

PARSHAT SHOFTIM
DEUTERONOMY 16:18-21:9
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 51:12-52:12
30 AV 5786/13 AUGUST 2026



The Conversation
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CREATIVE TENSION

1. King. Priest. Prophet.
“...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. “[the king] shall not keep many horses...he shall not have many wives...nor shall he amass silver and gold to excess.” (Deuteronomy 17:16-17)

“[the king] shall read 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. The blood avenger, pursuing the slayer in hot anger, may overtake and kill him; that is why I command you to set aside three cities... (Deuteronomy 19:16-17)

4. God withdrew the plenitude of God's being to make space for the world. A similar space must exist between human beings in order to imitate God and create viable worlds. Such a vacated space must also exist within us if we are to create viable selves. (Rabbi Nachman)
5. Liberty does not flourish because men have natural rights or because they revolt if their rulers push them too far; it flourishes because power is so distributed and so organized that whoever is tempted to abuse it finds legal restraints in his way. (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*)