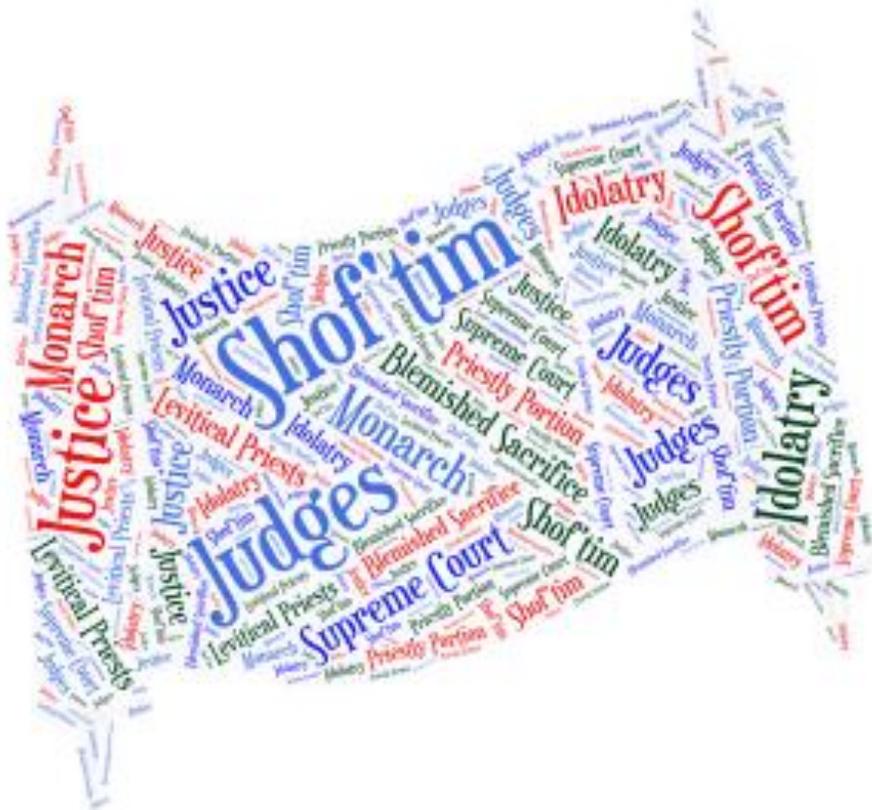


# Shoftim- Judges D'varim 16:18-21:9

Year One Study D'varim 16:18 to 18:5

Rabbin D'vorah Eliana Brandt



	מ	י	ט	פ	ש
letter:	mem sofeet	yod	tet	fay	shin
sound:	M	EE	Tee	F'	SHo

*Judges* = SHOF'TIM = שפטים

### Related Words<sup>1</sup>

justice, judgment, law, case, sentence; plural	<i>mishpaht, mishpatim</i>	משפט, משפטים
judgment, punishment	<i>shehjet</i>	שפט
judge, referee, umpire (singular, plural forms)	<i>shofet, shof'tim</i>	שופט, שופטים
precedence (sentence of the firstling)	<i>mishpaht ha-b'khorah</i>	משפט הבכורה
death sentence	<i>mishpaht mavet</i>	משפט מות
law court, court of justice; (also <i>beit-mishpaht, (also beit-din)</i> law court, court of justice)		בית־משפט, בית־דין
jurist	<i>mishp'tahn</i>	משפטן

<sup>1</sup> Feinberg, J. E., Ph.D., & Moudy, K. A. (2003). *Walk Deuteronomy!: Words*. Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers.

