

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 301

ABLE MEN WHO FEAR ELOHIM

A Covenant Deep Dive into Exodus 18:21 and the Standard for Choosing Those Who Bear
the Burden of the People in the Tanakh

*What Standard Did Jethro Set Before Moses, Who Looked the Men Out, How Were They Set
Over the People, and How Would Miqdash Bethel Choose Such Men Today? — A
Three-Religion Covenant Response*

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Rabbinic tradition reads Exodus 18:21 together with Deuteronomy 1:13 and counts seven marks of a judge. Maimonides lists them as wisdom, humility, fear of heaven, hatred of money, love of truth, being loved by the people, and a good name (Laws of the Sanhedrin 2:7). Rashi takes <i>anshei chayil (able men)</i> as men of means who need not flatter anyone, and says that Moses sought seven marks and found three (on Exodus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 1:15). The Mishnah sets courts of three, of twenty-three, and of seventy-one (Sanhedrin 1:6).	The New Testament follows the same steps. The assembly is told, <i>“look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business,”</i> and hands are laid on them (Acts 6:3, 6). Overseers and deacons must be <i>“not greedy of filthy lucre”</i> and must <i>“first be proved”</i> (1 Timothy 3:3, 8, 10; Titus 1:7), and hands are to be laid <i>“suddenly on no man”</i> (1 Timothy 5:22). The Greek Septuagint renders the last mark of Exodus 18:21 as men <i>“bating arrogance.”</i>	The Qur’an commands, <i>“Allah commands you to render trusts to those worthy of them, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice”</i> (Q. 4:58). In the house of the elder of Midian, his daughter says of Moses, <i>“the best one you can hire is the strong, the trustworthy”</i> (Q. 28:26). The hadith says, <i>“We do not appoint to this work anyone who asks for it or is eager for it”</i> (Sahih al-Bukhari 7149; Sahih Muslim 1733), and curses both the giver and the taker of a bribe (Sunan Abi Dawud 3580).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one verse, **Exodus 18:21**, and to the question that verse answers: what kind of men are to be set over the people, who looks them out, and how they are set in place. It then asks how Miqdash Bethel would choose such men today. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with their English meaning, also bold italic, in parentheses. Scripture references are bold. **Verse numbers follow the English version. In a few chapters the Hebrew Bible divides the chapter at a different point, so the same verse carries a different number in the Hebrew text. Where that happens, the Hebrew number is given in brackets on first citation, for example Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14].** Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, the Qur'an and hadith, and the Greek Septuagint appear only in the

opening table, the Comparative Texts table, and the Three-Religion Audit, as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The counsel of Jethro and what Moses did with it; the second telling in Deuteronomy 1:9–18; the laws that bind every judge; Joshua set before the congregation
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zechariah	What happened when the standard was kept and when it was ignored; the prophets' charge against chiefs who loved gain; the promise of judges restored
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	The marks seen in a life; men sought out under David, Jehoshaphat, Ezra, and Nehemiah; Daniel's record searched by his enemies

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Acts 6:3, 6; 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; 5:22; Titus 1:5–9	How the first-century assemblies looked out and proved men; the same marks restated
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 2:188; 4:58; 28:26; 38:26; Sahih al-Bukhari 7149; Sahih Muslim 1733, 1825; Sunan Abi Dawud 3580	Trusts given to those worthy of them; the strong and the trustworthy; office refused to the one who asks; bribery cursed
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:6; Mishnah Bekhorot 4:6; Sifrei on Deuteronomy, section 15; Talmud Sanhedrin 18a; Rashi on Exodus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 1:15; Maimonides, Laws of the Sanhedrin 2:7	The seven marks of a judge; the saying that three were found of seven; the count of 78,600 chiefs; payment that voids a judgment

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Historical sources	Septuagint (Greek) of Exodus 18:21	How an ancient translation rendered the four marks

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — WHO SHALL BEAR THE BURDEN WITH YOU?

I-A. The Question as It Is Asked

Every assembly, every nation, and every household of faith must sooner or later answer one question: who shall be set over the people? Churches answer it with seminaries, votes, and boards. Synagogues answer it with ordination and contracts. Mosques answer it with scholars and committees. Governments answer it with elections and appointments. In all of them the same complaint is heard: the wrong men rise.

The Tanakh answered this question once, in one verse, before Israel had a priesthood, a king, or a court. A father-in-law watched Moses judge the people alone from morning until evening, told him it was not good, and gave him a standard for the men who would share the load. That verse is **Exodus 18:21**. This study asks six questions of it:

First: what do the Hebrew words of the standard mean?

Second: who gave the counsel, and on what condition did it stand?

Third: who looked the men out, and who set them in place?

Fourth: what does the Tanakh show each mark to look like in a man's life?

Fifth: what happened when the standard was ignored?

Sixth: how would Miqdash Bethel choose such men today?

I-B. The Governing Text

“And you, you shall look out from all the people able men, fearers of Elohim, men of truth, haters of unjust gain; and you shall set them over them as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens” (Exodus 18:21).

וְאַתָּה תִּחְזֶה מִכָּל־הָעָם אֲנָשִׁי־חַיִּל יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲנָשִׁי אֱמֶת שְׂנֹאֵי בָצַע וְשֹׂמְתֵי עֲלֵהֶם שְׂרֵי אֲלָפִים
שְׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שְׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשְׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת

The verse has three parts. It names where to look: *mi-kol ha-am (from all the people)*. It names what to look for: four marks, every one of them a matter of character and none of them a matter of birth. And it names what to do with the men who are found: set them over the people in ranks that reach down to a chief for every ten.

I-C. The Setting — Moses Alone from Morning to Evening

The day after Jethro arrived, “*Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening*” (Exodus 18:13). When Jethro asked why he sat alone, Moses gave three reasons.

1. The people came “*to inquire of Elohim.*”
2. He judged “*between a man and his neighbor.*”
3. And he made known “*the statutes of Elohim and His laws*” (Exodus 18:15–16).

Jethro answered:

“The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear away, both you and this people that is with you; for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to do it alone” (Exodus 18:17–18).

Two things are at risk in that sentence. Moses will wear away, and so will the people. A people that must stand all day to be heard is a people kept from judgment. Moses said the same of himself when he retold it: “*I am not able to bear you alone*” (Deuteronomy 1:9), and again, “*How can I alone bear your load, and your burden, and your strife?*” (Deuteronomy 1:12). He said it a third time at Taberah, to Yahweh: “*I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me*” (Numbers 11:14).

Finding: that one man cannot carry the judgment of the whole people, and should not try, is **Corroborated** (Exodus 18:18; Numbers 11:14; Deuteronomy 1:9, 12). The standard of Exodus 18:21 exists because rule by one man alone is “*not good,*” for the man or for the people.

I-D. What This Study Builds On, and How Findings Are Graded

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 216** (*Called and Chosen*) examined the commissioning of an elder. **Doc 265** (*Seven Offices, One King*) set the elder and the judge beside the other offices and found that both continue wherever the covenant people live. **Doc 221** (*The Law Written and the Law Made*) compared the covenant’s law with civil law. The May 2026 study *The Benei Chayil* examined *chayil (worth)* in the life of a man. The present document takes the one verse those studies quote, asks what it requires, and then states the standard by which Miqdash Bethel would choose such men (Section X). It refines points in four earlier documents (Section XII).

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is a **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The verse is built from plain words. The table sets out the vocabulary this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>chazah</i> (to see, to look out), חָזָה	H2372	To see, to behold; the verb of a prophet's seeing	Exodus 18:21; Isaiah 1:1
<i>anashim</i> (men), אָנָשִׁים	H376	Plural of <i>ish</i> (man); in the joined form, <i>anshei</i> (men of)	Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:13
<i>chayil</i> (ability, worth), חַיִל	H2428	Strength, ability, worth, wealth, an army; capacity for the work	Genesis 47:6; Ruth 3:11; 1 Chronicles 26:8
<i>yare</i> (fearing), יָרָא, and <i>yir'ah</i> (fear)	H3373 / H3374	Standing in awe of; held back by reverence	Genesis 22:12; 2 Samuel 23:3
<i>emet</i> (truth), אֱמֶת	H571	Firmness, faithfulness, reliability, truth	Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 7:2
<i>sane</i> (to hate), שָׂנֵא	H8130	To hate; to reject; to refuse to be joined to	Proverbs 28:16; Amos 5:15
<i>betza</i> (unjust gain), בָּצַע	H1215	A piece cut off for oneself; profit taken by wrong	1 Samuel 8:3; Jeremiah 22:17
<i>shochad</i> (bribe), שֹׁחַד	H7810	A gift given to turn judgment	Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19
<i>sar</i> (chief), שָׂר	H8269	A chief, captain, ruler, or prince; one set over others	Exodus 2:14; Exodus 18:21
<i>sim</i> (to set) and <i>natan</i> (to give)	H7760 / H5414	To set in place; to give. These are the verbs of appointing	Exodus 18:21, 25; Deuteronomy 16:18
<i>bachar</i> (to choose), בָּחַר	H977	To choose; to select after looking	Exodus 18:25; Deuteronomy 17:15
<i>havu</i> (provide), הָבוּ	H3051	Give; bring forward; provide	Deuteronomy 1:13; Joshua 18:4

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>chakhamim</i> (<i>wise</i>), חֲכָמִים	H2450	Skilled; wise	Deuteronomy 1:13; Deuteronomy 16:19
<i>nevonim</i> (<i>understanding</i>), נְבוֹנִים	H995	Discerning; able to tell one thing from another	Deuteronomy 1:13; Genesis 41:33
<i>yedu'im</i> (<i>known</i>), יְדוּעִים	H3045	Known; having a record others can speak to	Deuteronomy 1:13, 15
<i>rashim</i> (<i>heads</i>), רָאשִׁים	H7218	Heads; those who stand first	Exodus 18:25; Deuteronomy 1:15
<i>shofetim</i> (<i>judges</i>), שֹׁפְטִים, and <i>shoterim</i> (<i>officers</i>), שְׁטָרִים	H8199 / H7860	Those who decide cases; officials who record and enforce	Exodus 18:22; Deuteronomy 16:18
<i>tzivvah</i> (<i>to command, to charge</i>)	H6680	To command; to lay a charge on someone	Exodus 18:23; Numbers 27:19; Deuteronomy 1:16
<i>ne'emanim</i> (<i>faithful</i>), נְאֻמָּנִים, and <i>emunah</i> (<i>faithfulness</i>), אֱמוּנָה	H539 / H530	Proved firm; reliable with a trust	Nehemiah 13:13; 2 Chronicles 19:9

Four lexical observations govern what follows.

