

PARASHAT SHOFETIM

Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9

Parashat Shofetim opens with the command to appoint judges and legal officials to carry out justice within the society and with a warning against the worship of other gods. Two witnesses must be heard before a court can impose the death penalty. Cases of homicide, civil law, or assault too difficult to decide in one court must be transferred to a higher court. Regulations for choosing a king/leader are presented, including a warning that this leader should follow the laws of Torah faithfully. The offerings for priests are again set forth; also set forth is the difference between a true and false prophet. Cities of refuge for those guilty of manslaughter are described, with laws forbidding the movement of landmarks. The portion concludes with regulations to be observed during war and with assessments of communal responsibilities when the body of a murder victim is found beyond city limits.
