

Twisted

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

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I. Judge v. 18

- a. Appoint
- b. Judges - to **pass judgement, administer justice** Ex 18:13.22a.26a Dt 25:1
 - i. As the Lord's own underlings they must be scrupulously fair (lit., "render righteous judgment")
 - ii. those in authority were expected to protect the rights of the poor and weak in society. "True justice" (see Lev 19:15) was required of kings, officials and local magistrates. In fact, the "world turned upside down" theme found in the book of Judges and in prophetic literature (Is 1:23) describes a society in which "laws are enacted, but ignored"
 - iii. The Israelites expected God's justice to be fair because it was issued from God who was a righteous Judge (Ps 7:11; 9:8; 119:137; 145:17). Those who were appointed to the office of judge (*dayyān* or *šōpēṭ*) or magistrate were expected to reflect God's holy nature (Exod 18:21). Consequently, when executing justice, the judges (*šōpēṭîm*) were to be absolutely fair, realizing that they were acting as agents or deputies of the holy God (Deut 1:16–17; cf. Exod 18:21–23). In this light, the so-called judges (*šōpēṭîm*) of the book of Judges were appointed by God to act for him as administrators of justice in two ways. In a military emergency, they liberated the Israelites by commanding military campaigns against the aggressive enemies who threatened their freedom and peace (*šālôm*). In peacetime, the judges administered justice by deciding disputes arising among their people (Judg 4:4–5). That these judges were just and righteous people is implied in the Deuteronomistic summary statement that when they died, the children of Israel forgot the way of the Lord (Judg 2:17–19)
 - iv. broad principle that provision is to be made for the administration of justice, and that this is to be done by the appointment of judges possessing local jurisdiction.
 - v. Elsewhere in Dt. "judges" are alluded to 17:9, 12. (at the central court), 19:17f, 21:2, 25:2 (and in the Mosaic age 1:16, 29:9 (10) ; cf. in Jos. 8:33, 23:2, 24:1): but usually (see on 19:12) the "elders" of a city appear as the local guardians of justice.
 - vi. At this time in his sermon Moses did not specify *how judges and officials* would be appointed. In the wilderness Moses at first had been the only judge of the people. But when the judicial burden became too great for

him he appointed “leading men” of the **tribes** as military leaders (“commanders”), officials, and judges (1:15–18; cf. Ex. 18). Probably these men were the chief elders in each tribe. So the judges appointed in each city were probably taken from that city’s council of elders (the elders functioned as a judicial body; cf. Deut. 19:12).

- c. Officers - placed in a responsible position (perhaps “recorder”) in judicial proceedings Dt 16:18
 - 1. subordinate officials, whose duties would be analogous to those of the modern clerk, warder, police-sergeant,
 - 2. The “officials” were probably assistants to the judges, probably functioning as clerks. These leaders were to **judge the people fairly** (lit., “righteously”; cf. 1:17; Prov. 18:5; 24:23).
- ii. In Towns
 - 1. Towns – gates, relatively small settlement, presumably larger than the village but smaller than the city
 - 2.
- iii. According to Tribes
- d. Lord has Given

II. By the Book vs. 18b-20a

- a. Judge
 - i. Righteous Judgment - expressions: saving: traditionally right, upright
 - 1. reliable judgement, true judgements (NRSV), true justice (REB) Zech 7:9, דִּלְפִי יְהוָה judgement that makes for peace, satisfactory justice Zech 8:16
 - 2. a model code for judges (see also Exod 23:1–3, 6–8; Lev 19:15–16).
 - 3. totally correct judgment”
 - 4. The man who is righteous tries to preserve the peace and prosperity of the community by fulfilling the commands of God in regard to others. In the supreme sense the righteous man (*ṣaddîq*) is one who serves God (Mal 3:18). Specifically, he, like Job, delivers the poor and orphaned, helps the blind along the way, supports the weak and is a father (provider) to the poor (Job 29:12–15).
 - 5. But the “righteousness” consisted in obedience to God’s law and conformity to God’s nature, having mercy for the needy and helpless. Among other righteousnesses of Job were his care for the traveler (Job 31:31–32), eschewing wealth for its own sake (31:24–25), thus not victimizing himself or others in its pursuit
 - 6. Their verdicts were to conform to the righteous standards set forth in the Word of **God** (which meant at that time the five books of Moses). They were **not to pervert justice**. This implies that God had given them a heavenly pattern for their actions toward each

other. If their actions did not conform to this pattern, those actions were to be changed or punished. Any nonconformity to the pattern of justice was a perversion.