# Key Words

## Judges H8199

שפַּט

shâphaṭ

### **BDB Definition:**

1) to judge, govern, vindicate, punish

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to act as law-giver or judge or governor (of God, man)

1a1a) to rule, govern, judge

1a2) to decide controversy (of God, man)

1a3) to execute judgment

1a3a) discriminating (of man)

1a3b) vindicating

1a3c) condemning and punishing

1a3d) at theophanic advent for final judgment

1b) (Niphal)

1b1) to enter into controversy, plead, have controversy together

1b2) to be judged

1c) (Poel) judge, opponent-at-law (participle)

**Part of Speech:** verb

**A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number:** a primitive root

**Same Word by TWOT Number:** 2443

## Officers H7860

שָׂטֵר

shôṭêr

### **BDB Definition:**

1) (Qal) official, officer

**Part of Speech:** verb or noun masculine

**A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number:** active participle of an otherwise unused root probably meaning to write

**Same Word by TWOT Number:** 2374a

# Judgment H4941

משפט

mishpâṭ

## **BDB Definition:**

- 1) judgment, justice, ordinance
  - 1a) judgment
    - 1a1) act of deciding a case
    - 1a2) place, court, seat of judgment
    - 1a3) process, procedure, litigation (before judges)
    - 1a4) case, cause (presented for judgment)
    - 1a5) sentence, decision (of judgment)
    - 1a6) execution (of judgment)
    - 1a7) time (of judgment)
  - 1b) justice, right, rectitude (attributes of God or man)
  - 1c) ordinance
  - 1d) decision (in law)
  - 1e) right, privilege, due (legal)
  - 1f) proper, fitting, measure, fitness, custom, manner, plan

**Part of Speech:** noun masculine

**A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number:** from [H8199](#)

**Same Word by TWOT Number:** 2443c

## **Parsha Outline Shof'tim Year One**

- Judges and Justice (16:18)
- Sacred Trees & Pillars (16:21)
- Blemished Sacrifices (17:1)
- Penalties for Idolatry (17:2)
- The Supreme Court (17:8)
- The Monarch (17:14)
- Levitical Priests (18:1)
- Priestly Portion (18:3)

## **Haftorah Portion: Isaiah 51:12-52:12**

### **Apostolic Scriptures References**

- Disputes – Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8
- Retaliation – Matthew 5:38-42
- Idolatry – 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
- Leadership – Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, Ephesians 2:22, 4:11
- Testimony – John 8:17, 2 Corinthians 13:1, Hebrews 10:28-31
- Supporting Ministry – 1 Timothy 5:17-22, 1 Corinthians 9: 6-14, Galatians 6:6

Introduction:

## Shoftim in a Nutshell

Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9

Moses instructs the people of Israel to appoint **judges** and law enforcement officers in every city. “**Justice, justice** shall you pursue,” he commands them, and you must administer it without corruption or favoritism. Crimes must be meticulously **investigated** and evidence thoroughly examined—a minimum of two credible **witnesses** is required for conviction and punishment.

In every generation, says Moses, there will be those entrusted with the task of **interpreting and applying** the laws of the Torah. “According to the law that they will teach you, and the judgment they will instruct you, you shall do; you shall not turn away from the thing that they say to you, to the **right nor to the left.**”

Shoftim also includes the prohibitions against **idolatry** and **sorcery**; laws governing the appointment and behavior of a **king**; and guidelines for the creation of “**cities of refuge**” for the **inadvertent murderer**. Also set forth are many of the rules of **war**: the exemption from battle for one who has just built a **home, planted a vineyard, married**, or is “**afraid** and soft-hearted”; the requirement to offer **terms of peace** before attacking a city; and the prohibition against wanton **destruction** of something of value, exemplified by the law that forbids to cut down a **fruit tree** when laying siege (in this context the Torah makes the famous statement, “**For man is a tree of the field**”).

The Parshah concludes with the law of the **eglah arufah**—the special procedure to be followed when a person is killed by an unknown murderer and his body is found in a field—which underscores the **responsibility** of the community and its leaders not only for what they do, but also for what they might have prevented from being done.

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## Torah Reading:

Moses is continuing to instruct Israel regarding Torah obedience as they enter the land. A people or civilization cannot survive without Law and Order. There must be structure if a community is to live together and to make sure crime and evil does not take over. We see many laws in place in our own country regarding Court systems and judges, that I believe were founded upon Torah principles since these laws go back before any Greek or Roman laws were in place. Every area of society and religious life is covered in these Torah commands to insure the peace/Shalom and safety of God's people in the land and to insure the pure worship of Elohim was kept from being polluted by the paganism that surrounded them.

