped by the writings of the Hebrew Scriptures. The 14th Amendment, in particular, reflects the concept that all citizens deserve equal protection under the law. Due process is based on this Biblical concept: "Justice, justice, you shall pursue."

["Justice, justice you must pursue, so that you may live and possess the land that ADONAI your God is giving you."](#)  
[Deuteronomy 16:20](#), *emphasis added*

Trying to memorize Scripture?

Notice this particular verse in the TLV translation nearly rhymes, making it an easy verse to memorize.

*Justice, justice you must pursue*

*so that you may live and possess the land that ADONAI your God is giving you.*

## **Justice and Righteousness are better than sacrifice**

The Holy Scriptures tell us that

["To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to ADONAI than sacrifice."](#) Proverbs 21:3



To do righteousness and justice  
is more acceptable to ADONAI  
than sacrifice.

Proverbs 21:3



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A sacrifice may atone for one particular sin, but if we live consistently in justice and righteousness, there would ultimately be no need for sacrifice because sin would be averted.

We are not perfect; however, and sin does creep into our lives.

There is nothing greater than the sacrifice Yeshua haMashiach (Jesus Christ) made for us. He lived in perfect righteousness and justice and also sacrificed Himself on behalf of us sinners, to make [atonement](#) for us.

As believers who have placed our hope and trust in our Savior, the best way we can demonstrate our gratitude is by living as He would – seeking justice and truly pursuing righteousness. We cannot possibly do so perfectly, but we ought to try. We ought to show a rebellious world how wonderful and different life can be when we strive to live in righteousness.

## Ways we can seek to live in justice

## **and righteousness**

Honoring others, demonstrating love, quieting our attitudes, dressing modestly, reaching out to our neighbors offering help and kindness, minding our tongue so as not to speak judgmentally, offering genuine hospitality, managing our resources with wisdom and prudence, and creating a gentle home atmosphere so that our families live peaceably . . . these are all ways we can seek to live in justice and righteousness.

It isn't enough to tell a rebellious world that we know a better way. We must show the world that we are different: they will know we are Christians by our love.

We have a new hope today. The criminal can be forgiven. The thief can be restored. The liar can learn Truth. The Messiah of Israel came to this earth to live and to die on behalf of those who would put their trust in His Name. You are not too far gone. Maybe you have lived a life of rebellion. Maybe you think there is no hope for you. What you need to know today is there is a Savior who loves you and He died so that you could live eternally in heaven with Him.

Please, put your trust in Him today. His divine and righteousness justice could have condemned us all for all eternity, but His love is such that He chose to save us, if we will allow Him into our hearts. He is so very just that we are all found guilty, but He chose to forgive us.

Will you trust Him today? Will you allow His righteousness to cover you? He loves you, and He wants to welcome you into His Kingdom as His very own child.

**If you have made a commitment to trust in the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Yeshua (Jesus), please let us know! Please leave a comment so we can pray for you as you learn to walk under His righteous covering. You don't have to fear. He is willing to forgive you, even today.**

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# Humility and Discretion in Micah 6:8

Haftarah [Balak](#) ([Micah/Michoh/Michah 5:6-6:8](#)) 5782 B”H

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת צֶלְעָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּרִיחַ וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת מִיכָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת שְׁפָרַיִם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי מְנַחֵם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי מִיכָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי שְׁפָרַיִם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי מְנַחֵם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי מִיכָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי שְׁפָרַיִם

וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי מְנַחֵם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי מִיכָה וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי שְׁפָרַיִם

וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

## Walking “humbly” with God

The Hebrew word “[צָנָה](#)” *tzana* occurs only twice in the Hebrew Scriptures (“Old Testament”).