First, the verb of selecting is a verb of seeing. Jethro does not say, appoint whom you please. He says *techezeh* (*you shall look out*), תַּחְזֶה, from *chazah* (*to see*), the root that gives the Tanakh its word for a prophet's vision (**Isaiah 1:1**). The verb stands only four times in the Torah. Besides this verse, it is used by the nobles of Israel who “*beheld Elohim*” on the mountain (**Exodus 24:11**) and twice by Balaam, who “*sees the vision of the Almighty*” (**Numbers 24:4, 16**). The man who chooses is to see what is already there. He does not make an able man by giving him a title. When Moses carried the counsel out, the text uses the ordinary verb: “*Moses chose*” (**Exodus 18:25**). Seeing comes first, and choosing follows what was seen.

Second, *chayil* is wider than strength. It is the word for an army (**Exodus 14:4**) and for wealth (**Deuteronomy 8:18**), and it is the word for the worth of a person.

Boaz told Ruth, “*all the gate of my people knows that you are a woman of chayil (worth)*” (**Ruth 3:11**).

Pharaoh used the phrase before Jethro did, and for the same purpose:

“if you know that there are anshei chayil (able men) among them, then set them as chiefs of livestock over what is mine” (Genesis 47:6).

In both places the able men are found first and set as chiefs second.

Third, *betza* comes from a verb that means to cut off (*batza*, H1214). It is the piece a man cuts for himself. The word is not evil in every place. Judah asked his brothers, *“What betza (profit) is it if we kill our brother?”* (Genesis 37:26). But wherever the Tanakh joins the word to a ruler or a judge, it is profit taken through the office (1 Samuel 8:3; Jeremiah 22:17; Ezekiel 22:27). And the verse does not say the men must avoid it. It says they must hate it.

Fourth, the verse does not use the word judge. The men are *sarim* (*chiefs*), the word used of captains in the field (Numbers 31:14). Their work is named in the next verse: *“and they shall judge the people at all times”* (Exodus 18:22). When Moses retold it he called the same men *“your judges”* (Deuteronomy 1:16) and added *shoterim* (*officers*) (Deuteronomy 1:15). One body of men led, judged, and kept order. The standard of Exodus 18:21 is therefore the standard for anyone set over others in the covenant community, whatever the post is called.

Finding: that the same men were both chiefs and judges is **Corroborated** (Exodus 18:21–22, 25–26; Deuteronomy 1:15–16).

III. THE COUNSEL AND ITS CONDITION

III-A. Who Gave the Counsel

The standard did not come down from the mountain. It came from Jethro, *“the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law”* (Exodus 18:1). Midian was a son of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:1–2). Jethro had heard what **Yahweh** did for Israel. He came to the camp at *“the mountain of Elohim”* (Exodus 18:5) and confessed, *“Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods”* (Exodus 18:11). He brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to **Elohim**, and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with him before **Elohim** (Exodus 18:12). The counsel came the next day.

So the covenant’s standard for its own chiefs was spoken by a man from outside Israel who had come to confess **Yahweh**. The Torah did not hide that. It recorded his name, his counsel, and the fact that Moses listened to him.

Finding: that a standard for Israel’s government was received from a man of another nation who confessed **Yahweh** is a **Single witness** (Exodus 18:1–24).

III-B. The Condition — “And Elohim Commands You”

Jethro did not hand Moses a rule and tell him to obey it. He opened with a blessing and closed with a condition.

He opened: *“Listen now to my voice; I will counsel you, and may Elohim be with you”* (Exodus 18:19).

He closed: *“If you do this thing, and Elohim commands you, then you will be able to stand, and all this people also will come to their place in peace”* (Exodus 18:23).

The words *ve-tzivvekha Elohim (and Elohim commands you)*, וְצִוְּךָ אֱלֹהִים, put the whole counsel under Yahweh. The clause can be read as a condition (if Elohim so commands you) or as a result (then Elohim will direct you). In either reading the advice is not the final word. Jethro’s counsel was good, and it was still only counsel until Elohim commanded it.

The Torah afterward made it a command in its own words: *“Judges and officers you shall give yourself in all your gates”* (Deuteronomy 16:18).

Finding: that the counsel of Jethro stood under the command of Elohim, and that the Torah afterward commanded what he had counseled, is **Corroborated** (Exodus 18:23; Deuteronomy 16:18–20).

III-C. Teach Before You Appoint

The verse before the standard is easily passed over. Before any chief is set, Moses is told what he himself must keep doing:

“And you shall warn them of the statutes and the laws, and you shall make known to them the way in which they must walk and the work that they must do” (Exodus 18:20).

The order matters. The people are taught the statutes first. Then men are set to judge them by those statutes. A chief under Exodus 18:21 does not make the law, and he does not judge by his own opinion. He applies what the whole people has already been taught. The same order appears when judges were appointed outside the Land.

Ezra was to appoint judges for *“all who know the laws of your Elohim,”* and for anyone who did not know them the decree said, *“you shall teach”* (Ezra 7:25).

Finding: that teaching the people the law comes before setting men to judge by it is Corroborated (Exodus 18:20–21; Ezra 7:25).

III-D. What Moses Did

“And Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said” (Exodus 18:24). The man who spoke with Yahweh took correction from a visitor. Then:

“And Moses chose able men from all Israel, and gave them as heads over the people: chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens” (Exodus 18:25).

The report names one mark, *anshei chayil* (*able men*), where the counsel had named four. The report in Deuteronomy does the same: three marks are asked for, and two are named in the men who were taken (**Deuteronomy 1:13, 15**). Some have concluded that Moses could not find men who bore all the marks. The text does not say that. A report that is shorter than the instruction is the ordinary way of Hebrew narrative, and the plain statement is that Moses *“did all that he had said.”*

Finding: that Moses failed to find men who bore all the marks is **Not in the text** (Exodus 18:24–25).

III-E. When It Happened

Exodus sets Jethro’s visit at the mountain of **Elohim**, before its account of the words spoken at Sinai (**Exodus 18:5**). Deuteronomy sets the appointment *“at that time,”* at Horeb, when Israel was told it had stayed long enough at the mountain (**Deuteronomy 1:6, 9**). The two accounts agree on the place. Neither says how many days lay between the counsel and the setting of the chiefs, and this study does not settle more than the text does.

IV. THE FOUR MARKS OF EXODUS 18:21

The four marks are not four kinds of men. They are four things true of the same man. The table shows what each one guards against, and the sections that follow take each in turn.

MARK	HEBREW	WHAT IT GUARDS AGAINST	SECOND WITNESS
Able	<i>anshei chayil</i> אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל	The willing man who cannot carry the work	Genesis 47:6; 1 Chronicles 26:8
Fearing Elohim	<i>yir’ei Elohim</i> יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים	The able man who has no restraint where no one can check him	Genesis 42:18; Nehemiah 5:15
Men of truth	<i>anshei emet</i> אַנְשֵׁי אֱמֶת	The devout man whose word and findings cannot be relied on	Nehemiah 7:2; Zechariah 8:16

MARK	HEBREW	WHAT IT GUARDS AGAINST	SECOND WITNESS
Hating unjust gain	<i>son'ei vatza</i> שׂוֹנֵי' בָצַע	The trusted man who uses the post to feed himself	1 Samuel 8:3; Proverbs 28:16

IV-A. Able Men

Chayil in this verse is the capacity to carry the work. The Tanakh uses the same word for men who are fit for a task. Pharaoh wanted *anshei chayil (able men)* over his livestock (Genesis 47:6). The gatekeepers of the house of Elohim were “*able men with strength for the service*” (1 Chronicles 26:8), and the priests who returned from exile were “*mighty men of chayil (ability) for the work of the service of the house of Elohim*” (1 Chronicles 9:13). In each place the word answers a simple question: can this man do what the post requires?

Jethro’s own reason for the counsel was that the load was “*too heavy*” for one man (Exodus 18:18). The men who share it must be able to bear weight: to sit through a dispute, to hear both sides, to say no to a strong man, and to keep doing it.

Moses charged them, “*you shall not be afraid of the face of any man*” (Deuteronomy 1:17). That is *chayil*.