The same principle must be followed in our local Messianic Congregations as well, there must be structure and order in order for us to function as a community. Without order and structure there will be chaos and the congregation will not survive.

Our decisions must be based upon fairness and justice not favoritism. This is why it is important to be connected to a Beit Din, so that difficult situations can be judged fairly for all who are involved and preserve the peace within the community.

## Judges & Justice

Deu 16:18 "Judges and officers you are to appoint within all your gates that Adonai your God is giving you, according to your tribes; and **they are to judge the people with righteous judgment.**

**Deu 16:19** You are not to twist justice—you must not show partiality or take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts the words of the righteous.

Deu 16:20 Justice, justice you must pursue, so that you may live and possess the land that Adonai your God is giving you.

Righteous judgment was to be the standard in Israel. Judges were to make decisions fairly and equitably according to the Torah. They were not to accept bribes in order for judgment to be in favor of one over the other.

Proverbs 17:23 - Bribes

Micah 6:8 - Justice

Philippians 4:8 - Justice

## Sacred Trees and Pillars

Idolatry was not to be tolerated. Unfortunately, we see many times where Israel succumbed to Idol worship which cause them much sorrow and loss. This is true today as well, there are many areas in our lives where we can put something before God, which makes it an idol. We tend to make idols out of wealth, celebrities, sports figures etc. and make them into something to be idolized. We need to guard against idols in our hearts as well as anything that would detract from true worship of Elohim. Also in Christianity today we see rejection of God's feasts and have substituted celebrations that are not scriptural, i.e. Christmas, Easter, Lent, Halloween (All Saints Day), Sunday worship and many more practices that find their roots in idolatry.

Deu 16:21 You are not to plant for yourself an Asherah pole of any kind of wood beside the altar of Adonai your God that you make for yourself.

Deu 16:22 Nor are you to set up a pillar for yourself—Adonai your God hates this.

## Jeremiah 10

**ASHERAH.** A Canaanite mother-goddess mentioned in the Ras Shamra texts (*atrtt*) as a goddess of the sea and the consort of El, but associated in the OT with Baal (*e.g.* Jdg. 3:7). While the OT sometimes refers to Asherah as a goddess (*e.g.*, 1 Ki. 18:19; 2 Ki. 23:4; 2 Ch. 15:16), the name is used also of an image made for that goddess (*e.g.* 1 Ki. 15:13) which consequently came to represent her. The Israelites were commanded to cut down (*e.g.* Ex. 34:13) or burn (Dt. 12:3) the *asherim* of the Canaanites, and were likewise forbidden themselves to plant ‘an Asherah of any kind of tree’ beside God’s altar (Dt. 16:21). From these references it appears that the object was of wood, and was presumably an image of some kind. A piece of carbonized wood about 1.2 m long, discovered in the Early Bronze Age shrine at Ai, has been interpreted as a possible asherah, but many scholars would now reject the view that the object was a post, and would give the translation ‘Asherah-image’ in all occurrences. In the AV the word is consistently translated ‘grove’.<sup>2</sup>

## Blemished Sacrifice

We are to give God our best, not our rejects or leftovers. He is to get the First Fruits, not the damaged fruits.

**Deu 17:1** You are not to sacrifice to Adonai your God a bull or a sheep that has a defect or anything bad—for that would be an abomination to Adonai your God.

## Penalties for Idolatry

Webster’s 1826 Dictionary Definition

### Idolatry

**IDOL'ATRY**, n. [L. idololatria. Gr. idol, and to worship or serve.]

1. The worship of idols, images, or anything made by hands, or which is not God.

Idolatry is of two kinds; the worship of images, statues, pictures, &c. made by hands; and the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars, or of demons, angels, men and animals.