b. Justice

i. Not Distort

1. To twist, pull or twist out of shape.
2. give a misleading account or impression of.

ii. Only Justice

1. Justice - **equity, what is right:**

iii. Pursue

1. **Pursue- follow after**
2. Moses summed up the requirements for the judges and officials with an emphatic command to **follow justice and justice alone** (lit., “righteousness, righteousness you must pursue!”). These words imply that impartial justice could be an elusive goal because of the weakness of human nature. Therefore it was absolutely essential that the standard set forth in the Law be followed precisely. Their lives and prosperity (Deut. 16:20) depended on their establishing impartial justice in the Promised **Land**.

c. Not Partial

i. “recognize the face”, be a respecter of persons, be partial

- ii. Nor were they to **show partiality** (lit., “do not recognize faces”). Ideally the judges were to treat each person as though they had no prior knowledge of him or her. Accepting **a bribe** was obviously wrong for it perverted (**blinds and twists**) the ability of judges to act in fairness to the parties in the litigation.

d. Not take a Bribe

i. Bribe Blinds

1. Bribe - gift intended to secure favor
 - a. The temptation for judges and government officials to accept bribes is found in every time and place (see Prov 6:35; Mic 7:3). Taking bribes becomes almost institutionally accepted in bureaucratic situations as competing parties attempt to outmaneuver each other (see Mic 3:11; Ezra 4:4–5). (presumably because of a bribe), including stiff fines and permanent removal from the bench. Exodus 23:8 forbids the taking of bribes and the perversion of justice as an offense against God, the weak and innocent, and the entire community (see Is 5:23; Amos 5:12)
2. Eyes of the wise
 - a. Wise - understanding and experienced
3. Perverts words of the righteous

- a. Perverts - to **twist, misrepresent**

III. **Live On v. 20**

- a. Live
 - i. When judges and people alike followed this standard of justice, they could expect long and prosperous life in the land (v. 20). This was precisely the promise for those who keep the fifth commandment (Deut 5:16).
 - ii. Their lives and prosperity (Deut. 16:20) depended on their establishing impartial justice in the Promised **Land**.
- b. Possess
- c. Land Given
 - i. By the Lord

Word Studies

Judge - to **pass judgement, administer justice** Ex 18:13.22a.26a Dt 25:1, 2C 19:6 with לָּ of the person; Ezk 44:24 with acc¹. of the person.

—b) לָּ־דָּ־קָּ Lv 19:15, לָּ־פָּ־טָּ־שָּ־מָּ Dt 16:18, אָּ־מָּ־נָּ reliable judgement, true judgements (NRSV), true justice (REB) Zech 7:9, לָּ־שָּ־לָּ־וּ־מָּ judgement that makes for peace, satisfactory justice Zech 8:16, דָּ־שָּ־בָּ to give judgement after accepting a bribe²

judiciary institutions in ancient Near East. As evidenced by the preface to the Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 B.C.) and the statements made by the “eloquent peasant” in Egyptian wisdom literature (c. 2100 B.C.), those in authority were expected to protect the rights of the poor and weak in society. “True justice” (see Lev 19:15) was required of kings, officials and local magistrates. In fact, the “world turned upside down” theme found in the book of Judges and in prophetic literature (Is 1:23) describes a society in which “laws are enacted, but ignored” (for example in the Egyptian *Visions of Neferti* [c. 1900 B.C.]). An efficiently administered state in the ancient Near East depended on the reliability of the law and its enforcement. To this end, every organized state created a bureaucracy of judges and local officials to deal with civil and criminal cases. It was their task to hear testimony, investigate charges made and evaluate evidence, and then execute judgment (detailed in the Middle Assyrian laws and the Code of Hammurabi). There were some cases, however, that required the attention of the king (see 2 Sam 15:2–4), and appeals were occasionally forwarded to that highest magistrate (as in the Mari texts).