The word also carries worth. Solomon said of Adonijah,

“If he will be a ben chayil (man of worth), not a hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if evil is found in him, he shall die” (1 Kings 1:52).

There *chayil* stands opposite to evil. David is the Tanakh’s picture of the two halves held together:

“He shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and led them by the skillfulness of his hands” (Psalms 78:72).

A whole heart with unskilled hands harms the flock. Skilled hands with a divided heart harm it more.

Does *chayil* here mean wealth? The word can mean wealth (Deuteronomy 8:17–18), and a man who is not in need is harder to buy. But the verse cannot be requiring riches, because its last mark requires a man to hate gain.

The Tanakh also says plainly, “*Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in his ways, though he is rich*” (Proverbs 28:6), and it tells of a poor wise man who saved a city by his wisdom (Ecclesiastes 9:15).

Finding: that *chayil* in **Exodus 18:21** means ability and worth for the work is **Corroborated** (**Genesis 47:6; 1 Kings 1:52; 1 Chronicles 9:13; 1 Chronicles 26:8**). That it requires a man to be wealthy is **Not in the text**.

IV-B. Fearers of Elohim

The Tanakh shows what the fear of **Elohim** is by showing where it is missing and where it is present. Abraham said of Gerar, *“Surely there is no fear of Elohim in this place, and they will kill me”* (**Genesis 20:11**). Amalek struck the faint and weary at the rear of the march, *“and he did not fear Elohim”* (**Deuteronomy 25:18**). Where the fear of **Elohim** is missing, the weak are not safe.

Where it is present, power is held back. The midwives *“feared Elohim, and did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them”* (**Exodus 1:17**).

Joseph, holding his brothers’ lives in his hand, said, *“Do this and live; I fear Elohim”* (**Genesis 42:18**).

Nehemiah, as governor, had a right to the governor’s bread and did not take it: *“The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people ... but I did not do so, because of the fear of Elohim”* (**Nehemiah 5:15**).

The Torah attaches the words *“you shall fear your Elohim”* to commands where the injured person cannot hold the offender to account:

1. cursing the deaf and tripping the blind (**Leviticus 19:14**),
2. wronging one another in a sale (**Leviticus 25:17**),
3. and ruling a servant with harshness (**Leviticus 25:43**).

The deaf man does not hear the curse. **Elohim** does. That is why this mark is required of a judge. Most of what a judge does wrong, no one else will ever be able to prove.

David’s last words say what a ruler must be: *“He who rules over men must be righteous, ruling in the fear of Elohim”* (**2 Samuel 23:3**).

Jehoshaphat charged his judges, *“let the dread of Yahweh be upon you”* (**2 Chronicles 19:7**).

Finding: the fear of **Elohim** is the restraint that governs a man’s use of power when no man can check him, and it is required of those who rule and judge. **Corroborated** (**Genesis 42:18; Exodus 1:17; Leviticus 19:14; Nehemiah 5:15; 2 Samuel 23:3; 2 Chronicles 19:7**).

IV-C. Men of Truth

Emet comes from the root of firmness. It is what can be leaned on. **Yahweh** names it of Himself: *“abundant in lovingkindness and emet (truth)”* (Exodus 34:6).

In the Torah’s courts it is a word about facts.

When a charge is brought, the judges must: *“inquire, and search, and ask well; and behold, if it is emet (truth), the matter is established”* (Deuteronomy 13:14 [Hebrew 13:15]; Deuteronomy 17:4).

A man of truth is a man who will do that work and report what he found, whether or not it is what anyone wanted.

The prophets ask the same of every court. *“Judge true judgment”* (Zechariah 7:9).

“Speak truth, each man to his neighbor; judge truth and the judgment of peace in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16).

The righteous man *“has done true judgment between a man and a man”* (Ezekiel 18:8).

And the man who may dwell in **Yahweh**’s tent is the one who *“speaks truth in his heart”* and who *“swears to his own hurt and does not change”* (Psalms 15:2, 4).

His word holds when keeping it costs him.

One appointment in the Tanakh names this mark and the one before it together. Nehemiah gave the charge of Jerusalem to Hananiah, *“for he was as a man of truth, and he feared Elohim more than many”* (Nehemiah 7:2). Centuries after Jethro, a city was put into a man’s hand for the same two reasons.

Finding: a man of truth is one whose word holds and who establishes a matter by what is so. This mark is required of those who judge. Corroborated (Deuteronomy 13:14; Zechariah 8:16; Psalms 15:2, 4; Nehemiah 7:2).

IV-D. Haters of Unjust Gain

Jethro put the hardest mark last. The Tanakh returns to it again and again, because this is where the office most often falls.

The passage that fulfills the warning is exact. Samuel judged Israel all his life and could say at the end, *“Whose ox have I taken? ... From whose hand have I taken a ransom, that I should hide my eyes with it?”* (1 Samuel 12:3).

His sons were set as judges after him:

“And his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after betza (unjust gain), and took bribes, and turned judgment aside” (1 Samuel 8:3).

The word is the word of **Exodus 18:21**. The men lacked the fourth mark, and within two verses the elders of Israel were asking for a king (**1 Samuel 8:4–5**). The judges did not lose their place because a better system was found. They lost it because the sons loved what the standard told them to hate.

The Torah explains why a judge cannot simply promise to stay fair after he has taken something:

“You shall take no bribe, for the bribe blinds the clear-sighted and twists the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19).

It does not say the bribe tempts the wicked. It says it blinds the wise. No man is strong enough to take the gift and keep his sight.

The prophets brought the same charge against every rank.

“Your eyes and your heart are on nothing but your betza (gain)” (Jeremiah 22:17).

“Her chiefs in her midst are like wolves tearing prey ... in order to gain betza (unjust gain)” (Ezekiel 22:27).

“From the least of them to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain; and from the prophet to the priest, everyone deals falsely” (Jeremiah 6:13).

“Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets divine for silver” (Micah 3:11).

The shepherds ***“all turn to their own way, each one to his gain” (Isaiah 56:11).***

The promise is given to the man who bears the mark.

“He who hates betza (unjust gain) shall prolong his days” (Proverbs 28:16).

“He who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands from holding a bribe ... he shall dwell on the heights” (Isaiah 33:15–16).

The psalmist prayed for it: ***“Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to betza (gain)” (Psalms 119:36).***

Why does the verse say ***“hate”***? A man who merely declines a gift is still weighing it. The verse asks for a man to whom the thing is repulsive.

The same verb governs the prophet’s command for the gate: ***“Hate evil, and love good, and set up judgment in the gate” (Amos 5:15).***

Finding: that those set over the people must hate gain taken through their place, and that the love of it destroys the office, is Corroborated (Exodus 18:21; Exodus 23:8; 1 Samuel 8:3; Proverbs 28:16; Isaiah 33:15; Jeremiah 22:17; Micah 3:11).

V. THE SECOND WITNESS — DEUTERONOMY 1:9–18

V-A. The Same Event in Moses' Own Words

In the fortieth year Moses told it again, to the generation about to enter the Land (**Deuteronomy 1:3**). He did not mention Jethro. He told them what he had said to the people:

“Provide for yourselves men who are wise, and understanding, and known, for your tribes, and I will set them as your heads” (Deuteronomy 1:13).

הָבוּ לָכֶם אֲנָשִׁים חֲכָמִים וְנִבְנִים וְיָדְעִים לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם וְאֲשִׁימָם בְּרָאשֵׁיכֶם

V-B. Three More Marks

Chakhamim (wise) means skilled in the matter. *Nevonim (understanding)* comes from *bin (to discern)* and means being able to tell one thing from another, which is the whole work of a judge.

The pair first appears when Joseph tells Pharaoh to *“look out a man understanding and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt” (Genesis 41:33),*

and Pharaoh answers, *“Can we find a man like this, in whom is the spirit of Elohim?” (Genesis 41:38).*

It appears again when Solomon asks for a heart *“to judge Your people, to discern between good and evil,”* and is given *“a wise and understanding heart” (1 Kings 3:9, 12).*

Yedu'im (known) is the mark that makes the others testable. The form is passive. It does not mean men who know. It means men who are known. Their ability, their fear of Elohim, their truthfulness, and their hatred of gain are already on record among the people they live with. The phrase *le-shivteikhem (for your tribes)* can be joined to *“provide”* (provide them tribe by tribe) or to *“known”* (known to your tribes). Either way the result is the same: each tribe puts forward its own men, and they are men the tribe has watched. A stranger with a fine account of himself is not *yadua (known).*

V-C. Who Looked, and Who Set

The two accounts together show two parties, and each does its own part.

ACT	WHO DOES IT	TEXT
Puts the men forward	The people, tribe by tribe: <i>“Provide for yourselves”</i>	Deuteronomy 1:13
Agrees to the arrangement	The people: <i>“The thing that you have spoken is good to do”</i>	Deuteronomy 1:14
Looks the men out against the marks	Moses: <i>“you shall look out”; “Moses chose”</i>	Exodus 18:21, 25
Sets them over the people	Moses: <i>“I will set them”; “I took ... and gave them as heads over you”</i>	Deuteronomy 1:13, 15
Charges them	Moses: <i>“I charged your judges at that time”</i>	Deuteronomy 1:16–17
Hears what is too hard	Moses: <i>“bring it to me, and I will hear it”</i>	Deuteronomy 1:17

The people did not appoint their own judges, and Moses did not pick men the people did not know. Those who lived beside the men put them forward. The men Moses took were already *“the heads of your tribes”* (Deuteronomy 1:15), men the tribes already looked to. The one charged with the people examined them and set them. Joshua used the same form of words when he needed men to survey the Land:

“Provide for yourselves three men for each tribe, and I will send them” (Joshua 18:4).

