

בס"ד  
דניאל יונתן בן מרדכי צבי פרידמן  
שבת קודש פרשת דברים-חזון  
ג' אב תש"ף

**שבת דברים-חזון: חזרה למשפט**  
*Shabbat Chazon: The Pursuit of Justice*

The two mitzvot in this week's sedra, as enumerated by the Sefer Ha-Chinukh, both relate to establishing a proper judiciary. First, **לא תכירו פנים במשפט**, a restriction against appointing judges who lack proper credentials and qualifications, no matter what the ulterior motive, noble or nefarious, may be. Society has a responsibility to ensure the integrity of the judiciary.

Second, **לא תגורו מפני איש**, reciprocally, the judges themselves have a responsibility to society, to judge fairly, and to judge fearlessly, **כי המשפט לאלוקים הוא**. As Ramban so exquisitely formulates it, the judges are **שלוחי המקום**, they are executing the agency of the Almighty, and if they should shirk their responsibility, **הרי מעלתם בשליחותו**, they have desecrated this sacred mandate.

As such, it is altogether fitting that we have the pairing of Parshat Devarim with Shabbat Chazon. The overriding theme of the haftarah is the corruption of justice. The leadership of the society is likened to a group of thieves and gangsters, whose interest in lining their own pockets outstripped their concern for the fate of widows and orphans, **שריך סוררים וחברי גנבים כלו אוהב שוחד ורודף שלמונים יתום לא**. The Torah's mandate, **צדק צדק תרדוף**, has been replaced, apparently, by **רדיפת שלמונים**, the pursuit of kickbacks, perks and self-dealing. Those who pay the price, as is so often the case, are the most vulnerable in society, the orphan, and the widow.

The Navi did not try to obscure the path towards rehabilitation, **למדו היטב דרשו משפט אשרו חמוץ**, fighting for justice on behalf of the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow. It is, precisely as outlined in the parshah, by recommitting ourselves, to the pursuit of justice, and especially, justice for those who are oppressed.

This is not merely the path of rehabilitation, but it is very much the path towards redemption as well, as the haftarah, in the words that ring throughout Jewish history, stirring every pulsating heart in our people, **ואשיבה שפטיך כבראשונה ויעצרך כבתחילה אחרי כן יקרא לך עיר הצדק קריה נאמנה**, the integrity of our judiciary and our leadership will be restored.

The impact will be felt outside of the **בית דין** as well, throughout the entire city, which will be restored to an **עיר הצדק, קריה נאמנה**. Indeed, our redemption and restoration, which we so yearn for this time

of year, will surely, follow, as only through law shall Zion be redeemed, and her returnees shall come through justice, ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה.

Since the brutal murder of George Floyd, our society has demonstrated great resolve to take increased devotion to the pursuit of equal justice under the law. This is especially true with respect to historically oppressed groups such as African Americans. Our shared participation in this struggle honors the timeless message of Moshe Rabbenu, that doing justice is indeed the Lord's work. Moreover, it echoes Yeshayahu's lament, who called on us to concern ourselves with the welfare of particularly vulnerable groups, and reminded us that we could not be redeemed until this was a priority for all of us.

As we engage in this struggle, alongside people of good faith from all walks of life, we may take a quiet pride in the fact that, from the perspective of Jewish tradition, the insistence upon equal justice for all has *always* been our vision .