

Justice

Christian Bible

John 7:24 (Holy Bible: The New King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982.

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

Koran Sura 4: 29,58, 129, 135 (Trans. Majid Fakhry. An Interpretation of the Qur'an. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2004)

4:29 – O believers, do not consume your wealth illegally, unless there be trading by mutual agreement among you; and do not kill yourselves. Allah is indeed Merciful to you!

4:58 – G-d commands you to deliver trusts to their owners and, if you judge between people, to judge justly. Splendid is Allah's exhortation to you. Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

4:129 – You will never be able to treat wives equitably, even if you are bent on doing that. So do not turn away altogether [from any of them] leaving her, like one in suspense; and if you do justice [to her] and guard against evil, He is surely All-Forgiving, Merciful!

4:135 – O believers, be upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents or kinsmen. Whether rich or poor, Allah takes better care of both. Do not follow your desire to refrain from justice. If you twist [your testimony] or turn away, Allah is Fully Aware of what you do.

Sanhedrin 6b (Soncino from Ta V'Shema Website)

R. Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilean says: It is forbidden to arbitrate in a settlement, and he who arbitrates thus offends, and whoever praises such an arbitrator [bozea'] contemneth the Lord, for it is written, He that blesseth an arbiter [bozea'], contemneth the Lord.² But let the law cut through the mountain,³ for it is written, For the judgment is God's.⁴ And so Moses's motto was: Let the law cut through the mountain. Aaron, however, loved peace and pursued peace and made peace between man and man, as it is written, The law of truth was in his mouth, unrighteousness was not found in his lips, he walked with Me in peace and uprightness and did turn many away from iniquity.⁵ ...

R. Judah b. Korha says: Settlement by arbitration is a meritorious act, for it is written, Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.¹⁰ Surely where there is strict justice there is no peace, and where there is peace, there is no strict justice! But what is that kind of justice with which peace abides? — We must say: Arbitration.¹¹ So it was in the case of David, as we read, And David executed justice and righteousness [charity] towards all his people.¹² Surely where there is strict justice there is no charity, and where there is charity, there is no justice! But what is the kind of justice with which abides charity? — We must say: Arbitration.

Ben Yehuda Dictionary

1. The straight and good that is worthy and correct to do and to make into law.

2. The characteristics of a righteous person, the deeds of a righteous person.

תהא מושתתת על

יסודות החירות,

הצדק והשלום

לאור חזונם

של נביאי ישראל

*It will be based on
freedom, justice and
peace as envisaged by
the prophets
of Israel*

Rav Milim Dictionary:

Honesty, fairness, lack of duplicity, lack of discrimination or unjust treatment, the way of truth.

When a judge is nominated, he shall make a declaration of faith before the president of the state; the declaration shall be as follows: **"I pledge myself to be in allegiance to the State of Israel and to its laws, to dispense justice fairly, not to pervert the law and to show no favour."**

Basic Law: The Judiciary [official translation]

Talking about Peace

Sung by: Mook E (Israeli rap singer); Words: Mook E; Melody: Filoni*?

Everybody is talking about peace,
nobody talks about justice,
for one it is paradise and for the other,
Hell,
More than one finger on the trigger.

Till when will the storm blow
Till when, man, son of dog
The face slips over the razor
The fingers caress the sword

Sometimes life gets me on my knees
There is no guard, no gate
No sign from heaven

I see people who live
Dreams and hopes
People who only live
Plots and schemes

Some ask questions and there are no answers
There are those who are full only of complaints and demands

Everybody is talking about peace,
nobody talks about justice,
for one it is paradise and for the other,
Hell,
More than one finger on the trigger.

Psalms 85:11-14

11 Faithfulness and truth meet;
justice and well-being kiss.

12 Truth springs up from the earth;
justice looks down from heaven.

13 The Lord also bestows His bounty;
our land yields its produce.

14 Justice goes before Him
as He sets out on His way.

Justice

In the language of the Bible, the two terms "tzedeq" and "tzedaqah" are synonymous, with a single meaning, and their meaning is behavior based on the law – a synonym for "law" (mishpat). Tzedeq is only mentioned in the singular, while tzedaqah is mentioned also in the plural. Tzedeq expresses a legal ideal: "Justice, justice you shall pursue," (Deut. 16:20), and "decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite" (Deut. 1:16). Additional synonyms for tzedeq can be found in the Bible: emunah, emet, yesha / yeshua, meisharim / mishor. The combination tzedeq v'chesed is used (Hosea 2:21), although the meaning of the two words is not identical: tzedeq is that which is stipulated by law, while chesed is parallel to compassion, or "beyond the strict letter of the law." Hashem is the God of justice – "A faithful God, never false / True and upright is He." (Deut. 32:4)