2. Excessive attachment or veneration for anything, or that which borders on adoration.

Deu 17:2 Suppose there is found in your midst—within one of your gates that Adonai your God is giving you—a man or woman who does what is evil in the eyes of Adonai your God by transgressing His covenant.

**within any of thy gates:** The expression, "within any of thy gates," denoted all residing in the cities, and all who went in and came out at the gates of them; so that it included the inhabitants of the whole land.

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AV Authorized Version (King James'), 1611

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, T. C. (1996). Asherah. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman, Ed.) (3rd ed.) (92). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

**Deu 17:3 This person goes and serves other gods and worships them—the sun or moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded.**

Deu 17:4 It is told to you and you have heard about it, and you investigate thoroughly and indeed it is true and the thing certain—this abomination has been done in Israel.

Deu 17:5 Then you are to bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and stone that man or woman with stones to death.

Deu 17:6 By the word of two or three witnesses, the one who is to die is to be put to death. No one is to be put to death by the word of one witness.

Deu 17:7 The hand of the witnesses is to be first to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you are to purge the evil from your midst.

See: Deuteronomy 4:19  
2 Kings 21

## The Supreme Court

**A supreme court (17:9).** Local judges might determine the facts, but not be expert enough in the Law to make a ruling. So Moses provides for a higher, final court of priests and judges. This system was adopted by Jehoshaphat (872–848 B.C., 2 Chron. 19:5–11). The same system was followed in N.T. times. Each town had local judges, but the Jerusalem Sanhedrin was Judaism’s supreme court.<sup>3</sup>

**Sanhedrin** n. Hebrew (san-HED-rin) From the Greek word for “council.” The Supreme Court of the Jews who lived in ancient **Israel**. Composed of 71 wise elders who dispensed legislation and judgment, it was the chief judicial and legislative body during the time of the **Second Temple** and for several hundred years after its destruction. The scholar **Hillel** served as its president at one time. It disbanded in 425 C.E.<sup>4</sup>

Deu 17:8 “Suppose a matter arises that is too hard for you to judge—over bloodshed, legal claims or assault—matters of controversy within your gates. Then you should go up to the place Adonai your God chooses, and come to the Levitical kohanim and the judge in charge at that time. And you will inquire, and they will tell you the sentence of judgment.

Deu 17:9 and you will inquire, and they will tell you the sentence of judgment.

Deu 17:10 You are to act according to the sentence they tell you from that place Adonai chooses, and take care to do all that they instruct you.

Deu 17:11 You are to act according to the instruction they teach you and the judgment they tell you—you must not turn aside from the sentence they tell you, to the right or to the left.

Deu 17:12 The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the kohen who stands to serve there before Adonai your God, or to the judge, that man must die. So you are to purge the evil from Israel.

Deu 17:13 Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and not act presumptuously again.

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<sup>3</sup> Richards, L. O. (1991). *The Bible reader’s companion* (electronic ed.) (130). Wheaton: Victor Books.

n. noun

<sup>4</sup> Eisenberg, J., Scolnic, E., & Jewish Publication Society. (2001). *The JPS dictionary of Jewish words* (139). Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society.

## The Monarch/King

The King was to write a Torah Scroll for himself so that He would not forget the Laws of YHWH. It also has been proven that writing things down helps you to remember better!

Deu 17:14 “When you come to the land that Adonai your God is giving you, possess it and dwell in it, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations around me,’

Deu 17:15 you will indeed set over yourselves a king, whom Adonai your God chooses. One from among your brothers will be appointed as king over you—you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

Deu 17:16 Only he should not multiply horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to multiply horses, because Adonai has said to you, “You must never go back that way again.”

Deu 17:17 Nor should he multiply wives for himself, so that his heart does not turn aside, nor multiply much silver and gold for himself.

Deu 17:18 “Now when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he is **to write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll, from what is before the Levitical kohanim.**

Deu 17:19 It will remain with him, and he will read in it all the days of his life, in order to learn to fear Adonai his God and keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes.

