



## Law's First Requirement: Just and Fair Authorities

**16:18** "You shall appoint magistrates and officers for your tribes, in all the settlements that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. **19** You shall not judge unfairly; you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just. **20** Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Deut. 16:18-20)

The traditional translation for the term "shofetim," the first word and title of our Parasha, is "judges," but the term "magistrates," which include judges as well as other types of rulers or governors, is more appropriate for governments which don't distinguish between governmental branches. The second term, "shoterim," is understood more as "law enforcement." They are not the judges or the governors themselves, but they are assigned as agents to enforce and execute the law and rules declared by the governors. Such law enforcement personnel are also authority figures, so the translation "officer" is appropriate, as we often term our law enforcement "police officers."

The Bible is intensely concerned with governmental fairness and rooting out any governmental corruption and partiality. I've noted many times in our Isaiah study class how a disproportionate amount of the prophet's message is directed to the governing classes. Isaiah places much of the blame for Judea and Israel's predicament upon bad rulership, even when much of the blame could be seen as lying with the people themselves, or with other factors. Yes, many times Isaiah does direct diatribes against the people, but what particularly seems to infuriate him is governmental failure, both in not correcting the people's failings as well as in making matters worse through corruption of government. I often have remarked to myself how much of that Biblical preoccupation with governmental miscarriage of justice has been absorbed by our American society: If something is wrong with society, we Americans will aver time and time again, 'it must be the government's fault.'

Much of that laser-focused concern for good government is in evidence here, at the very beginning of the legal exposition of our Parasha. Before **any** particular laws are discussed, laws against governmental corruption are mentioned, prohibitions against bribing or showing favoritism in the government. Although many of us are used to thinking of the famous admonishment "justice, justice shalt thou pursue" as being directed to the individual and his ethical imperatives, it is striking for me to note that the context in which the phrase is used here refers to the pursuit of a just and fair government. The phrase which follows, "in order that you thrive and inherit the Land," reinforces the point that the Torah is speaking of just government: For only a good and just political order, acknowledged by the people as fair and just, can cause the people and the government to thrive enough to maintain power over a territory in perpetuity, as a perpetual heritage.

Further, the Hebrew Bible's opinion seems to be that it's considered the responsibility of the authorities to **make sure** that the people are good and reprove them if they are not. If law and order are properly administered and enforced, the Bible feels, then the people will be forced to be good and just, and the people and their state will thrive. If the people and their state are not thriving because people are misbehaving, the onus of responsibility **must** fall upon the authorities, according to this Biblical way of thinking, which has a highly idealized conception of leadership. Of course, the first responsibility of the people is to appoint authorities, and that is exactly what this Parasha's first command is. The people can be blamed for not producing and appointing such authorities, but whatever leadership they appoint is to be blamed for much of the society's inadequacies. These conceptions were taken from an ancient Oriental view of government, with the Ruler standing at the center, close to God, establishing political order which then upholds the natural order on Earth, keeping the whole Earth from descending into Chaos. This view, which the Bible inherits, places an enormous emphasis upon good leadership.

## Shabbat Shofetim

September 2-3, 2022 | 7 Elul, 5782

### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 820 | Haftarah: p. 835

Kaplan: p. 948 | Haftarah: p. 1234

**Candle Lighting** | 7:08 pm

**Friday Evening Services** | 7:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

**Zemirot** | 8:30 am

**Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

**Youth Program** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

**Kiddush** | following services | Paved Paradise

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 6:20 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Evening Services** | 7:05 pm | Main Sanctuary

**Habdala** | 8:02 pm

### Weekday Service Times

#### Morning Services

Sunday & Monday (Labor Day): 8:05 am

Tuesday-Friday: 7:05 am

#### Evening Services

Monday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit & Selihot): 6:30 pm

*Please note that our office will be closed on Monday for the legal holiday.*

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## HIGH HOLIDAYS

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### High Holiday Seating Reservations

*For Members & Guests*

**Register by September 12 (but sooner is appreciated!)**

We are offering both Indoor Services in our Main Sanctuary and Outdoor Services next door on Paved Paradise.

Both services will be beautiful and uplifting, and Rabbi Soloveichik will be spending time with each and delivering his sermons at both.

*For more detailed information on the venues and to place your reservation, please visit [shearithisrael.org/hh-5783](http://shearithisrael.org/hh-5783).*

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### Shabbat Teshuba Derasha

**Rabbi Meir Soloveichik**

**Shabbat, October 1 | Following Morning Services**

Sponsorship opportunities are available.

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### Place Your Lulab & Etrog Orders

**Deadline: October 2**

Purchase your lulab & etrog set through the synagogue at [shearithisrael.org/lulab](http://shearithisrael.org/lulab).

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Mazal tob to **Ondine Lewitinn**, upon the marriage of her daughter Sarah Lewitinn to Daniel Patterson, in Copenhagen.

Mazal tob to **Ruth & Irwin Shapiro** upon the birth of a great granddaughter, born to their grandchildren, Sara & Josh Jay.

Congratulations to **Anwar Suleiman**, upon the production of his play, The Arranged Matrimony, which is to be staged between Sept 11 and 18 at the Theater for The New City (tickets can be purchased at [dreamupfestival.org](http://dreamupfestival.org)).

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## COMING UP

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### New Member Tour with Z. Edinger

**Wednesday, September 7 | Following 6:30 pm Evening Services**

Are you a member who joined our congregation during COVID-19 times? Or have you been a member for a while but always wanted a chance to get to know our synagogue better? This tour is designed especially for you!

*To RSVP, email [zedinger@shearithisrael.org](mailto:zedinger@shearithisrael.org).*

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### **Nina Wachsmann, Author of *The Gallery of Beauties*, in conversation with Shearith Israel trustee, David Sable**

*Integration Without Assimilation:*

*The "Modern Jew" in Renaissance Venice*

**Wednesday, September 14 | 7:00 pm, following 6:30 pm evening services**

In the city that invented the concept of the 'Ghetto,' it is surprising to learn that the Jews lived separately but not isolated from the culture around them in the seventeenth century. Rabbis were not only leaders in the Jewish community, but scholars, mathematicians, statesmen and playwrights. The music, art, and innovative foods which filled the city, filtered into the Ghetto, finding its way into synagogues and homes.

In a salon-like discussion with trustee David Sable, Nina Wachsmann will bring to life this unusual city and its unusually modern Jews, from her research for her novel of historical suspense, *The Gallery of Beauties*.

*Register at [shearithisrael.org/events/nina-wachsmann](http://shearithisrael.org/events/nina-wachsmann).*

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### **Young Families Welcome Back Shabbat Picnic**

**Shabbat, September 24 | following kiddush**

Welcome back! Enjoy a potluck picnic on Paved Paradise and share your summer stories. Bring your kids, and have your kids bring their friends!

*RSVP at [shearithisrael.org/events/welcome-back-picnic](http://shearithisrael.org/events/welcome-back-picnic).*