The Torah’s later command keeps both sides in one sentence: *“Judges and officers you shall give yourself in all your gates ... for your tribes”* (Deuteronomy 16:18).

Finding: that the people put forward men they knew, and that the one already charged with the people examined and set them, is **Corroborated** (Exodus 18:25; Deuteronomy 1:13–15; Joshua 18:4). That the chiefs were chosen by Moses without the people, or by the people without Moses, is **Not in the text.**

V-D. The Seven Marks Together

#	MARK	HEBREW	TEXT
1	Able	<i>anshei chayil</i>	Exodus 18:21, 25
2	Fearing Elohim	<i>yir’ei Elohim</i>	Exodus 18:21
3	Men of truth	<i>anshei emet</i>	Exodus 18:21

#	MARK	HEBREW	TEXT
4	Hating unjust gain	<i>son'ei vatza</i>	Exodus 18:21
5	Wise	<i>chakhamim</i>	Deuteronomy 1:13, 15
6	Understanding	<i>nevonim</i>	Deuteronomy 1:13
7	Known	<i>yedu'im</i>	Deuteronomy 1:13, 15

None of the seven is a matter of birth, tribe, wealth, age, or appearance. Three concern character: the fear of Elohim, truth, and the hatred of gain. Three concern capacity: ability, wisdom, and understanding. The seventh, being known, is how the other six are proved.

VI. HOW MEN WERE CHOSEN ACROSS THE TANAKH

Exodus 18:21–25 is not the only place the Tanakh shows men being chosen for a charge. Seven further witnesses show the same pattern.

Witness One — the seventy. **Yahweh** told Moses to gather seventy men *“of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and its officers”* (**Numbers 11:16**). The men were already known and already serving. Moses brought them. Yahweh put the spirit on them (**Numbers 11:17, 25**).

A man can recognize another man’s record. Only Yahweh gives the spirit for the work.

Witness Two — Joshua. Moses did not name his own successor.

He asked: *“Let Yahweh, the Elohim of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation”* (**Numbers 27:16**).

Yahweh named *“a man in whom is spirit”* (**Numbers 27:18**). Joshua had served at Moses’ side since Sinai (**Exodus 24:13; Exodus 33:11**). He was set before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and Moses *“gave him a charge”* in their sight (**Numbers 27:19, 23**).

Witness Three — Jehoshaphat’s judges. The king set judges in the land *“city by city,”* and his charge restates the marks:

“you do not judge for man but for Yahweh” (**2 Chronicles 19:5–6**);

“there is with Yahweh our Elohim no injustice, nor partiality, nor taking of a bribe” (**2 Chronicles 19:7**);

“thus you shall do, in the fear of Yahweh, in faithfulness, and with a whole heart” (2 Chronicles 19:9).

Witness Four — David’s officers and judges. Chenaniah and his sons were set *“for the outward business over Israel, as officers and judges”* (1 Chronicles 26:29).

Of the Hebronites the text says, *“in the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought out, and there were found among them mighty men of chayil (ability) at Jazer of Gilead”* (1 Chronicles 26:31).

The verb is *nidrashu (they were sought out)*, נִדְרָשׁוּ. Able men were searched for, and they were found far from the king’s city.

Witness Five — Ezra. Ezra was to appoint judges from *“all who know the laws of your Elohim”* (Ezra 7:25). When he found no Levites in his company he sent for *“men of understanding,”* and *“by the good hand of our Elohim upon us they brought us a man of discretion”* (Ezra 8:16–18).

Witness Six — Nehemiah. He gave Jerusalem to a man of truth who feared Elohim (Nehemiah 7:2) and the storehouses to men who *“were counted faithful”* (Nehemiah 13:13). The same test was applied to money in the days of Joash and of Josiah. Those who paid the workmen were men who *“dealt in faithfulness”* (2 Kings 12:15 [Hebrew 12:16]; 2 Kings 22:7).

Witness Seven — Daniel. Daniel was set over the kingdom *“because an excellent spirit was in him.”* His rivals searched his record for a fault, and *“they could find no occasion or corruption, because he was faithful”* (Daniel 6:3–4 [Hebrew 6:4–5]). The test was run by his enemies, and he passed it.

WITNESS	WHO LOOKED	WHAT WAS LOOKED FOR	HOW HE WAS SET
The chiefs Exodus 18:21–25; Deuteronomy 1:13–17	The tribes put forward; Moses chose	The seven marks	Given as heads; charged
The seventy Numbers 11:16–25	Moses, from elders he knew	Known as elders and officers	Yahweh put the spirit on them
Joshua Numbers 27:15–23	Yahweh, at Moses’ prayer	<i>“A man in whom is spirit”</i> ; long service	Hand laid; charged before all

WITNESS	WHO LOOKED	WHAT WAS LOOKED FOR	HOW HE WAS SET
Jehoshaphat's judges 2 Chronicles 19:5–9	The king	Fear of Yahweh , faithfulness, a whole heart	Set city by city; charged
David's officers 1 Chronicles 26:29–32	They <i>“were sought out”</i>	<i>Chayil (ability)</i>	Made overseers
Ezra's judges Ezra 7:25	Ezra	Knowledge of the laws of Elohim	Appointed; the rest taught
Nehemiah's men Nehemiah 7:2; Nehemiah 13:13	Nehemiah	Truth, fear of Elohim , counted faithful	Given charge
Daniel Daniel 6:3–4	The king	An excellent spirit; faithful; no corruption	Set over the kingdom

Finding: across the Tanakh, men set over others were already known and proved, were looked for by character and ability, were set by one who already carried the responsibility, and were set in public with a charge. **Corroborated** by the eight witnesses above.

VII. WHAT THE STANDARD DOES NOT REQUIRE

VII-A. Not Birth

The men are looked out *mi-kol ha-am (from all the people)*, מְכֹל־הָעָם. Moses' own two sons arrive in this very chapter (**Exodus 18:3–6**), and they receive no post. His successor was Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim (**Numbers 13:8; Numbers 27:18**).

Of Moses' sons the record says only that they *“were named among the tribe of Levi”* (1 Chronicles 23:14).

Gideon said, *“I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; Yahweh shall rule over you”* (Judges 8:23).

When Samuel set his own sons as judges, it failed (1 Samuel 8:1–3).

Two offices in the Tanakh do pass by birth, and both by Yahweh's own grant: the priesthood of Aaron (Exodus 28:1) and the throne of David (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

The place of a chief or judge is not among them.

Finding: that a charge under Exodus 18:21 does not pass from father to son is Corroborated (Exodus 18:21; Numbers 27:15–18; 1 Chronicles 23:14; 1 Samuel 8:1–5).

VII-B. Not Wealth, Stature, or Appearance

When Samuel saw Jesse’s eldest he was sure he had found the man.

Yahweh answered, *“Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, for I have rejected him ... for man looks at the eyes, but Yahweh looks at the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Saul stood taller than all the people (1 Samuel 9:2), and no man in Israel was praised for beauty like Absalom (2 Samuel 14:25).

Isaiah describes a ruined city where a man seizes his brother and says, *“You have a cloak; be our chief”* (Isaiah 3:6). To choose a ruler for what he owns is a mark of judgment on a people.

Finding: that wealth, height, or appearance qualifies a man is Not in the text, and three witnesses stand against it (1 Samuel 16:7; Isaiah 3:6; Proverbs 28:6).

VII-C. Not Age Alone

No age is given for the chiefs. To be *yadua (known)* a man needs a record, and a record takes time.

Yet *“it is not the great who are wise, nor the aged who understand judgment”* (Job 32:9), and *“better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who no longer knows how to take warning”* (Ecclesiastes 4:13).

On the other side, Isaiah counts *“youths as their chiefs”* in a judgment (Isaiah 3:4), and Rehoboam lost ten tribes by following the young men who had grown up with him (1 Kings 12:8).

Finding: an age for the chiefs is Not in the text. A tested record is required (Deuteronomy 1:13).

VII-D. Not the Man Who Asks

No one in Exodus 18:21–25 or in Deuteronomy’s account applies for the post.

The Tanakh’s portraits of men who sought rule are all warnings.

Absalom stood by the gate and said, *“Oh that I were made judge in the land”* (2 Samuel 15:4).

Adonijah *“exalted himself, saying, I will be king”* (1 Kings 1:5).

Korah and his company were asked, *“and do you seek the priesthood also?”* (Numbers 16:10).

Abimelech hired worthless men with silver and killed his brothers to rule (**Judges 9:4–5**).

Jotham’s parable explains why. The trees asked the olive, the fig, and the vine to reign over them, and each refused, because each had fruit to bear. The bramble accepted at once and threatened fire on any who would not shelter under it (**Judges 9:8–15**).

Those whom **Yahweh** called commonly drew back:

Moses said, “*Who am I?*” (**Exodus 3:11**);

Gideon said, “*I am the least in my father’s house*” (**Judges 6:15**);

Saul hid among the baggage (**1 Samuel 10:22**);

Jeremiah said, “*I do not know how to speak*” (**Jeremiah 1:6**).

