

## THAT YOU MAY LIVE\*

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף

לְמַעַן תַּחְיֶיהָ וַיִּרְשֶׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

אֲשֶׁר־יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ:

Justice, justice, shall you pursue,  
that you may live and possess the land  
that Adonai your God gives you.

*Justice, justice shall you pursue*—The purpose of your courts shall be “justice alone, justice and only justice” (J.H. Tigay). You shall seek to ensure that the benchmark of every court [and act of government] is “righteousness” (Sforno). And righteousness must be not only the judicial purpose but its method as well (Kotzker Rebbe), so that there is no double jeopardy (Sifre), favoritism to any particular class or interest (16:19), or any other perversion of justice. *That you may live and possess the land*—The well-being of the entire people and its ability to maintain itself in the land depends on the righteousness of those who administer the law, because they model the pursuit of justice for every individual, family, and community in the nation. Thus the naming of “honorable judges” is sufficient to sustain Israel and to “settle them upon their land” (Rashi). *That Adonai your God gives you*—Our lives and the possession of the land are not granted unconditionally but are renewed minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day, according to how well we demand and dispense justice that meets the Creator’s standard of righteousness—the measure for any individual or nation to survive.

\* Deuteronomy 16:20 (in Shoftim)