You will find a form of the word in both the above passage which is [Micah 6:8](#) as well as in [Proverbs 11:2](#):

[“When pride comes, then comes disgrace,  
but with the humble is wisdom.” Proverbs 11:2](#)

*Tzana* is usually translated in English as “humble.” [Strong’s Hebrew Concordance](#) defines *tzana* as “to be modest or humble.” Accordingly, I will highlight how the NKJV, NRSV, and TLV all choose to translate this word as “humbly”:

## [Micah 6:8 New King James Version](#)

[“He has shown you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the LORD require of you  
But to do justly,  
To love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8 NKJV](#), emphasis

added

## [Micah 6:8 New Revised Standard Version](#)

[“He has told you, O mortal, what is good,  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice and to love kindness  
and to walk \*\*humbly\*\* with your God?” Micah 6:8 NRSV,](#)  
emphasis added

## [Micah 6:8 Tree of Life Version](#)

[“He has told you, humanity, what is good,  
and what \*ADONAI\* is seeking from you:  
Only to practice justice, to love mercy,  
and to walk \*\*humbly\*\* with your God.” Micah 6:8 TLV,](#) emphasis  
added

## **Walking “discreetly” with God**

With this much agreement by Christian translators, can't we just be happy with their translation and move on with our day?

Well, sure. But that would be boring.

Let me instead point out a nuance that captured my attention while studying this passage and I hope sparks your thoughts, too!

The *Complete Tanakh* translation used by the Orthodox Jewish *Chabad* movement translates this word differently. Rather than humble, they chose to translate *tzana* as “discreet”:

## [Micah 6:8 Complete Tanakh](#)

[He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the LORD  
demands of you; but to do justice, to love loving-kindness,  
and to walk \*\*discreetly\*\* with your God. Micah 6:8, Complete  
Tanakh,](#) emphasis added

Could it be that the Jewish translation is closer to the original meaning?

Many of the Orthodox Jewish folks are more fluent in Hebrew having studied and spoken it much longer than those of us who are able to read and translate, but who are not necessarily as familiar with the language's deepest nuances.

To be humble requires a degree of discretion, does it not? Let's think about what it would mean to add more discretion to our walk with the LORD.

## **What about Bold Professions of Faith?**

It is generally easy in the United States to make bold professions of our faith without fear of persecution or retribution.

We are able to wear Christian t-shirts, carry a Bible in a cute case, preach openly and testify to those who would listen.

*Do you realize how incredibly blessed we are that our car radios can access multiple Christian stations? Those radio stations aren't censored and no one is getting prison time for sharing the Gospel message. Not so in other countries, my friend.*

Here in the U.S., we have a tendency to *boast* of our evangelistic efforts. "How many" people attended the tent revival. "How many" people got saved last week. We focus on numbers and we pat ourselves on the back when we baptize new followers of Messiah.

Some of that is ok. After all in [Galatians 6:14](#), Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) exhorts us to boast in the cross. *But are we boasting of our LORD or boasting of our own efforts?*



What we should strive for is a bold profession of faith *coupled with humility.*

Were it not for the LORD . . .

## **Justice, Mercy, and *Discretion***

I grew up in a very liberal “church.” They were not ashamed to tell you that they believed the Gospel in a nutshell is summarized by [Micah 6:8](#). While this verse is wonderful, the *Gospel* requires the understanding that God’s Son came, died, and rose again for us.

Their abrasive social justice campaigns always cited this verse, and I kid you not, one “Easter Sunday” they advertised “Health and Wellness Sunday” and completely ignored the Resurrection.

Yeah, it was weird.

I bring this up because we need to understand the type of justice that Micah is talking about.

What many call “social justice” today is an aberration to true, Godly justice.

Micah exhorts us to seek the type of justice that will honor God. We are to love mercy so that we are balanced in our decision-making and demonstrate God-honoring kindness.

Humility goes right along with that, but so does being discrete.

I can wear my faith (literally) on my sleeve, but *what changes when I am more discrete about it?*

Messiah Jesus taught discretion: [“But when you do tzedakah \(charity/good deeds\), do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing...” Matthew 6:3](#)

*Won't my inner conversation with my LORD be even more personal, more intimate?*

*Won't my boasting shift from my own achievements to what He has accomplished?*

*What happens when I **don't** make it obvious that I am a believer? Is there a segment of people I could actually reach better if they didn't know from the outset that I am a follower of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ) the Anointed One?*

On the other hand, we do not want to be overly discreet so as to muddle our testimony, cause confusion, or inadvertently damage our testimonies! It is no secret that most strict Jewish communities are very closed to the outside world. "Walking discreetly with God" takes on a different sense in those communities such that their observance is so inward it seems on the outside that they have very little sense of welcome to nonJews (even though hospitality is actually a very strong part of Judaism!).