Deu 17:20 Then his heart will not be exalted above his brothers, and he will not turn from the commandment to the right or to the left—so that he may prolong his days in his kingship, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel.

## The Levitical Priests

The Priests were to be supported by the Tribes as ministers of Israel. In the same way we are to support our Congregations and Leadership who’s job it is, is to pray and study so we can be instructed correctly in the Word of Elohim.

**Deu 18:1** “The Levitical kohanim, all the tribe of Levi, are to have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They are to eat the offerings made to Adonai by fire as His inheritance.

Deu 18:2 They will have no inheritance among their brothers—Adonai is their inheritance, just as He promised them.

## Priestly Portion

The Priests were to be taken care regarding all their needs including food.

Deu 18:3 So this will be the share due to the kohanim from the people—from those who offer a sacrifice, whether a bull or sheep, they are to give the kohen the shoulder, two cheeks, and the stomach.

Deu 18:4 The firstfruits of your grain, of your new wine, of your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep, you are to give him.

Deu 18:5 For Adonai your God has chosen him from all your tribes to stand and serve in the Name of Adonai—him and his sons forever. (TLV)

## Shoftim Haftorah in a Nutshell

[Isaiah 51:12-52:12](#)

This week's *haftorah* is the fourth of a series of seven "*Haftarot* of Consolation." These seven *haftarot* commence on the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

The *haftorahs* of the past two weeks open with Israel's complaint that they have been abandoned by G-d. Israel is not content with consolations offered by the prophets -- instead they demand that G-d alone comfort them. In response, this week's *haftorah* begins with G-d's response: "I, indeed I, will comfort you."

After briefly reprimanding Israel for forgetting their Creator for fear of human and finite oppressors, the prophet describes the suffering and tribulations which Israel has endured. However, the time has arrived for the suffering to end. The time has come for Israel's oppressors to drink the "cup of suffering" which they had hitherto forced Israel to drink: "Awaken, awaken, put on your strength, O Zion; put on the garments of your beauty, Jerusalem the Holy City, for no longer shall the uncircumcised or the unclean continue to enter you. Shake yourselves from the dust, arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; free yourself of the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

Isaiah extols the beauty of the messenger who will announce the good tidings of Redemption. "Burst out in song, sing together, O ruins of Jerusalem, for the L-rd has consoled His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem."

The *haftorah* ends by highlighting the difference between the Egyptian Exodus, when the Israelites hurried out of their exile and bondage, and the future Redemption: "For not with haste shall you go forth and not in a flurry of flight shall you go, for the L-rd goes before you, and your rear guard is the G-d of Israel."

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## **Apostolic Scriptures References**

- **Disputes – Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8**

Mat 18:15 "Moreover, if your brother commits a sin against you, go and show him his fault—but privately, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother.

Mat 18:16 If he doesn't listen, take one or two others with you so that every accusation can be supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Mat 18:17 If he refuses to hear them, tell the congregation; and if he refuses to listen even to the congregation, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax-collector.

Mat 18:18 Yes! I tell you people that whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Mat 18:19 To repeat, I tell you that if two of you here on earth agree about anything people ask, it will be for them from my Father in heaven.

Mat 18:20 For wherever two or three are assembled in my name, I am there with them."

**1Co 6:1** How dare one of you with a complaint against another go to court before pagan judges and not before God's people?

1Co 6:2 Don't you know that God's people are going to judge the universe? If you are going to judge the universe, are you incompetent to judge these minor matters?

1Co 6:3 Don't you know that we will judge angels, not to mention affairs of everyday life?

1Co 6:4 So if you require judgments about matters of everyday life, why do you put them in front of men who have no standing in the Messianic Community?

1Co 6:5 I say, shame on you! Can it be that there isn't one person among you wise enough to be able to settle a dispute between brothers?

1Co 6:6 Instead, a brother brings a lawsuit against another brother, and that before unbelievers!

1Co 6:7 Actually, if you are bringing lawsuits against each other, it is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

1Co 6:8 Instead, you yourselves wrong and cheat; and you do it to your own brothers!