Finding: that a man may put himself forward for a charge over the people has no approving witness in the Tanakh. The witnesses to self-promotion all end in ruin. Corroborated (**Judges 9:8–15**; **2 Samuel 15:4–6**; **1 Kings 1:5**; **Numbers 16:10**).

VII-E. A Note on Women

The verse says *anshei (men of)*, and every chief named under it is a man.

The Tanakh also records that **Yahweh** raised up Deborah, “*a prophetess*,” who “*judged Israel at that time*,” and “*the children of Israel came up to her for judgment*” (**Judges 4:4–5**).

She was raised up as the judges of that book were (**Judges 2:16**), not appointed by the procedure of **Exodus 18:21–25**. The word *chayil* is not limited to men.

Ruth is an *esbet chayil (woman of worth)* known in “*all the gate of my people*” (**Ruth 3:11**), and the woman of **Proverbs 31:10, 31** is praised “*in the gates*” for her works.

Finding: that women were set as chiefs under **Exodus 18:21** is Not in the text. That **Yahweh** raised up a woman to judge Israel is a **Single witness** (**Judges 4:4–5**). This study reports both and adds nothing to either.

VIII. WHEN THE STANDARD IS IGNORED

The Tanakh records what followed when men came to a place over the people by some other road.

CASE	HOW HE CAME TO THE PLACE	WHAT WAS MISSING	OUTCOME	TEXT
Eli's sons	Born to it	The fear of Elohim: <i>"they did not know Yahweh"</i>	The sons slain; the ark taken	1 Samuel 2:12; 1 Samuel 3:13; 1 Samuel 4:11
Samuel's sons	Set by their father	The hatred of gain	The elders demand a king	1 Samuel 8:1–5
Abimelech	Hired followers with silver	Truth; the fear of Elohim	Seventy brothers killed; Shechem destroyed	Judges 9:4–5, 45, 56–57
Absalom	Campaigned at the gate	Truth: he <i>"stole the hearts"</i>	War; twenty thousand dead	2 Samuel 15:2–6; 2 Samuel 18:7
Jeroboam's priests	<i>"Whoever wished, he filled his hand"</i>	Every mark; no test at all	<i>"Became sin to the house of Jeroboam"</i>	1 Kings 12:31; 1 Kings 13:33–34
Rehoboam's counselors	The companions he grew up with	Wisdom and understanding	Ten tribes lost	1 Kings 12:8, 16

The prophets describe what such men do to a people.

"When the righteous increase, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2).

"If a ruler listens to a word of falsehood, all his servants are wicked" (Proverbs 29:12):

the man at the top draws men like himself. Yahweh said through Hosea, *"They have made kings, but not from Me; they have made chiefs, and I did not know it"* (Hosea 8:4).

Restoration begins at the same point. *"I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning; afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness"* (Isaiah 1:26).

"I will give you shepherds according to My heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15).

Finding: wherever a place over the people came by birth alone, by purchase, by self-promotion, by friendship, or with no test at all, the Tanakh records ruin. Corroborated by the six cases above.

IX. THE STRUCTURE — THOUSANDS, HUNDREDS, FIFTIES, AND TENS

IX-A. A Chief for Every Ten

The ranks reach down to ten. A chief of ten knows ten men by name, knows their households, and can be found the same day. Judgment under this verse is near at hand. Jethro’s complaint was that the people stood waiting from morning until evening (Exodus 18:14).

His remedy was that *“they shall judge the people at all times”* (Exodus 18:22).

The same ranks ordered Israel in the field (Numbers 31:14; 1 Samuel 8:12; 2 Kings 1:9).

The text gives no count of the chiefs. If the ranks are applied to the *“about six hundred thousand on foot”* who left Egypt (Exodus 12:37), simple division gives six hundred chiefs of thousands, six thousand of hundreds, twelve thousand of fifties, and sixty thousand of tens. That is 78,600 men, about one man in eight. The figure is arithmetic and not Scripture, and the text does not say the ranks were filled in just this way. What it shows is the scale the verse has in view. A charge was not held by a few. A large share of the men of Israel carried responsibility for someone.

IX-B. The Hard Matter Goes Up

Jethro said that every great matter should come to Moses and every small matter should be judged by the chiefs (Exodus 18:22).

The report of what was done uses a different word: *“the hard matter they brought to Moses”* (Exodus 18:26). Moses’ charge agrees: *“the matter that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will bear it”* (Deuteronomy 1:17).

What goes up is the case that is difficult. It is not the case that involves an important man or a large sum, for the same charge says, “you shall bear the small and the great alike.”

The Torah later provided a higher court for such matters at the place **Yahweh** would choose (Deuteronomy 17:8–9), and Jehoshaphat set one in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 19:8, 10).

Finding: that the chiefs judged what they could and sent up what was too hard, without regard to the rank of the parties, is Corroborated (Exodus 18:26; Deuteronomy 1:17; Deuteronomy 17:8–9).

IX-C. When Even Moses Waited

The top of the structure was not one man’s opinion.

Jethro told Moses, *“Be for the people before Elohim, and bring the matters to Elohim”* (Exodus 18:19).

Four times the Torah shows Moses receiving a case for which he had no word, and four times he did not guess.

CASE	WHAT WAS DONE	TEXT
The man who cursed the Name	<i>“They put him in custody, that it might be declared to them by the mouth of Yahweh”</i>	Leviticus 24:12
The men unclean at the Passover	<i>“Stand, and I will hear what Yahweh will command concerning you”</i>	Numbers 9:8
The man gathering wood on the Sabbath	<i>“They put him in custody, because it had not been declared what should be done to him”</i>	Numbers 15:34
The daughters of Zelophehad	<i>“Moses brought their case before Yahweh”</i>	Numbers 27:5

Finding: where the word of Yahweh on a matter was not known, Moses did not rule by his own judgment. He waited for the word. Corroborated (Leviticus 24:12; Numbers 9:8; Numbers 15:34; Numbers 27:5). A chief under this standard must be able to say that the text has not spoken.

X. HOW MIQDASH BETHEL WOULD CHOOSE THESE MEN TODAY

The question is practical. Miqdash Bethel has no Moses, no Urim, and no court at the place Yahweh chose. It has the written covenant and the pattern the covenant records.

Doc 265 found that the elder and the local judge continue wherever the covenant people live (Deuteronomy 16:18; Ezra 7:25). The standard below is how this Institution would look out for the men who are to carry that load. Each step is tied to its witnesses. Where a step is wisdom and not command, it says so.

X-A. The Standard in Seven Steps

#	STEP	WITNESSES
1	Teach first. The people are taught the statutes before anyone is set to judge by them.	Exodus 18:20; Ezra 7:25
2	Look among all the people. The assembly that knows the men puts them forward. No man puts himself forward.	Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:13; Joshua 18:4; Judges 9:8–15
3	Test the seven marks by witnesses. Each mark is established by two or three who have seen it, not by the man's account of himself.	Deuteronomy 1:13; Deuteronomy 19:15; Nehemiah 7:2; Daniel 6:4
4	Prove him in the small before the great. A man is given ten before he is given fifty.	Genesis 39:4, 22; Genesis 41:40; Psalms 78:70–72
5	Ask Yahweh, and hold the choice under His word.	Exodus 18:19, 23; Numbers 27:15–17; 1 Samuel 16:7
6	Set him in public, with the assent of the people and a spoken charge.	Deuteronomy 1:14–17; Numbers 27:19, 23; 2 Chronicles 19:6–9
7	Keep him answerable. The hard matter goes up, his hands stay open to inspection, and the man who turns aside is removed.	Exodus 18:26; 1 Samuel 12:3–5; 1 Samuel 8:3–5; Isaiah 22:19–21

X-B. Who Does the Looking

There are two parties, as in Section V-C. **The assembly where the man lives puts him forward, because only they can say that he is *yadua* (known).** Those already charged with the work **examine him and set him.** For Miqdash Bethel that is its Elder, together with the elders already set wherever there are any. Moses himself was told that carrying it alone was “*not good*” (Exodus 18:17), and “*in the multitude of counselors there is safety*” (Proverbs 11:14).

A man's own household may speak for him, but not alone. Where a father puts forward his son, or a brother his brother, others who are not his kin must bear the same witness. Samuel's sons are the reason (1 Samuel 8:1–3). This is wisdom drawn from the narrative and not a command of the text.

X-C. What Counts as Evidence

Every mark can be seen in a man's life. The table sets out what the Tanakh shows each mark to be, and what Miqdash Bethel would ask of those who know him.

MARK	WHAT THE TANAKH SHOWS IT TO BE	WHAT IS ASKED OF THE WITNESSES	TEXTS
Able	He can carry weight. He hears both sides, is not afraid of any man's face, and finishes what he is given.	What has he been responsible for, and how did it end? Has he ever had to tell a strong man no?	Deuteronomy 1:17; 1 Chronicles 26:8; Psalms 78:72
Fears Elohim	He holds himself back where no one could call him to account.	How does he treat those who work for him, who owe him, or who cannot answer back? Has he refused something he had a right to take?	Leviticus 19:14; Leviticus 25:43; Nehemiah 5:15; Job 31:13–14
Man of truth	His word holds to his own hurt. He reports what he found.	Has he kept his word when it cost him? Has anyone found him shading an account? Does he answer a matter before he has heard it?	Psalms 15:2, 4; Deuteronomy 13:14; Zechariah 8:16; Proverbs 18:13
Hates unjust gain	He turns away from profit that comes through position.	How has he handled money that was not his? Does he pay what he owes? Has he taken a gift from someone whose matter he was deciding?	Exodus 23:8; 1 Samuel 12:3; Isaiah 33:15; 2 Kings 12:15
Wise	He is skilled in the covenant and in life.	Does he know the written Tanakh, and does he do it before he teaches it?	Deuteronomy 4:6; Ezra 7:10
Understanding	He can tell one thing from another.	Can he separate what the text says from what tradition says, and a fact from a report?	1 Kings 3:9; Deuteronomy 17:4
Known	His record is open to those who live with him.	How long has the assembly watched him? Do his wife, his children, his employer, and his neighbors bear the same witness?	Deuteronomy 1:13; Ruth 3:11; Proverbs 31:23; Genesis 18:19

The questions are put to the witnesses and not to the man. The covenant establishes a matter *“at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses”* (Deuteronomy 19:15), and the proverb says, *“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth”* (Proverbs 27:2).

