

Nosh & Learn with Mindy, Parshat *Shoftim*, TBH-BE, 8/20/2020

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצוותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

Parshat Shoftim – Ch 16:18-21:9

basic societal structure for living with laws, governance and consequences

Devarim 16: 18-20

שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּסְּוֹרֶנָּה בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ לְשֹׁבְטֶיךָ וְשֹׁפְטֵי אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צְדָקָה:

You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice.

לֹא־תִטָּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכִּיר פְּגָם וְלֹא־תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֹר עֵינֵי חֹכְמִים וְיִסְלַף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים:

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.

צְדָק צְדָק תִּרְדָּף לְמַעַן תַּחְיֶה וּבְרַשְׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ:

Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Man and God, by R. Eliezer Berkovitz, Chapter 7: Sedeq and S'daqah

On numerous occasions, *sedeq* appears as an attribute of *mishpat*, of the administration of justice. According to biblical injunction, one must not respect the person of the poor or favor the mighty in judgment; “but in *sedeq* shalt thou judge thy neighbor.” Of the judges, who had to be set up “in all thy gates,” it is said: “and they shall judge the people *mishpat sedeq*.” In the first example *sedeq* means “justice,” in the second “just.” Similarly, it is also said: “and judge *sedeq* between

a man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.”²³ *Lev. 19:15; Deut. 16:18; ibid. 1:16*. God is called a *shofet sedeq*, a just judge.²⁴ *Jer. 11:20; Pss. 9:4*. Isaiah prophecies concerning the Messiah that he will judge the poor with *sedeq*.²⁵ *Isa. 11:4*. *Sedeq* is also required of a man’s trading. The scales, the weights, the measures, they all must be *sedeq*, just.²⁶ *Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:15*. And who is not familiar with the biblical admonishment: “Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. *Sedeq, sedeq* shalt thou pursue, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”²⁷ *Deut. 16:19–20* Here, too, *sedeq* means justice. Looked at superficially, it would seem to be rather removed from what we have found *s’daqah* to indicate. However, we should recall what has been said on the biblical concept of *mishpat* (justice) and immediately the gap between *sedeq*, in the sense of just or justice, and *s’daqah* will narrow considerably. The full significance of the idea of a judgment which is *sedeq* comes to clearest expression in the exultation of the psalmist over such a judgment.

Psalm 34:12

סוּר מִרָע וַעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב בְּקֶשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְּפֶהוּ:

Shun evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.

Berachot 6b

And Rabbi Helbo said that Rav Huna said: One who is aware that another person is accustomed to greet him is not only obligated to return his greeting, but he must greet him first, as it is stated: “Seek peace and pursue it” ([Psalms 34:15](#)).

Psalm 23:6

אֵד | טוֹב וְחַסֵּד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים:

Only goodness and mercy shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long years.