As in all things, there must be balance.

## **The Secret Place of the Most High**

There is something to be said about dwelling in the "secret place" of the Most High. Throughout Scripture, the "secret place" is also translated as "shelter," "refuge," or being "concealed," by God.

["He who dwells in the shelter of Elyon, will abide in the shadow of Shaddai." Psalm 91:1](#)

The LORD covers us, in such a way that could be described as "discreet." We are invited into the secret place, the place of His holiness, covered and protected in His love.

So let us learn to walk justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly *and* discreetly with Him.

How will we do that?

By being in relationship with the LORD God Almighty and His Son, Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ. We must be filled by His Holy Spirit so we can truly live in justice, mercy, and humility.

**So I encourage you today, seek Him with all your heart! Allow the LORD to teach you and guide you in all of His ways so you may know Him and make Him known! Shalom!**

## **Related:**

[\*Tzedek, Tzadik, & Tzedakah: Matthew 6:3-4 through a Hebraic lens\*](#)

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**Could Tzelophehad's inheritance be given to daughters?**

*Parashat Pinchas ([B'midbar/Numbers 25:10 – 29](#)) 5781 B"H  
(Updated 7/19/22 5782)*

# The Law had been given, but clarification was needed

By [Numbers 25](#), Israel had *Torah* (God's instructions), but different situations arose in Israel's history which needed clarification.

One such instance occurred in [Numbers \(B'midbar\) 27](#) when a man named Tzelophehad (commonly spelled, [Zelophehad](#), in English translations) died in the wilderness.

He was survived by 5 daughters.

## Tzelophehad's family

It appears Tzelophehad had been a decent man.

Nothing is said about his wife, so she may have died many years earlier.

Yet somehow Tzelophehad managed to raise up 5 thoughtful daughters:

Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

*Machlach's* name refers to "sickness." If she was the firstborn, as suggested by the name-order listing in the Bible, perhaps her mother struggled during childbirth. *Noah's* name is derived from a word meaning, "movement," referring to "trembling" or "quivering." Perhaps she was seen as "nervous" or "anxious." *Choglah's* name is a bit more obscure, probably meaning, "partridge" according to Strong's Hebrew Concordance. Maybe she was a crier as an infant, because, according to the [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#), partridges were known for their loud cries that attracted plenty of attention. *Milcah* is a form of *Malchah*, meaning "queen," and *Tirtzah* describes a "favored" one or one in whom there is "delight."

These women knew right from wrong and just from unjust. They were respectful of Moses and they concerned themselves with a legal matter, demonstrating that they also respected YHVH.



The legal precedence was such that sons received a father's inheritance.

**But Tzelophehad had no sons!**

He did, however, have some independent thinkers!

His daughters concerned themselves with an issue of fairness, seeking justice, not only for themselves, but for the legacy of their father.



# TZELOPHEHAD'S FIVE DAUGHTERS

The legal precedence in Israel was such that sons received a father's inheritance. But Tzelophehad had no sons! He did, however, have some independent thinkers. His daughters concerned themselves with an issue of fairness. They sought justice, not only for themselves, but for the legacy of their father.



  
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## Moses & Eleazar hear the daughters' petition

Tzelophehad was never part of [Korah's](#) clan. Tzelophehad's daughters made a special point to ensure their father's legacy would in no way be connected to Korah.

**Tzelophehad had nothing to do with the rebellious uprising.**

**[Read about Korah, the \(wicked\) Social Influencer of their day HERE](#)**

Machlah, Noah, Choglah, Milcah, and Tirzah appeared before Moses, Eleazar, and the princes of the entire Israelite assembly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

No sickness or nervousness would keep them from walking in favor.

They did not seek attention for attention's sake.

The 5 sisters had in them the confidence that they were daughters of Israel, queens in the royal kingdom of a holy nation blessed by the Almighty One. They were bound as sisters, and they made their petition *together*.

[“Why should our father’s name diminish from his family just because he had no son? Give to us property among our father’s brothers.” \(Numbers 27:4\)](#)

## A verdict from on high

Moses didn't make a decision until he had consulted the Supreme Law-Giver, *ADONAI*. Moshe prayed and the LORD responded to him that Tzelophehad's daughters were right:

They ***should*** be given the inheritance of their father, and the commandment would stand for all of Israel.