In the language of the prophets, the concept of tzedeq also took on a very broad, social meaning. The biblical expression "mishpat utzedaqah" is used to denote social justice. The reversal of tzedeq is social injustice: "And he hoped for justice / But behold, injustice; For equity / But behold, iniquity!" (Isaiah 5:7). In later Judaism and in modern Hebrew, the words took on a different meaning, and in our day, "tzedaqah" is a mitzvah and a privilege that means helping the needy, giving them a donation. Tzedeq refers to the behavior of a person towards his fellow in the social realm. A person who acts in accordance with the principle of tzedeq is known as a tzadiq, one who has attained moral and religious perfection. (Gesher Reader, The Encyclopedia, <http://www.mikragesher.org.il/titles/encyclopedia/index.html>)

Menachem Begin, "Voice of Zion Fighting," radio broadcast at founding of state on Saturday night, 6 Adar / 15 May 1948

Just Government

...and within our State, justice will be the supreme ruler, ruling even over the rulers. There will be no tyranny. There will be functionaries who serve society, rather than tyrannize it. There will be no parasitism. There will be no exploitation. There will be in our home no person, citizen or foreigner, who is hungry, lacking a roof, clothing or basic education. "Remember that you were a stranger in the Land of Egypt" – this supreme commandment will determine our relations with our neighbors. And "Justice, justice you shall pursue" – this supreme commandment will determine our relations, one person unto his comrade.

Exodus 23:6-9 –

6You shall not subvert the rights of your needy in their disputes. 7Keep far from a false charge; do not bring death on those who are innocent and in the right, for I will not acquit wrongdoer. 8Do not take bribes, for bribes blind the clear-sighted and upset the pleas of those who are in the right.

9You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ibin Ezra to Exodus 23 6-9

6. You shall not subvert the rights of your needy. This is directed towards the judge, meaning a warning to the priest and the judge to:

7. Keep far from a false charge Investigate the testimony of witnesses thoroughly. The innocent and in the right – do not sentence someone to death when he is innocent of the charge before you. Don't treat him wrongly in the matter at hand because there is evidence that he is an evil person saying, that because he is an evil person I will not acquit the wrongdoer. The point is that if he is a wrongdoer in other matters, I will take revenge.

8. Upset the pleas of those who are in the right. The point is that bribes influence the soul of the righteous as the briber wishes. A judge must be just, and bribery will bring falsehoods from his mouth.

9. You shall not oppress a stranger. This is also directed towards the judge, so that the judge will not think to (automatically) side with the Torah of Israel (Jew) when a Jew has an argument with a stranger. This is also directed to individual. It is written "Do not oppress" (In the singular) yet says: "And you shall judge (plural) justly between any person and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. (Deuteronomy 1:16)

**תהא מושתתת על יסודות
החירות, הצדק והשלום לאור
חזונם של נביאי ישראל
*It will be based on freedom,
justice and peace as envisaged
by the prophets of Israel***

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15, 35-37 –

1The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d, am holy.

15You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly.

35You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity. 36You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin.

I the Lord am your G-d who freed you from the land of Egypt. 37You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules: I am the Lord.

Deuteronomy 27:19 –

19Cursed be he who subverts the rights of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. – And all the people shall say, Amen.

Ibn Ezra to Deuteronomy 27: 19

19. Who subverts the rights of the stranger, the orphan. For they have nobody to help them. They are transparent. The stranger, the orphan and the widow are mentioned because if the judge subverts the rights of others they will appeal against him and they will make the thing known. However, the stranger, the orphan and the widow are powerless.

Deuteronomy 1:8-17 –

8See, I place the land at your disposal. Go, take possession of the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to them and to their heirs after them.

9Thereupon I said to you, "I cannot bear the burden of you by myself. 10The Lord your G-d has multiplied you until you are today as numerous as the stars in the sky. – 11May the Lord, the G-d of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as He promised you. – 12How can I bear unaided the trouble of you, and the burden, and the bickering! 13Pick from each of your tribes men who are wise, discerning, and experienced, and I will appoint them as your heads." 14You answered me and said, "What you propose to do is good." 15So I took your tribal leaders, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over your chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens, and officials for your tribes. 16I charged your magistrates at that time as follows, "Hear out your fellow men, and decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. 17You shall not be partial in judgment; hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is G-d's. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring it to me and I will hear it."

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 –

18You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that the Lord your G-d is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. 19You 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. 20Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your G-d is giving you.

