

The Obvious Distortion of Justice
International Bible Lesson
Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 16:18-20
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L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

“Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous” (Deuteronomy 16:19—KJV).

“They are not to be unjust or show partiality in their judgments; and they are not to accept bribes, for gifts blind the eyes even of wise and honest men, and cause them to give wrong decisions” (Deuteronomy 16:19—GNB).

“You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right” (Deuteronomy 16:19—NRSV).

After God freed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, God created a new human government and commanded that judges and officials be appointed to “render just decisions for the people” (Deuteronomy 16:18). In accordance with the laws of God, God wanted these leaders to help His people learn to govern themselves, so they would have the inner resources to restrain themselves from wrongdoing and the wisdom to serve others in ways that would benefit everyone. The greatest leaders of God’s people ruled according to God’s laws, though they did not always do so perfectly. They did not distort justice, show partiality, or take bribes. The Hebrew people admired and

trusted these great national leaders because of their loyalty to God.

The signs a government has become corrupt, decadent, and godless, include the obvious distortion of justice by leaders and officials appointed or elected to uphold just laws—laws consistent with the revealed will of God in the Bible. A government with leaders acting contrary to the laws of God will show partiality to rich people, or to poor people, or to people of their own political party, or to people from whom they hope to profit in some way. People who have turned their backs on God will tell lies about others and distort or exaggerate the supposed flaws of those with whom they disagree. If they do not believe their leaders will do what is right, those who want to live right will not have confidence in those making decisions in their government. — L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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lgp@InternationalBibleLessons.org

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Thinking Further

1. Why do you think some people say it bothers them when they learn that God requires them to “fear the LORD”? What might you tell them?

2. Why is it important to tell people that God’s laws are for their “own well-being” or benefit?

3. Why did God choose the Israelites “out of all the peoples”?

4. Why did God tell the Israelites that He “executes justice” and “loves the strangers,” and told the Israelites to “also love the stranger”?

5. What might happen to a business, country, church, government, or other organization when leaders or officers “distort justice” or “show partiality”?

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