There was only one caveat (described in [Numbers 36](#)) which was that the daughters had to marry within their tribe.

## Individual and community rights

These five brave women took a stand for their human rights. Some would say they remained limited due to the provision that they must marry within their clan, but culturally speaking, they were still granted significant freedom to marry whoever they wished within their tribal grouping.

Rabbi Johnathan Sacks, of blessed memory, delves deeper into the human rights discussion that arises from [Numbers 27](#) in his article titled, [Complexity of Human Rights](#). Of particular

interest, the dichotomy of the individual rights justly pursued by the five daughters of Tzelophehad and the group or tribal rights that are also an important part of wholesome justice.

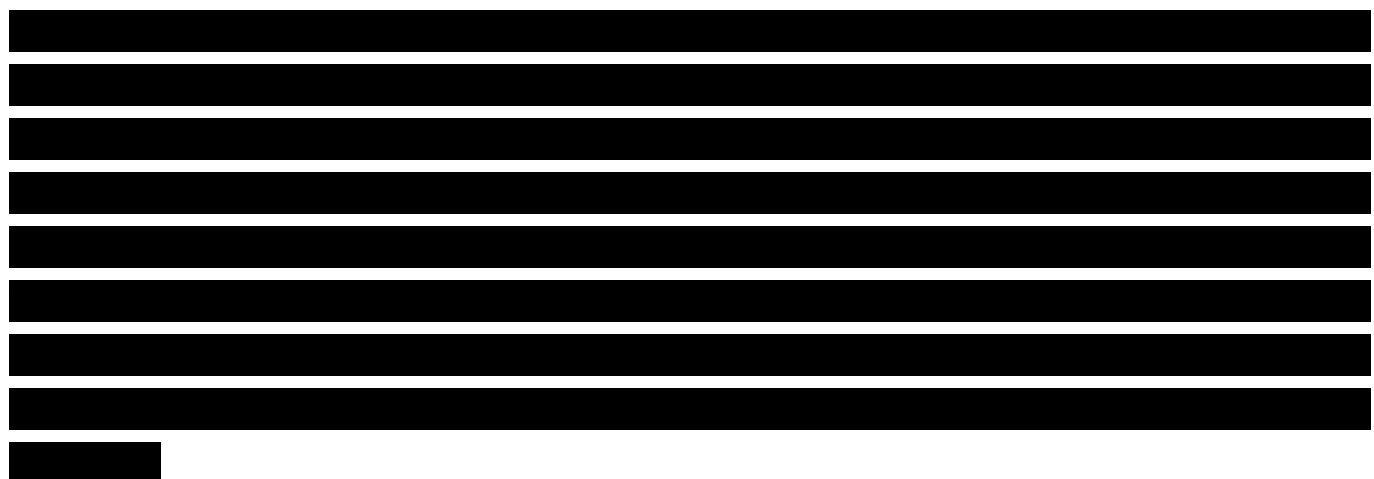
Today, most people are only focused on their *individual* rights, to the exclusion or disregard of the needs and rights of the wider society. This can lead to major distortions in appropriate social justice. The “me” culture of today forces wider society to adapt to *outlandish policies* demanded by at times defiant individuals, in a less-than-holy and unjust way.

The lesson from [Numbers 27](#) is that when an individual pursues justice in a righteous and holy way, then their needs can and should be addressed, and the wider society will benefit from that individual situation.

Machlah, Noah, Choglah, Milcah, and Tirzah would marry within the tribe, for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of the nation of Israel.

Families come first, and this Scripture passage illustrates that.

The 5 daughters of Tzelophehad were blessed and heard because of their faithfulness and obedience, and the nation of Israel prospered, even to this day.



[Korah: the Rebellious Social Influencer](#)



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# **Tzedek, Tzadik, & Tzedakah: Matthew 6:3-4 through a Hebraic lens**

Charitable giving is tracked, graphed, sought-after, solicited, pleaded for, telethoned for . . . and for good reason – there is a healthy motivation when all parties involved win. But how charitable is our charitable giving, if it is done for a reward?