

A Midrash for Monday (#10)

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“Appoint for yourselves judges and police in all your gates, for your tribes ... They will judge the people *mishpat tzedek* (fairly; literally, with charitable justice)” (Deuteronomy 16:18).

“In all your gates” means in every city. “For your tribes” teaches us that even if all the people in the city are members of the same family they still need to appoint judges. [In some families they may also need police! – OB]

Why is honest, correct judgment called mishpat tzedek? One reason is that the judge is “giving charity” to both litigants. The one who wins the case takes what’s rightfully his. The one who lost has stolen goods removed from his possession.

A second reason: When judges investigate and judge honestly, they are “giving” charity to society and saving them from punishment. This is learned from the following verse, “Truth sprouts from the ground; tzedek (justice) gazes down from Heaven” (Psalms 85:12). When true justice is meted on Earth, then the Blessed Holy One gazes down from Heaven and gives tzedakah, sparing mankind punishment and suffering. In their stead, good comes to the world.

Even if you don't have a black robe and a gavel, you can conduct all your business and financial affairs honestly. In addition to avoiding the need to go to court—with all its attendant aggravation and costs—you bring charity and good to the world. Amen.

Based on *Midrash Tanchuma, Shoftim #6*

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