X-D. Proving Him

The Tanakh's leaders were proved in a small charge before a great one.

Joseph was set over one house (**Genesis 39:4**), then over a prison (**Genesis 39:22**), then over Egypt (**Genesis 41:40**).

David kept sheep, and **Yahweh** *“took him from the sheepfolds ... to shepherd Jacob His people”* (**Psalms 78:70–71**).

Joshua served beside Moses for a generation before the congregation was put into his hand (**Exodus 24:13**; **Numbers 27:18**).

The ranks of the verse itself allow for this. There are chiefs of ten before there are chiefs of thousands.

Miqdash Bethel would therefore give a man a small charge first, such as a household gathering or the care of a few families, and would watch how he carries it through at least one full round of the appointed times before he is set over more. The length of that proving is wisdom and not command. The proving itself is **Corroborated** (**Genesis 39:4, 22**; **Genesis 41:40**; **Psalms 78:70–72**).

X-E. Asking Yahweh

Moses prayed for the man before any man was named (**Numbers 27:15–17**).

Samuel was corrected when he looked at Eliab's height (**1 Samuel 16:7**).

Jethro put his own counsel under the words *“and Elohim commands you”* (**Exodus 18:23**).

Joshua was to stand before the priest, *“who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Yahweh”* (**Numbers 27:21**).

No priest stands with Urim today (Ezra 2:63), and Miqdash Bethel does not pretend to have an oracle. What remains is what Moses did first: prayer, and the written word as the measure of the man.

The Tanakh also records the lot. *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from Yahweh”* (**Proverbs 16:33**).

The lot pointed out Saul after **Yahweh** had already named him to Samuel (**1 Samuel 9:15–17**; **1 Samuel 10:20–21**), and it assigned duties among priests and gatekeepers who were already qualified, *“the small as well as the great”* (**1 Chronicles 24:5**; **1 Chronicles 26:13**).

In no text does the lot take the place of the marks. Where two men both bear every mark and one place is open, the lot is a witnessed way to decide between them. It is not commanded for that purpose.

Finding: that the lot may stand in place of a man's qualification is **Not in the text**.

X-F. Setting Him, and the Charge

The setting is public. Joshua was set “*before all the congregation*” (Numbers 27:19) and charged “*in the sight of all Israel*” (Deuteronomy 31:7). It has the assent of the people: “*The thing that you have spoken is good to do*” (Deuteronomy 1:14). And it carries a charge.

The Tanakh records three: Moses to the judges, Moses to Joshua, and Jehoshaphat to his judges. Miqdash Bethel would speak the charge in the Tanakh's own words:

“Hear between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother, and the stranger who is with him” (Deuteronomy 1:16).

“You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of any man, for the judgment is Elohim's” (Deuteronomy 1:17).

“You shall not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exodus 23:2). *“You shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the great; in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor”* (Leviticus 19:15).

“You shall take no bribe, for the bribe blinds the clear-sighted and twists the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:8).

“Consider what you do, for you do not judge for man but for Yahweh, and He is with you in the matter of judgment” (2 Chronicles 19:6).

“Thus you shall do: in the fear of Yahweh, in faithfulness, and with a whole heart” (2 Chronicles 19:9).

One point of precision. The Torah's verbs for the chiefs are *sim* (to set), *natan* (to give), and *tzivvah* (to charge).

A hand is laid on Joshua (Numbers 27:18, 23), and Doc 216 follows that pattern when an elder is commissioned.

For the chiefs of Exodus 18:25 and Deuteronomy 1:15, the laying on of a hand is **Not in the text**.

The public setting and the charge are **Corroborated** (Deuteronomy 1:15–16; Numbers 27:19, 23; 2 Chronicles 19:5–9).

Where Miqdash Bethel lays a hand on a man it follows Joshua's commissioning. It does not claim that Exodus 18:21 requires it.

X-G. Keeping Him Answerable

The hard matter goes up. A chief does not decide what he cannot ground in the text. He brings it to the elders together and to the written word, and where the word has not spoken he says so, as Moses did four times (Section IX-C). Miqdash Bethel does not claim the higher court of **Deuteronomy 17:8–13**, which stood at the place **Yahweh** chose (Doc 265; Doc 240).

Open hands. Samuel invited the people to examine him, and they answered, *“You have not taken anything from any man’s hand”* (1 Samuel 12:3–5).

Moses could say, *“I have not taken one donkey from them”* (Numbers 16:15).

Nehemiah recorded what he had not taken (Nehemiah 5:14–15).

Ezra had the silver weighed out to named men and weighed in again at Jerusalem, *“by number and by weight ... and all the weight was written at that time”* (Ezra 8:24–25, 33–34).

Any man who handles what belongs to the assembly does so with a second man and a written record. A chief takes nothing from anyone whose matter is before him (**Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 27:25**).

Removal. A place over the people is not permanent.

Yahweh said of Shebna the steward, *“I will thrust you from your post,”* and gave his authority to Eliakim (**Isaiah 22:19–21**).

Of the shepherds who fed themselves He said, *“I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock”* (Ezekiel 34:10).

The house of Eli fell because he knew what his sons did *“and he did not restrain them”* (1 Samuel 3:13).

A chief who turns aside after gain, shows partiality, or is found false is removed on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), by those who set him before the same assembly that saw him set.

On support: the passages on chiefs and judges name no wage. They forbid anything from a party to a case (**Exodus 23:8**). The priests and Levites who also judged lived from the tithe (**Numbers 18:21; 2 Chronicles 19:8**), which Doc 250 examined. Whether an assembly may support a man who gives it his whole time, the judge passages do not say. That he may not profit from the matters he hears is **Corroborated** (**Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; 1 Samuel 12:3**).

X-H. What Miqdash Bethel Does Not Claim

Men chosen this way hold no power to compel. They teach, give counsel, settle matters between those who bring matters to them willingly, keep order in the assembly, and care for those under their charge.

The penalties of the Torah’s courts belong to courts that are not standing (**Deuteronomy 17:8–13**). The covenant people live under the governments of the nations, where they are told to *“seek the peace of the city”* (**Jeremiah 29:7**). No one set under this standard is thereby a prophet, a priest, or a king (Doc 265, Section XI).

The same standard applies in every nation where an assembly keeps the covenant. The men are looked out by those who live with them, in their own place, because that is the only place a man can be *yadua* (**known**). A letter of commendation from far away is not that witness. And no title given by this Institution makes a man what the seven marks had not already shown him to be.

XI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION CHOOSES ITS LEADERS

The table sets the three traditions against Tanakh’s findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	• ISLAM
Practice today	Rabbis are ordained by teachers or seminaries and hired by congregations. Religious courts of three hear matters of status and money (Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:6). Rabbinic tradition lists seven marks for every judge (Maimonides, Laws of the Sanhedrin 2:7) and counts 78,600 chiefs in the wilderness (Talmud Sanhedrin 18a).	Churches choose leaders by ordination after seminary, by a vote of the congregation, by a bishop’s appointment, or by the call of a board. The New Testament lists qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9) and records elders appointed in every assembly (Acts 14:23).	An imam is chosen for knowledge and character. A <i>qadi</i> (judge) is commonly appointed by the ruler or the state. The Qur’an commands that trusts be given to those worthy of them and that judgment be just (Q. 4:58), and tells David to judge in truth and not to follow desire (Q. 38:26).
Covenant strength	Maimonides’ seven include the fear of heaven, the hatred of money, and the love of truth: three of Jethro’s four, almost by name. Rabbinic	Acts 6:3 follows Deuteronomy 1:13 step by step: the assembly looks out known men, and those already charged appoint	<i>“The strong, the trustworthy”</i> (Q. 28:26) sets ability beside faithfulness in the house of Moses’ father-in-law. The hadith

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✱ ISLAM
	law holds that when a man takes payment to judge, his judgments are void (Mishnah Bekhorot 4:6).	them. <i>“Let these also first be proved”</i> (1 Timothy 3:10) is the proving of Section X-D. <i>“Not greedy of filthy lucre”</i> (1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7) is <i>son’ei vatza</i> (<i>haters of unjust gain</i>).	refuses office to the man who asks for it (Sahih al-Bukhari 7149; Sahih Muslim 1733) and calls office a trust the weak should not take up (Sahih Muslim 1825). Bribing a judge is forbidden (Q. 2:188; Sunan Abi Dawud 3580).
Covenant departure	Reading <i>chayil</i> as wealth (Rashi on Exodus 18:21) is not required by the verse and sits uneasily with its last mark. The saying that Moses found only three marks of seven (Sifrei on Deuteronomy, section 15; Rashi on Deuteronomy 1:15) goes beyond the text (Section III-D). Where a rabbi’s standing rests on a diploma and a contract and not on being known to the people he serves, the mark of Deuteronomy 1:13 has been set aside.	Where office comes by degree, by salary, by family succession in a ministry, or by popularity in the pulpit, none of the seven marks has been tested. Ministries that pass from father to son repeat 1 Samuel 8:1–3 . Leaders who live richly from the offerings stand where Micah 3:11 and Ezekiel 34:2–3 stand.	Where judges and preachers are paid servants of the ruler, they are pressed to judge for the one who pays them, which 2 Chronicles 19:6 forbids. Rules that pass by family, and offices that are sought and campaigned for, depart from the hadith’s own standard as well as from Judges 9:8–15 .
Covenant witness	The seven marks of the rabbinic list are a faithful summary. Read from the Tanakh outward, they call every court back to character before learning.	Read from the Tanakh outward, Acts 6 and the letters to Timothy and Titus add no new standard. They restate Jethro’s.	Q. 4:58 and the refusal of office to the one who seeks it stand as witnesses beside Exodus 18:21 and Judges 9:8–15 .