Officers-) placed in a responsible position (perhaps “recorder”) in judicial proceedings Dt 16:18³

Towns – gates, relatively small settlement, presumably larger than the village but smaller than the city. Although occasionally distinguished from the village (Josh. 15:45, 47; Matt. 10:11; Luke 13:22; cf. 8:1; Matt. 9:35), precise classification is made difficult because of the town’s designation by the same Hebrew and Greek terms elsewhere used for “village” or “city”⁴

¹acc. accusative case

² Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1623.

³ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1441.

⁴ Allen C. Myers, [*The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1013.

Righteous - expressions: saving :⁵: traditionally right, upright⁶

Distort – To twist, pull or twist out of shape.

2 give a misleading account or impression of.

3 change the form of (an electrical signal or sound wave) during transmission or amplification⁷

Partial - “recognize the face”, be a respecter of persons, be partial⁸

Bribe- gift intended to secure favour⁹

16:19. bribes in the ancient world. The temptation for judges and government officials to accept bribes is found in every time and place (see Prov 6:35; Mic 7:3). Taking bribes becomes almost institutionally accepted in bureaucratic situations as competing parties attempt to outmaneuver each other (see Mic 3:11; Ezra 4:4–5). However, at least on the ideal level, arguments and penalties are imposed to eliminate or at least lessen this problem. Thus Hammurabi’s code places harsh penalties on any judge who alters one of his decisions (presumably because of a bribe), including stiff fines and permanent removal from the bench. Exodus 23:8 forbids the taking of bribes and the perversion of justice as an offense against God, the weak and innocent, and the entire community (see Is 5:23; Amos 5:12).¹⁰

Wise- understanding and experienced¹¹

Perverts - to **twist, misrepresent**

⁵:: in contrast with

⁶ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1005.

⁷ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., [*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 700.

⁹ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1457.

¹⁰ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 16:18–19.

¹¹ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 314.

Justice - **equity, what is right:**

B. Fairness of God's Justice

The Israelites expected God's justice to be fair because it was issued from God who was a righteous Judge (Ps 7:11; 9:8; 119:137; 145:17). Those who were appointed to the office of judge (*dayyān* or *šôpēṭ*) or magistrate were expected to reflect God's holy nature (Exod 18:21). Consequently, when executing justice, the judges (*šôpēṭîm*) were to be absolutely fair, realizing that they were acting as agents or deputies of the holy God (Deut 1:16–17; cf. Exod 18:21–23). In this light, the so-called judges (*šôpēṭîm*) of the book of Judges were appointed by God to act for him as administrators of justice in two ways. In a military emergency, they liberated the Israelites by commanding military campaigns against the aggressive enemies who threatened their freedom and peace (*šālôm*). In peacetime, the judges administered justice by deciding disputes arising among their people (Judg 4:4–5). That these judges were just and righteous people is implied in the Deuteronomistic summary statement that when they died, the children of Israel forgot the way of the Lord (Judg 2:17–19).¹²

The man who is righteous tries to preserve the peace and prosperity of the community by fulfilling the commands of God in regard to others. In the supreme sense the righteous man (*šaddîq*) is one who serves God (Mal 3:18). Specifically, he, like Job, delivers the poor and orphaned, helps the blind along the way, supports the weak and is a father (provider) to the poor (Job 29:12–15). This was the righteous "clothing" of Job's life. To return the poor man's pledged coat before sundown so that it may serve as his night clothes is righteousness (Deut 24:13), the purpose in this case being the man's comfort. But the "righteousness" consisted in obedience to God's law and conformity to God's nature, having mercy for the needy and helpless. Among other righteousnesses of Job were his care for the traveler (Job 31:31–32), eschewing wealth for its own sake (31:24–25), thus not victimizing himself or others in its pursuit. Nor did he squeeze out of his servants the last ounce of effort (31:13) having their limits of strength and comfort in mind. Job's long oath of innocence was a declaration of righteousness as the three friends recognized (32:1).¹³

Pursue- follow after

¹² Temba L. J. Mafico, "[Just, Justice,](#)" ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1128.