Isaiah 1:26-27 –

26" I will restore your magistrates as of old,
And your counselors as of yore.
After that you shall be called
City of Righteousness, Faithful City."

27Zion shall be saved in the judgment;
Her repentant ones, in the retribution.

Isaiah 11:1-9 –

1But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse,
A twig shall sprout from his stock.
2The spirit of the Lord shall alight upon him;
A spirit of wisdom and insight,
A spirit of counsel and valor,
A spirit of devotion and reverence for the Lord.
3aHe shall sense the truth by his reverence for the Lord;
He shall not judge by what his eyes behold,
Nor decide by what his ears perceive.
4Thus he shall judge the poor with equity
And decide with justice for the lowly of the land.
He shall strike down a land with the rod of his mouth
And slay the wicked with the breath of his lips.
5Justice shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his waist.
6The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard lie down with the kid;
The calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling together,
With a little boy to herd them.
7The cow and the bear shall graze,
Their young shall lie down together;
And the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.
8A babe shall play
Over a viper's hole,
And an infant pass his hand
Over an adder's den.
9In all of My sacred mount
Nothing evil or vile shall be done;
For the land shall be filled with devotion to the Lord
As water covers the sea.

תהא מושתתת על יסודות החירות,

הצדק והשלום לאור חזונם

של נביאי ישראל

*It will be based on freedom,
justice and peace as envisaged
by the prophets of Israel*

**PESIQTA ZUTRATA (Lekach Tov), Deut.,
Shoftim, 28a**

Another idea: "Justice, justice you shall pursue." If one leaves the court acquitted and someone can prove him guilty, he is not returned [to court]. If someone leaves court with a guilty sentence and there's someone who can prove him innocent, he's taken back. "That you may thrive and occupy the land " (Deut. 16:20), teaches us that the judges were appointed in order to revitalize the Israelites and return them to their land.

Isaiah 32:1, 16-18 –

1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness,
And ministers shall govern with justice;

16 Then justice shall abide in the wilderness
And righteousness shall dwell on the farm land.
17 For the work of righteousness shall be peace,
And the effect of righteousness, calm and confidence forever.

Jeremiah 22:3-5

3 "Thus said the Lord: Do what is just and right; rescue from the defrauder him who is robbed; do not wrong the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; commit no lawless act, and do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place. 4 For if you fulfill this command, then through the gates of this palace shall enter kings of David's line who sit upon his throne, riding horse-drawn chariots, with their courtiers and their subjects. 5 But if you do not heed these commands, I swear by Myself – declares the Lord – that this palace shall become a ruin."

תהא מושתתת על יסודות החירות, הצדק והשלום לאור חזונם של נביאי ישראל
It will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel

Haim H. Cohen, "Justice," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, vol. 4, 1968, Merchavia Press, p. 919 (Hebrew)

Justice is first and foremost a subjective concept... in this sense, it varies from person to person, according to one's character and tendencies, education and world views. However, the sensibility of justice also varies based on objective circumstances that change from period to period and country to country.

Haim Weizman – The Test

I am writing these words the day after an historic decision by the United Nations. With 1947 coming to a close, the Jewish People, and particularly the Zionists, face a great test. Before another year passes, we must establish a Jewish State... the state is only the means to an end, or in other words, the state is just a vessel that needs to be infused with content, and it is imperative to know what the nature of that content is. The first foundation of this content – and in my opinion the life vessel of a stable society, is justice; and not merely as an abstract principle, but as implemented in the judiciary and in the legal system. It must be quick and not costly – so that every person can make use of it – and it must be equal for all people. There must not be one set of laws for Jews and another for Arabs. We must maintain the principle expressed in the Torah: "The same rule shall apply to you and to the stranger who resides among you" (Num. 16:17). In stating this, I do not mean that there are tendencies towards inequality or discrimination. This is only a timely warning, necessary since we will have a very large Arab minority. I am certain that the world will judge the Jewish State according to how it treats the Arabs, just as the Jewish people will be judged largely by the achievements and oversights of the State, through which we have begun given a wonderful opportunity after thousands of years of wandering and suffering.

(Masa uma'as – Life Recollections of the President of Israel, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1963, p. 446-451 (Hebrew))

Haim H. Cohen, The Law, Jerusalem, 1992, p. 88 (Hebrew)

Aristotle speaks of two kinds of justice: in terms of equality and in terms of proportion. A prime example of justice in terms of equality is "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another shall be inflicted on him" (Levit. 24:20): Justice based on equality is complete and absolute equality between crime and punishment, damage and compensation, commodity and price... justice based on equality is 'mathematical' justice, a matter of simple calculation. In contrast, justice based on proportion is 'geometrical' justice; it is entirely dependent on the structure of society, on the quality and size of its various components. This kind of justice also aspires to equality. However, this equality is not absolute, but relative. All rights and obligations in law are divided between people based on the nature, needs and ability of each.