- **Retaliation – Matthew 5:38-42**

Mat 5:38 "You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.'

Mat 5:39 But I tell you not to stand up against someone who does you wrong. On the contrary, if someone hits you on the right cheek, let him hit you on the left cheek too!

Mat 5:40 If someone wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well!

Mat 5:41 And if a soldier forces you to carry his pack for one mile, carry it for two!

Mat 5:42 When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something from you, lend it to him.

- **Idolatry – 1 Corinthians 5:9-13**

1Co 5:9 In my earlier letter I wrote you not to associate with people who engage in sexual immorality.

1Co 5:10 I didn't mean the sexually immoral people outside your community, or the greedy, or the thieves or the idol-worshippers—for then you would have to leave the world altogether!

1Co 5:11 No, what I wrote you was not to associate with anyone who is supposedly a brother but who also engages in sexual immorality, is greedy, worships idols, is abusive, gets drunk or steals. With such a person you shouldn't even eat!

1Co 5:12 For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders? Isn't it those who are part of the community that you should be judging?

- **Leadership – Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, Ephesians 4:11-15**

Act 14:23 After appointing elders for them in every congregation, Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust.

Tit 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was so that you might attend to the matters still not in order and appoint congregation leaders in each city—those were my instructions.

Eph 4:11 He Himself gave some to be emissaries, some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers—

Eph 4:12 to equip the kedoshim for the work of service, for building up the body of Messiah.

Eph 4:13 This will continue until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Ben-Elohim—to mature adulthood, to the measure of the stature of Messiah's fullness.

Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be like children, tossed around by the waves and blown all over by every wind of teaching, by the trickery of men with cunning in deceitful scheming.

Eph 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all ways into Messiah, who is the Head.

- **Testimony – John 8:17, 2 Corinthians 13:1, Hebrews 10:28-31**

Joh 8:17 Even in your Torah it is written that the testimony of two men is true.

2Co 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. "By the testimony of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Heb 10:28 Anyone who rejected the Torah of Moses dies without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses.

Heb 10:29 How much more severe do you think the punishment will be for the one who has trampled Ben-Elohim underfoot, and has regarded as unholy the blood of the covenant by which he was made holy, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Heb 10:30 For we know the One who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," and again, "Adonai will judge His people."

Heb 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- **Supporting Ministry – 1 Timothy 5:17-22, 1 Corinthians 9: 6-14, Galatians 6:6**

1Ti 5:17 The elders who lead well are worthy of honor and honorarium—especially those who work hard in the word and teaching.

1Ti 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and, "The worker is worthy of his wage."

1Ti 5:19 Do not accept an accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

1Ti 5:20 Correct those who continue sinning in the presence of everyone, so that the rest also may fear.

1Ti 5:21 I solemnly charge you—before God and Messiah Yeshua and the chosen angels—to observe these things without taking sides, doing nothing out of favoritism.

1Ti 5:22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily or take part in the sins of others—keep yourself pure.

1Co 9:6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to not work?

1Co 9:7 What soldier ever serves at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink its milk?

1Co 9:8 I don't say these things merely as a man, do I? Doesn't Torah also say these things?

1Co 9:9 For it is written in the Torah of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing." Is it the oxen that concern God,

1Co 9:10 or is He speaking entirely for our sake? Yes, it was written for our sake, because the one plowing ought to plow in hope and the one threshing in hope of a share in the crop.

1Co 9:11 If we sowed spiritual things into you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

1Co 9:12 If others have a share in this claim over you, shouldn't we even more? Nevertheless we did not use this right, but we put up with all things so that we cause no hindrance to the Good News of Messiah.

1Co 9:13 Don't you know that those who perform the holy services eat from the Temple, and those who wait on the altar receive a share at the altar?

1Co 9:14 So also the Lord ordered those who proclaim the Good News to get their living from the Good News.

Gal 6:6 Now let the one who is taught the word share all good things with his teacher.