

## Deuteronomy 1:16-18

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-1/deuteronomy-116-18/>

*Moses reminds the people that he called upon the judges to conduct their legal procedures with equity, knowing that every judgment belongs to the LORD.*

After the appointment of the leaders and officers (vv. 9-15), Moses turned his attention to the *judges* and their role as they sought to administer social justice in the land. He commanded them to *hear the cases between their fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him*. Moses exhorted the judges to pronounce a just verdict in every case, whether it involves their Israelites brothers or between Israelites and *aliens*. People who reside in a foreign land are called “*aliens*” or “*strangers*.” Such people, who may have fled their homeland for political or economic reasons, do not usually enjoy the same privileges as the citizens. They are usually the ones who suffer from social injustice. But every human is precious in God’s sight. So, God exhorts the judges to *not show partiality* in their judgments.

A clear example of an *alien* would be the situation of the Israelites in Egypt and their affliction by the Pharaoh “who did not know Joseph” ([Exodus 1:8-22](#)). Therefore, the mention of the word *alien* by Moses here serves to remind the Israelites of the time when they themselves lived as *aliens* in Egypt and the various persecutions they endured ([Exodus 22:21](#)). Such a reminder should have motivated the judges to show love for *aliens* who lived among them, and to treat them equally under the law.

True to human nature, in every society, there is always a tendency to show favoritism to those who are highly regarded or well known. In other words, knowing the social status of a person can potentially influence the decision of a judge. That is why Moses emphatically told the judges not to *show partiality in judgment*, an expression that could literally be translated “do not regard faces in judgment” or “never regard faces in judgment.” The judge should treat *the small and great alike*.

Moreover, Moses told the judges not to *fear man*, regardless of his position in the social hierarchy. The reason is because judgment belongs to God, the absolute sovereign judge and the one who deserves to be feared above all.

Finally, Moses set up a check on justice. An opportunity to appeal. He told the judges that if there was a case that seemed to be too difficult for them to handle, they could always appeal to him and he would *hear it*. In short, Moses wanted justice to be administered in God's ways in order that it might be done as unto the LORD.

Moses' reminder of all these things is laying the foundation for Israel to govern themselves. This will be instituting something new in the world. Israel will not be like other nations, who all have a king. God intends for the people of Israel to serve one another in obedience to His law. He also wants them to show love and care to one another.

### **Biblical Text:**

<sup>16</sup> “Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him. <sup>17</sup> ‘You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it. <sup>18</sup> “I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do.”