XII. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library’s rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else’s. Four earlier documents quote **Exodus 18:21** or **Deuteronomy 1:13**, and each needs a refinement. Every correction marked ***“Made”*** below was made in the Google Doc on October 10, 2026, so that the website copy can be replaced.

Correction 1 — *The Benei Chayil* (May 2026), lexical table. Three cells cited verses for the wrong phrase. *Ben chayil* (*son of worth*) was cited from **2 Chronicles 17:17**, where Eliada is called *gibbor chayil* (*mighty man of valor*); the phrase *ben chayil* stands in **1 Samuel 14:52** and **1 Kings 1:52**. *Ish chayil* (*man of valor*) was cited of Jephthah and Gideon, who are both called *gibbor chayil* (**Judges 11:1**; **Judges 6:12**); *ish chayil* stands in **Judges 3:29**, **1 Kings 1:42**, and **1 Chronicles 26:8**. *Gibbor chayil* was cited from **Isaiah 49:26**, which says “*the Mighty One of Jacob*” and does not use the phrase. Made.

Correction 2 — *The Benei Chayil*, Witness 1. The second mark of **Exodus 18:21** was written *yir’at Elohim* with H3374. The verse has *yir’ei Elohim* (*fearers of Elohim*), the plural of *yare* (*fearing*), H3373. H3374 is the noun *yir’ah* (*fear*). The verb was written *chazeh*; the form in the verse is *techezeh* (*you shall look out*). Made.

Correction 3 — Doc 216 (*Called and Chosen*), Sections II-A and II-B. Section II-A said that Jethro’s counsel came “*before any elder is chosen in the Torah’s own narrative sequence.*” The elders of Israel were already in place in Egypt (**Exodus 3:16**), and they ate bread with Jethro the day before the counsel (**Exodus 18:12**). What **Exodus 18:21** introduces is chiefs who judge. In Section II-B, *yedu’im* was rendered “*experienced.*” The form is passive and means “*known,*” as that section itself went on to explain. Both made.

Correction 4 — Doc 196 (*The Filibuster, the Constitution, and the Covenant*), Section VI. **Exodus 18:21** was quoted with “*who hate covetousness,*” and **Deuteronomy 1:13** with “*experienced men.*” The Hebrew is *son’ei vatza* (*haters of unjust gain*) and *yedu’im* (*known*). Made, in Section VI and in the closing verse. Two further points are left for Elder Kepha’s decision. Section VI-A says the chiefs were “*answerable both to the people and to Yabweh.*” The text has them bring the hard matter to Moses (**Exodus 18:26**) and says the judgment is **Elohim’s** (**Deuteronomy 1:17**); it does not say they answered to the people. Section VI-B calls impartiality a “*qualification for office.*” In the text it is the charge given after the men were set (**Deuteronomy 1:16–17**). Doc 196 also predates the September 2026 rules on names, location, and the website.

Correction 5 — the 613 Laws listing, Nos. 228 and 255. No. 228 cites **Deuteronomy 1:17** for not appointing a judge who is unlearned in the Torah. The verse forbids partiality in judgment; reading it as a rule of appointment is the later rabbinic reading. The standard for those appointed stands in **Exodus 18:21** and **Deuteronomy 1:13**. No. 255 reads the same verse as not fearing “*a bad man*”; the verse says “*any man.*” A note was added to each entry. Made.

A point confirmed — Doc 265 (*Seven Offices, One King*), Sections V-F and VIII-B. Doc 265 said that the qualifications of **Exodus 18:21** “*were stated then and never withdrawn,*” and that the people identified men already known among them and Moses appointed them. This study

confirms both. One note: Section V-F set the verse under *“How Elders Were Placed.”* The men of **Exodus 18:21** are chiefs who judge, and the elders are an older body (**Exodus 3:16**). The standard fits both, as Doc 265 held. Nothing was changed.

XIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON CHOOSING THOSE SET OVER THE PEOPLE

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	It is not good for one man to bear the people alone. The load is to be shared among men looked out for the purpose.	Exodus 18:17–18; Numbers 11:14; Deuteronomy 1:9
II	Those set over the people are looked out for what they already are: able, fearing Elohim , men of truth, hating unjust gain, wise, understanding, and known.	Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:13; Nehemiah 7:2
III	They are looked at from all the people. No charge under this standard passes by birth, and none is given for wealth, for stature, or for the asking.	Exodus 18:21; 1 Samuel 8:1–3; 1 Samuel 16:7; Judges 9:8–15
IV	The people who know the men put them forward. Those already charged examine them and set them. The whole is held under the command of Elohim .	Deuteronomy 1:13–15; Joshua 18:4; Exodus 18:23
V	The people are taught the statutes first, and those set over them judge by what is written. Where the word has not been spoken, they wait.	Exodus 18:20; Ezra 7:25; Numbers 9:8; Numbers 15:34
VI	No one set over the people may take gain through his place. The bribe blinds the wise, and the love of gain ends the office.	Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; 1 Samuel 8:3; Proverbs 28:16
VII	Everyone set over the people remains answerable: charged in public, open to inspection, and removed if he turns aside.	Deuteronomy 1:16–17; 1 Samuel 12:3–5; Isaiah 22:19–21; Ezekiel 34:10

XIV. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question about choosing men there is usually a person who has been hurt by the wrong man in a place of trust, or a man who wonders whether he is being asked to carry a charge. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: do not carry it alone, and do not leave another man to carry it alone. *“The thing that you are doing is not good”* (Exodus 18:17). The load is too heavy for one, and the people suffer for it.

Second: look at what a man is, not at what he claims or owns. *“Man looks at the eyes, but Yahweh looks at the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7). Ask those who live beside him.

Third: be slow to trust the man who wants the place. The olive and the vine had fruit to bear. It was the bramble that was ready to reign (Judges 9:8–15).

Fourth: become the man the verse describes before anyone looks for him. The marks are grown in a household, at work, and with money, long before they are seen at the gate. David said of his own house, *“My eyes are on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in a blameless way, he shall serve me”* (Psalms 101:6).

Fifth: wait for what Yahweh has promised. *“I will restore your judges as at the first”* (Isaiah 1:26). *“I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them, and they shall fear no more”* (Jeremiah 23:4).

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 18:19	Abraham commands his household after him	X-C
Genesis 20:11	No fear of Elohim in this place	IV-B
Genesis 22:12	Abraham known as one who fears Elohim	II
Genesis 25:1–2	Midian, a son of Abraham by Keturah	III-A
Genesis 37:26	Judah asks what profit there is	II
Genesis 39:4, 22	Joseph set over a house, then over a prison	X-A; X-D

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 41:33, 38, 40	A man understanding and wise; Joseph set over Egypt	II; V-B; X-A; X-D
Genesis 42:18	Joseph: I fear Elohim	IV; IV-B
Genesis 47:6	Pharaoh asks for able men as chiefs	II; IV; IV-A
Exodus 1:17	The midwives feared Elohim	IV-B
Exodus 2:14	Who made you a chief and a judge?	II
Exodus 3:11, 16	Moses draws back; the elders of Israel in Egypt	VII-D; XII
Exodus 12:37	About six hundred thousand on foot	IX-A
Exodus 14:4	<i>Chayil</i> as the word for an army	II
Exodus 18:1–12	Jethro comes, confesses Yahweh , and eats bread with the elders	III-A; III-E; VII-A; XII
Exodus 18:13–18	Moses judges alone; the thing is not good	I-C; III-A; IV-A; IX-A; X-B; XIII; XIV
Exodus 18:19–20	Jethro's counsel; teach the statutes first	III-A; III-B; III-C; IX-C; X-A; XIII
Exodus 18:21	The standard: four marks and four ranks	I-A; I-B; I-C; II; III-A; III-C; IV-A; IV-D; V-C; V-D; VI; VII-A; VII-D; VII-E; X-A; X-F; XI; XII; XIII
Exodus 18:22–23	Great and small matters; and Elohim commands you	II; III-A; III-B; VI; VII-D; VII-E; IX-A; IX-B; X-A; X-E; XIII
Exodus 18:24–26	Moses listens, chooses, and sets; the hard matter	II; III-A; III-D; V-C; V-D; VI; VII-D; VII-E; IX-B; X-A; X-F; XII
Exodus 23:2, 8	Not following a multitude; taking no bribe	II; IV-D; X-C; X-F; X-G; XIII
Exodus 24:11, 13	The nobles beheld Elohim ; Joshua, Moses' minister	II; VI; X-D
Exodus 28:1	The priesthood given to Aaron and his sons	VII-A
Exodus 33:11	Joshua did not leave the tent	VI

