

**Torah:** D'varim (Deuteronomy) 16:18– 21:9  
**Haftarah:** Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 51:12-52:12  
**B'rit Hadashah:** Revelation 21:1-27

	yr. 1 16:18-18:5	yr. 2 18:6-19:13	yr. 3 19:14-21:9
1	16:18 – 20	18:6 – 8	19:14 – 21
2	16:21 – 17:7	18:9 – 13	20:1 – 4
3	17:8 – 10	18:14 – 17	20:5 – 9
4	17:11 – 13	18:18 – 22	20:10 – 14
5	17:14 – 17	19:1 – 7	20:15 – 20
6	17:18 – 20	19:8 – 10	21:1 – 6
7	18:1 – 5	19:11 – 13	21:7 – 9

"Justice, justice shall you pursue." This parashah deals with the responsibilities of public officials, introducing

*shof'tim ve'shotrim titen lechá be'khol sh'arékha  
 ashér ADONAI Elohékhá noten lekhá lishvatékha  
 ve'shaftu et ha'am mishpat tzédek*

שְׁפָטִים וְשׁוֹטְרִים תִּתֵּן לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ  
 אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ  
 וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶדֶק:

judges and officials you will appoint for yourself in all your gates  
 which Adonai your God is giving to you for your tribes  
 and judge the people with righteous judgment

four main roles: judges, kings (optional), priests and prophets. Broad principles are presented including limits and rights of each authority, creating a balanced system, preventing the development of a single focus point of prestige and power. Torah makes these limitations known to everyone, so all can participate in supervision and criticism of human authority. Rules are given for cities of refuge, and for the tribe of Levi which does not have a territorial assignment in the Land. It contrasts the spiritual leaders of other nations with Israel's prophets, and warns about false prophets. Procedures for war, including exemptions from service, and environmental considerations that must be followed (e.g. prohibiting destruction of fruit-bearing trees) even in the course of battle.

The haftarah is the fourth Consolation of Isaiah. This passage recognizes that the People have suffered greatly but reassures them that their suffering is over and their tormentors will be the ones who suffer.

### Year 1 Aliyah Highlights

- De. 16:18-20** The appointment of judges and officials is addressed to everyone (lit. "appoint for yourselves"), leaving open which types of leaders would be appointed to function in this capacity. It seems that judicial propriety (fairness, partiality, bribes, etc.) were the obligation of everyone. The pursuit of justice is a required condition for Israel to prosper in The Land.
- De. 16:21-17:7** Interjection of foreign worship practices was prohibited. Even though Jacob, Moses and Joshua set up monuments (Bethel, Mt. Sinai, Shekhem), they were prohibited, possibly to establish a distinction between idolatry and the true worship of HaShem. Idolatry carried a death sentence (the application of Ex. 22:19) in which the public participated, beginning with witnesses.
- De. 17:8-10** When a case is too difficult for a local judge (in the city gate), it should be presented to the high court in the "chosen place." This is just like Moses judging the hard cases in the wilderness. Human authority is sanctioned by Torah to render verdicts (v. 9), and care-full obedience is required (v. 10).
- De. 17:11-13** Rabbinic interpretation gives legislative authority to the Sanhedrin and the sages that would follow. The "lower" courts must submit to the higher court's rulings. Disobedience to that highest human authority would threaten the entire community order and would receive the death penalty, even if the case was not a capital case. (See also De. 21:18-21 re. the rebellious son)

5. **De. 17:14-17** Appointing a king is optional. He must be Israeli. Horses (Ps. 20:8), wives (Pr. 31:3) and wealth are distractions (Ps. 20:8). Rights, authority and duty of a king are deemphasized.
6. **De. 17:18-20** A king would be subject to Torah just like everyone else. In fact, he must write his own personal copy, read it, study it, and keep the same law that is addressed to his “brothers.”
7. **De. 18:1-5** The tribe of Levi are priests. They have no tribal territory – HaShem is their inheritance. Because they have no land, they are supported by their portions of sacrifices and offerings.

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## Thought Focus

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**Yeshua affirms human authority:** Yeshua never abrogated Torah. In Mat. 23:3, he affirms submission to human authority granted in Torah: “So whatever they tell you, take care to do it...” He is not critical of Torah, but of the *hypocritical behavior* of the scribes and Pharisees.

**U.S. Constitutional Law based on Torah:** John Marshal was Chief Justice of the United States from 1801 to 1835. He established the principle of judicial review (courts can strike down unconstitutional federal and state laws), helping to implement the important principle of separation of powers that is taught in this Torah portion!

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## Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

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1. (16:18) We are required to make judgements every day. On what basis do you judge? (Deu 16:20, Joh 7:24, Mat 7:1-5, Mat 7:16-17, Isa 11:1-5)
2. (17:14) How do you handle the tension of not having what is promised... yet? (Mat 13:17, Luk 10:24, 1Pe 1:10-12, 1Co 13:12, Exo 33:17-23, Joh 14:8-11, Heb 1:1-3)
3. (18:1) All Levites- blemish free or not- were treated the same regarding inheritance. Do you feel excluded from service in God’s Kingdom because of some “disability?” (Isa 55:1-7, Luk 12:27-30, Gal 2:7-10, Gal 3:29)
4. (18:6) Levitical service was a duty, but provision was made for service from desire. Is your service to the Lord a duty or a desire? Or both? (Psa 63:1-4, Psa 27:4-6, Psa 37:4, Joh 17:24)
5. (18:14) God’s laws define God’s people, and their behavior. Where do you draw the line? (Deu 18:10-11, Jer 10:2-3, Act 14:16-17, Rom 12:2, Gal 5:19-21, 1Co 6:9-10, Mat 7:18-20, Psa 81:8-16, Act 17:30-31)
6. (19:14) What are your boundaries? Do you respect the boundary markers of your neighbor(s)? (Col 2:16, Rom 14:3, 5, 10, 13, Jud 3, Mar 9:39-40, Hos 5:10, Pro 23:10-11, 1Co 8:11-13)
7. (20:12) We are in a battlefield today. Do we offer peace or war? (Rom 12:18, Eph 6:11-13, 2Co 10:3-5, Rev 3:10-11, Rev 14:12)