

PARSHAT SHOFTIM
DEUTERONOMY 16:18-21:9
4 ELUL 5781/12 AUGUST 2021



The Conversation
Oil on canvass by Henri Matisse

CHECKS AND BALANCES

1. "...you shall be free to set a king over yourselves..." (Deuteronomy 17:15)
"...Adonai your God has chosen him [the priest]...to be in attendance for service in the name of Adonai..." (Deuteronomy 18:5)
"Adonai your God will raise up for you a prophet..." (Deuteronomy 18:15)
2. "When you enter the land Adonai your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it and you say, 'Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us...'" (Deuteronomy 17:14)

"he shall not keep many horses...he shall not have many wives...nor shall he amass silver and gold to excess." (Deuteronomy 17:16-17)

"he shall read it [this Torah] all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere Adonai his God...and so that he will not consider himself better than his fellows." (Deuteronomy 17:19-20)

3. “You shall appoint for yourselves judges and officers in all your gates...” (Deuteronomy 16:18)

It is written in Pirke Avot, “Do not judge your fellow until you come to their place.” Judges need to be drawn from the same environment as the defendants. They need to know not only what they have done; they need to have experienced the environment which brought them to do what they had done. (Based on the teachings of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson)

4. “Appoint for yourselves judges and officers throughout your land” (Deuteronomy 16:18). This can be read in connection with the hint that my grandfather, of blessed memory, found to the month of Elul in the verse: “He has made us and not we ourselves” (Psalm 100:3). There is a variance between the written text and the oral reading in this verse. One says *ve-lo anachnu* (“and not we ourselves”) while the other reads *ve-lo anachnu* (“and we are His”). These two words *lo* and *lo* make up the spelling of the name Elul. And these two aspects depend upon one another. (Sefat Emet)

[JPS translation: He made us and we are His]

הוּא עָשָׂנוּ וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ

אֶלּוּל - Elul