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Exodus 34:6	Abundant in lovingkindness and truth	II; IV-C
Leviticus 19:14–15	You shall fear your Elohim ; no partiality in judgment	IV-B; X-C; X-F
Leviticus 24:12	The man who cursed the Name held for the word of Yahweh	IX-C
Leviticus 25:17, 43	You shall fear your Elohim	IV-B; X-C
Numbers 9:8	I will hear what Yahweh will command	IX-C; XIII
Numbers 11:14–25	Moses cannot bear the people alone; the seventy	I-C; VI; XIII
Numbers 13:8	Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim	VII-A
Numbers 15:34	The wood-gatherer held in custody	IX-C; XIII
Numbers 16:10, 15	Korah seeks the priesthood; Moses took nothing	VII-D; X-G
Numbers 18:21	The tithe given to Levi	X-G
Numbers 24:4, 16	Balaam sees the vision of the Almighty	II
Numbers 27:5	The case of the daughters of Zelophehad	IX-C
Numbers 27:15–23	Joshua named by Yahweh , set before all, and charged	II; VI; VII-A; X-A; X-D; X-E; X-F
Numbers 31:14	Chiefs of thousands and of hundreds in the field	II; IX-A
Deuteronomy 1:3–12	Moses retells it; I cannot bear you alone	I-C; III-E; V-A; XIII
Deuteronomy 1:13–15	Wise, understanding, and known; the people provide and Moses sets	II; III-D; V-A; V-C; V-D; VI; VII-C; X-A; X-C; X-F; XI; XII; XIII
Deuteronomy 1:16–17	The charge to the judges	II; IV-A; V-C; VI; IX-B; X-A; X-C; X-F; XII; XIII
Deuteronomy 4:6	Your wisdom in the sight of the peoples	X-C
Deuteronomy 8:17–18	<i>Chayil</i> as wealth, given by Yahweh	II; IV-A
Deuteronomy 13:14	Inquire, search, and ask well	IV-C; X-C

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Deuteronomy 16:18–20	Judges and officers in all your gates; no bribe	II; III-B; IV-D; V-C; X; X-G; XIII
Deuteronomy 17:4, 8–13, 15	The truth established; the higher court; the king Yahweh chooses	II; IV-C; IX-B; X-C; X-G; X-H
Deuteronomy 19:15	Two or three witnesses	I-D; X-A; X-C; X-G; XIII
Deuteronomy 25:18	Amalek did not fear Elohim	IV-B
Deuteronomy 27:25	Cursed is he who takes a bribe	X-G
Deuteronomy 31:7	Joshua charged in the sight of all Israel	X-F
Joshua 18:4	Provide three men for each tribe	II; V-C; X-A; XIII
Judges 2:16	Yahweh raised up judges	VII-E
Judges 3:29	The phrase <i>ish chayil (man of valor)</i>	XII
Judges 4:4–5	Deborah judged Israel	VII-E
Judges 6:12, 15	Gideon called <i>gibbor chayil (mighty man of valor)</i> ; the least in his father's house	VII-D; XII
Judges 8:23	Neither I nor my son shall rule over you	VII-A
Judges 9:4–5, 8–15, 45, 56–57	Abimelech; Jotham's parable of the trees	VII-D; VIII; X-A; XI; XIII; XIV
Judges 11:1	Jephthah called <i>gibbor chayil (mighty man of valor)</i>	XII
1 Samuel 2:12; 3:13; 4:11	Eli's sons; he did not restrain them; the ark taken	VIII; X-G
1 Samuel 8:1–5, 12	Samuel's sons turn aside after gain; the elders ask for a king	II; IV; IV-D; VII-A; VIII; IX-A; X-A; X-B; XI; XIII
1 Samuel 9:2, 15–17	Saul's stature; Yahweh names him to Samuel	VII-B; X-E
1 Samuel 10:20–22	Saul taken by lot; hiding among the baggage	VII-D; X-E
1 Samuel 12:3–5	Samuel's hands open to inspection	IV-D; X-A; X-C; X-G; XIII
1 Samuel 14:52	The phrase <i>ben chayil (son of worth)</i>	XII
1 Samuel 16:7	Yahweh looks at the heart	VII-B; X-A; X-E; XIII; XIV

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
2 Samuel 7:12–16	The throne promised to David’s house	VII-A
2 Samuel 14:25; 15:2–6; 18:7	Absalom: his beauty, his campaign at the gate, and the end	VII-B; VII-D; VIII
2 Samuel 23:3	Ruling in the fear of Elohim	II; IV-B
1 Kings 1:5, 42, 52	Adonijah exalts himself; <i>ish chayil</i> ; <i>ben chayil</i>	IV-A; VII-D; XII
1 Kings 3:9, 12	Solomon’s wise and understanding heart	V-B; X-C
1 Kings 12:8, 16, 31; 13:33–34	Rehoboam’s young men; Jeroboam’s priests	VII-C; VIII
2 Kings 1:9	A chief of fifty with his fifty	IX-A
2 Kings 12:15; 22:7	They dealt in faithfulness	VI; X-C
Isaiah 1:1, 26	The vision that Isaiah saw; judges restored as at the first	II; VIII; XIV
Isaiah 3:4, 6	Youths as chiefs; you have a cloak, be our chief	VII-B; VII-C
Isaiah 22:19–21	Shebna thrust from his post; Eliakim set	X-A; X-G; XIII
Isaiah 33:15–16	He who despises the gain of oppressions	IV-D; X-C
Isaiah 49:26	The Mighty One of Jacob	XII
Isaiah 56:11	Each one to his gain	IV-D
Jeremiah 1:6	Jeremiah draws back	VII-D
Jeremiah 3:15; 23:4	Shepherds according to My heart	VIII; XIV
Jeremiah 6:13; 22:17	Everyone greedy for gain; eyes and heart on gain	II; IV-D
Jeremiah 29:7	Seek the peace of the city	X-H
Ezekiel 18:8	True judgment between a man and a man	IV-C
Ezekiel 22:27	Chiefs like wolves tearing prey	II; IV-D
Ezekiel 34:2–3, 10	Shepherds who feed themselves; the flock required at their hand	X-G; XI; XIII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Hosea 8:4	They made chiefs, and I did not know it	VIII
Amos 5:15	Hate evil; set up judgment in the gate	II; IV-D
Micah 3:11	Her heads judge for a bribe	IV-D; XI
Zechariah 7:9; 8:16	Judge true judgment; speak truth in your gates	IV; IV-C; X-C
Psalms 15:2, 4	He speaks truth in his heart; he swears to his own hurt	IV-C; X-C
Psalms 78:70–72	David taken from the sheepfolds; integrity and skill	IV-A; X-A; X-C; X-D
Psalms 101:6	My eyes are on the faithful of the land	XIV
Psalms 119:36	Incline my heart, and not to gain	IV-D
Proverbs 11:14	Safety in a multitude of counselors	X-B
Proverbs 16:33	The lot is cast into the lap	X-E
Proverbs 18:13; 27:2	Answering before hearing; let another praise you	X-C
Proverbs 28:6, 16	The poor man of integrity; he who hates unjust gain	II; IV; IV-A; IV-D; VII-B; XIII
Proverbs 29:2, 12	When a wicked man rules; a ruler who listens to falsehood	VIII
Proverbs 31:10, 23, 31	The woman of worth; known in the gates	VII-E; X-C
Job 31:13–14; 32:9	The cause of a servant; the aged do not always understand judgment	VII-C; X-C
Ruth 3:11	A woman of worth, known in the gate	II; VII-E; X-C
Ecclesiastes 4:13; 9:15	The poor and wise youth; the poor wise man	IV-A; VII-C
Daniel 6:3–4	Daniel's record searched by his rivals	VI; X-A
Ezra 2:63	Until a priest stands with Urim and Thummim	X-E
Ezra 7:10, 25	Seek, do, and teach; judges who know the laws	III-C; VI; X; X-A; X-C; XIII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Ezra 8:16–18, 24–25, 33–34	Men of understanding sent for; the silver weighed and written	VI; X-G
Nehemiah 5:14–15	I did not do so, because of the fear of Elohim	IV; IV-B; X-C; X-G
Nehemiah 7:2; 13:13	A man of truth who feared Elohim ; men counted faithful	II; IV; IV-C; VI; X-A; XIII
1 Chronicles 9:13; 26:8	Able men for the work of the service	II; IV; IV-A; X-C; XII
1 Chronicles 23:14	The sons of Moses named among the Levites	VII-A
1 Chronicles 24:5; 26:13	Duties assigned by lot, small and great alike	X-E
1 Chronicles 26:29–32	Officers and judges; able men sought out	VI
2 Chronicles 17:17	Eliada called <i>gibbor chayil (mighty man of valor)</i>	XII
2 Chronicles 19:5–10	Jehoshaphat’s judges and their charge	II; IV-B; VI; IX-B; X-A; X-F; X-G; XI

“The Elohim of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: He who rules over men must be righteous, ruling in the fear of Elohim.”

2 Samuel 23:3 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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