... Justice based on equality leads to formal and external equality, while justice based on proportion strives towards practical and actual justice... True justice – like true equality – arises from the law's taking into account inequality between two people who differ from one another: this is proportional justice.

Justice (tzedeq), not Charity (tzedaqa), Will Save Lives (Yossi Dahan, 10 September 2004)

The meaning of the concept of justice in Latin is to give every person what he or she deserves. The debate in political thought revolves around two things: one, what is the object of division in the principles of justice, i.e. what is being divided up, just freedoms or also income, opportunities, positions of power, and other social commodities. Second, what are the desirable principles of justice (for example, each one according to his needs? Each according to his contribution? According to his endowments? and other principles that have arisen in the discussion of proportional justice over history)... The principles of social justice are principles deriving from ethical assumptions, and they deal with the distribution of social and economic commodities such as freedom, wealth, income, opportunities, and positions of power. The institutional expressions of these principles are, among other things, the social rights and principles that guide economic and social policies.

Injustice Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere

Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) is a US black civil rights leader & clergyman. In 1963, King led a demonstration in Birmingham that caused his arrest. The letter he wrote in jail to fellow religious leaders who questioned the propriety of the demonstration has become a classic exposition of the need to act to protect the human rights of others. <http://www.humanistictexts.org/king.htm>

3. But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

4. Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

5. You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

**תהא מושתתת על יסודות
החירות, הצדק והשלום**

**לאור חזונם של נביאי ישראל
It will be based on freedom,
justice and peace as envisaged
by the prophets of Israel**

For Discussion:

? *There are many differing definitions and aspects of justice (justice in court, social and economic justice, prophetic justice, etc.):*

? *Which of these definitions do you think were intended by the authors of the Declaration?*

? *Which of them are expressed in other texts?*

Rabbis for Human Rights

We hope you have found these materials helpful and inspiring in exploring the vision of Israel and how we might work towards fulfillment of that vision. Rabbis for Human Rights developed these materials and we are distributing them free of charge. If you would like to support the creation, production and distribution of educational resources such as these, please consider making a contribution by using the form below. You may also make a contribution and find out more about RHR and RHR-NA on our websites: www.rhr.israel.net www.rhr-na.org

Name _____
Address _____
Phone (h) _____ (w) _____
Email _____
Congregation or faith community _____

Please indicate your level of support below:

\$1000 _____ \$360 _____ \$180 _____ \$72 _____ \$36 _____ Other _____

_____ My check to Rabbis for Human Rights – North America is enclosed.

PLEASE MAIL ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO
RABBIS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS-NORTH AMERICA
BOX 1539, WEST TIBURY, MA.02575

Credit card information: Name as it appears on the credit card _____

Credit card type: Mastercard Visa American Express

Credit card number: _____

Credit Card Expiration Date: _____

Founded in 1988, Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) is the only organization of rabbis in Israel including Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Renewal rabbis, and the only rabbinic organization that explicitly dedicates itself to the Jewish religious tradition of human rights. Dedicated to the physical security and moral vision of the State of Israel as reflected in Israel's Declaration of Independence, RHR develops educational resources on Judaism and human rights and teaches them in Israeli schools and pre-army programs; lobbies for economic justice in Israel; provides support for Palestinian families facing home demolition for administrative reasons; and protects Palestinian farmers' access to their agricultural land. RHR has received the Knesset's Award for Quality of Life and the 2006 Niwano Peace Prize. The work of RHR has been endorsed by the North American Rabbinic Associations of the Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist and Renewal movements.

Founded in 2002, Rabbis for Human Rights – North America (RHR-NA) is an organization of rabbis from all streams of Judaism dedicated to expanding support for the mission and work of RHR in Israel, and to education and advocacy on human rights issues in North America. In North America, RHR-NA has launched Honor the Image of God: Stop Torture Now, a Jewish campaign to end U.S.-sponsored torture. The campaign includes developing educational resources and programming for rabbis and Jewish communities nationwide and organizing Jews in local communities to participate in Jewish and interfaith efforts to end torture. In 2007, RHR-NA launched K'vod Habriot: A Jewish Human Rights Network, the first Jewish Human Rights network of rabbis, communities and individuals dedicated to the human rights of all. In 2008, RHR-NA will host The Second North American Conference on Judaism and Human Rights for rabbis, cantors, rabbinic and cantorial students, and all Jews committed to the protection of human rights for all.