

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT SHOFETIM

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## Righteousness, Righteousness Shall You Pursue



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This week's parasha begins with the various obligations of judges and what to look out for when choosing a court. The verse states, "Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue". Rashi (1040-1105) comments on this, that when choosing a court, one should seek out a reputable court. The Maharal of Prague (16th century), in his commentary *Gur Aryeh*, adds that this refers to a court which has the most learned and righteous judges.

There are numerous questions on

this verse. Firstly, why the double expression of the word "*tzedek*", righteousness? Secondly, the verse continues and states that it is in order that "you will live and take possession of the land" (Israel). What is the connection between seeking a righteous, reputable court and inheriting the land of Israel?

Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) quotes the Midrash of Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah who provides a novel explanation which can answer both these questions. He explains that this verse is a reference to the concept of reward and punishment. When the verse states the word "*tzedek*", it is referring to justice in this world.

After that, it is written "in order that

you will live and inherit the land," meaning, if a person judges themselves and remembers where they came from and where they are going, then God will provide them with the reward of life; there is no greater life for a Jew than in the promised land of Israel.

Furthermore, Ramban continues and explains why the verse mentions "*tzedek*" twice. The first "*tzedek*" refers to justice in this world and the second refers to justice in the World to Come, *Olam Haba*, which is the eternal reward for all mitzvot. With this explanation we can now understand the connection between the two parts of the verse and why it mentions *tzedek* twice.

## Quiz Time!

1. The word "*shofetim*" means       .
2. Which word is repeated twice, one after another, in a famous verse in this week's Torah reading?
3. This week's parasha tells us about special cities to which a person could flee, called           .
4. Who could go to these cities?
5. And when would they be let out of the city?
6. In this week's parasha, a human being is compared to a     .