¹³ Harold G. Stigers, "[1879 רַדָּף](#)," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 753.

Commentary Studies

18–19 “Judges [שפטים] and officials [שטררים]” were to be appointed in the local settlements throughout the land—“in all your towns.” Though the command is addressed directly to the people of Israel, Tigay suggests that the appointment of the judiciary in ancient Israel was probably in the hands of the elders: “It is possible that when a village chief was chosen from among the leading elders, he became a judge, just as a sheikh is chosen in traditional Arab society” (p. 160). It is also possible that the judge was someone selected from among the local Levitical priests to exercise that function (cf. 17:9; see M. Weinfeld, “Judge and Officer in Israel and in the Ancient Near East,” *IOS* 7 [1977] 76–80). Mayes argued that the word וּשְׁפֹטוּ, “and they shall judge,” carries the sense of “to rule” in a more general sense ([1981] 264), paralleled by the office of the Carthaginian “suffetes” (A. D. H. Mayes in *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. J. Hayes and J. Miller, OT¹⁵L [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977] 321–22). Morrow has presented a convincing argument, however, that we are not dealing here with a “class of professional judges,” but rather with the sort of legal community “in the gate” to which every fully enfranchised Israelite belonged (*Scribing the Center*, 167–69), which community M. Noth has described (*Exodus*, tr¹⁶. J. Bowden, OT¹⁷L [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962] 188–89; idem, *Leviticus*, tr¹⁸. J. E. Anderson, OT¹⁹L, 2nd ed [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977] 141). Morrow translates the phrase מִשְׁפָּט־צַדִּיק in an emphatic sense as “totally correct judgment” (p. 170). As was the case in 1:13–15, “wise and understanding” men were selected for the task of exercising “righteous judgment.” These men are urged not to “pervert judgment,” nor to “show partiality,” nor to “take a bribe [חַדָּשׁ], for the bribe blinds the eyes of the wise, and twists the words of the righteous.” Rabast, von Rad, and Richter have argued that v 19 once circulated independently of its present context as a “Richterspiegel,” a model code for judges (see also Exod 23:1–3, 6–8; Lev 19:15–16). In the third of these three apodictic prohibitions, the translation given here follows that of the NE²⁰B—“and (makes) the just man give a crooked answer.” For Mayes, “the previous clause pointed to the effect of bribery on those normally wise and upright; so here reference is to the effect of bribery on those normally just and innocent” ([1981] 265). The word חַדָּשׁ means a “gift,” for which one expects a return (see M. Goldberg, *In*²¹t 38 [1984] 15–25; and

¹⁴*IOS Israel Oriental Studies*

¹⁵OTL Old Testament Library (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Westminster)

¹⁶tr. Textus Receptus

¹⁷OTL Old Testament Library (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Westminster)

¹⁸tr. Textus Receptus

¹⁹OTL Old Testament Library (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Westminster)

²⁰NEB The New English Bible

²¹*Int Interpretation*

M. Greenberg, "Bribery; Bribe," *ID*²²B 1:465). It does not always refer to a bribe as such; for the term is used elsewhere of the fees charged by judges for hearing cases (Isa 1:23; Mic 3:11; 7:3).

20 On the translation of צדך צדך as "justice, only justice," compare the expression בדרך בדרך in 2:23 and *GK*²³C§123e.²⁴

18. *Judges and officers shalt thou appoint thee in all thy gates (12:12), which Jehovah thy God is giving thee (16:5), according to thy tribes (1:13, 15)]* no attempt is made to regulate the details of the institution, such as the method by which the judges are to be selected, their numbers, the organization of the courts, &c.; the Writer contents himself with affirming the broad principle that provision is to be made for the administration of justice, and that this is to be done by the appointment of judges possessing local jurisdiction. The course to be adopted in the treatment of a difficult case is, however, prescribed in 17:8–13. Elsewhere in Dt. "judges" are alluded to 17:9, 12. (at the central court), 19:17f, 21:2, 25:2 (and in the Mosaic age 1:16, 29:9 (10) ; cf. in ²⁵D²⁶² Jos. 8:33, 23:2, 24:1): but usually (see on 19:12) the "elders" of a city appear as the local guardians of justice.—*Officers* (שֹׁטְרִים)] *i.e.* in all probability, subordinate officials, whose duties would be analogous to those of the modern clerk, warder, police-sergeant, &c.; see on 1:15.—*And they shall judge the people with righteous judgment]* this is their primary and paramount duty (cf. 1:16); the obligations which it involves are stated more fully in the two following verses, v. 19 being repeated largely from the "Book of the Covenant" (and agreeing also in thought with Lev. 19:15, 19:35a H), v. 20 being the Writer's own parenetic addition.—**19.** *Thou shalt not wrest judgment]* Ex. 23:6 "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the poor in his suit": cf. Dt. 24:17, 27:19; 1 S. 8:3, Am. 5:12, Is. 10:2.—*Thou shalt not respect persons]* the principle, as Ex. 23:3 (J²⁷E) Lev. 19:15 (H), cf. Ps. 82:2, Pr. 18:5, Mal. 2:9, 2 Ch. 19:7: the expression (הַכִּיר פְּנִים), as 1:17 (*q.v.*).—*And thou shalt take no bribe; for a bribe blindeth the eyes of the wise, and subverteth the cause of the righteous]* repeated verbally from Ex. 23:8, except that for the "open-eyed" (פְּקֻחַיִם) is substituted the "eyes of the wise." An

²²*IDB* G. A. Buttrick (ed.), *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962–76)

²³*GKC Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* ed. E. Kautsch, trans. A. E. Cowley (London/New York: OUP, 1910; repr. 1966)

²⁴Duane L. Christensen, [Deuteronomy 1–21:9, Revised](#), vol. 6A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 363.

²⁵D Deuteronomist sections of Joshua, or sometimes (as p. lxxvi f.) secondary parts of Deuteronomy.

☞ The Greek Version of the OT. (the LXX)

²⁶² Deuteronomist sections of Joshua, or sometimes (as p. lxxvi f.) secondary parts of Deuteronomy.

²⁷JE Denoting the other Pentateuchal sources

epigrammatic description of the fatal effects of a bribe. For allusions to this most common source of corrupt justice in the East, see 10:17, 27:25, Is. 1:23, 5:23, Mic. 3:11, Ez. 22:12, Pr. 17:23; Ps. 15:5, Is. 33:15.—Cause] lit. *words*, i.e. statements, arguments, pleas, which in the aggregate are tantamount to a man's "case" or "cause"; cf. Ex. 24:14, 2 S. 15:3, Jos. 20:4.—**20.** *Justice, justice, shalt thou follow*] the repetition expresses emphasis (cf. 2:27): "justice, and only justice—justice without intermittence—is to be thy constant aim in judgment."—*That thou mayest live, &c.*] the same promise as 4:1, cf. 5:30 (33) 8:1.

²⁸**18.** מִשְׁפֵּט צַדִּיק] cogn. acc., as Ez. 23:45, Zc. 7:9, 8:16.—**19.** הַלְוִיָּהוּ] Ex. 23:8, Pr. 13:6, 19:3, 21:12, 22:12 (with דַּבְרֵי) Job 12:19²⁹†; הַלְוִיָּהוּ Pr. 11:3, 15:4³⁰†. The precise meaning is uncertain; prob. *to twist, pervert*. fig. *to subvert, ruin*.—**20.** קַדְוֵהוּ צַדִּיק] G-K³¹. § 123 d3.³²

16:18–20 The sociological changes suggested above are implicit in the instruction that judges were to be installed in every town that the Lord would give to Israel (v. 18). As the Lord's own underlings they must be scrupulously fair (lit., "render righteous judgment"). In a shift of subject the judges themselves were addressed and warned not to pervert (*nāʾîā*, "thrust aside") judgment or show partiality to (*nākar*, "pay regard to") anyone. Above all, they must reject bribes (*šōḥad*), for bribes encouraged people to do the very things just forbidden.⁸³³⁷ Instead, they were to make it a practice to follow hard after justice (v. 20). When judges and people alike followed this standard of justice, they could expect long and prosperous life in the land (v. 20). This was precisely the promise for those who keep the fifth commandment (Deut 5:16).

Scholars have long noted the apparent interpolation of irrelevant prohibitions (16:21–17:1) between the section on the appointment of judges (16:18–20) and that describing two case laws (17:2–13), usually proposing either that 16:21–17:7 is an intrusion from elsewhere,⁸³⁴⁸

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²⁹† The sign following a series of references, indicates that all examples of the word or form in question, occurring in the OT., have been quoted.

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³¹G-K. *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebädische Grammatik*, völlig umgearbeitet von Ed. Kautzsch, ed. 25, 1889.

The best grammar for ordinary purposes, the present edition being greatly improved, especially in the syntax. An English translation (of ed. 26, 1896) was published in 1898 (Clarendon Press).

³² S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 200–201.

³³⁸⁷ M. L. Goldberg, "The Story of the Moral: Gifts or Bribes in Deuteronomy?" *Int* 38 (1984): 15–25.

³⁴⁸⁸ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 201.

17:2–7 originally belonged to chap. 13,⁸³⁵⁹ or that 16:18 introduces 17:8–13, with 16:19–17:7 being secondary.⁹³⁶⁰ Closer examination reveals, however, that such resorts to smoothing out the passage are unnecessary once the purpose of the prohibition section is properly understood.⁹³⁷¹³⁸

16:18–20. At this time in his sermon Moses did not specify *how* **judges and officials** would be appointed. In the wilderness Moses at first had been the only judge of the people. But when the judicial burden became too great for him he appointed “leading men” of the **tribes** as military leaders (“commanders”), officials, and judges (1:15–18; cf. Ex. 18). Probably these men were the chief elders in each tribe. So the judges appointed in each city were probably taken from that city’s council of elders (the elders functioned as a judicial body; cf. Deut. 19:12).

The “officials” were probably assistants to the judges, probably functioning as clerks. These leaders were to **judge the people fairly** (lit., “righteously”; cf. 1:17; Prov. 18:5; 24:23). Their verdicts were to conform to the righteous standards set forth in the Word of **God** (which meant at that time the five books of Moses). They were **not to pervert justice**. This implies that God had given them a heavenly pattern for their actions toward each other. If their actions did not conform to this pattern, those actions were to be changed or punished. Any nonconformity to the pattern of justice was a perversion.

Nor were they to **show partiality** (lit., “do not recognize faces”). Ideally the judges were to treat each person as though they had no prior knowledge of him or her. Accepting a **bribe** was obviously wrong for it perverted (**blinds** and **twists**) the ability of judges to act in fairness to the parties in the litigation.

Moses summed up the requirements for the judges and officials with an emphatic command to **follow justice and justice alone** (lit., “righteousness, righteousness you must pursue!”). These words imply that impartial justice could be an elusive goal because of the weakness of human nature. Therefore it was absolutely essential that the standard set forth in the Law be followed precisely. Their lives and prosperity (Deut. 16:20) depended on their establishing impartial justice in the Promised **Land**.³⁹

³⁵⁸⁹ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 162: “It is possible that [the two passages] originally formed a unity.”

³⁶⁹⁰ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 263.

³⁷⁹¹ Kaufman sees 17:2–13 as case law instructing the judges of 16:18–20 in the instance of the violation of 16:21–17:1 (“Structure of Deuteronomic Law,” 134). The whole, therefore, is mutually dependent.

³⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 258.

³⁹ Jack S. Deere, “*Deuteronomy*,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 293–294.