

What Happens When we Establish Courts of Justice in our Lands?

Introduction

Opening Scripture:

The king gives stability to the land by justice,

But a man who takes bribes overthrows it. ¹

Objective:

This lesson will explore the biblical foundation of justice, highlighting the blessings that follow a society built on justice, and the consequences that come when justice is neglected. Through Scripture and historical examples, we will see how justice impacts individuals, communities, and nations, both in ancient times and today.

Main Points:

1. The Blessings of Justice

Scripture: *Proverbs 21:15 “The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous, But is terror to the workers of iniquity.”*

Explanation:

Justice is not merely a set of laws; it is the foundation of a healthy society. When justice prevails, there is peace, stability, and prosperity. Righteous people flourish in such a society because

¹ All Scripture references will be from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update (1995). The Lockman Foundation unless otherwise noted.*

justice protects them. Crime and corruption, the enemies of peace, are held in check when a fair system of justice is in place.

Biblical Example:

King David's reign – “So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people.” Under David’s leadership, Israel experienced peace and security because he upheld justice and righteousness.

Application to Us:

As individuals: When we seek justice in our personal dealings—whether in business, relationships, or community interactions—we contribute to the peace and stability of our broader community.

As a society: A just nation creates an environment where all people, regardless of their background or social status, can thrive. When the law is applied fairly, people feel secure and are able to prosper.

An example: Someone in recent times who has exemplified the establishment of justice in our land is U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas.

- 1) His rulings show a need for criminal justice reform through the framework of the U.S. Constitution. His rulings show a need to ensure the legal rights of the accused and victims are met.
- 2) He has stressed the importance of applying criminal laws in a fair and just manner.
- 3) He has often, even in public lectures, voiced support for the rights of crime victims.

Examples of Cities in America which advocate for justice:

1) Plano, Texas (Low Crime Rates and Effective Policing)

Plano, Texas, is often cited as one of the safest cities in America, with consistently low crime rates. The city has invested in community policing initiatives and has fostered a strong relationship between law enforcement and its residents. Police in Plano focus on transparency, accountability, and proactive engagement with the community. The justice system works effectively here, with fair enforcement of the law and strong oversight to ensure police conduct is within ethical standards.

Results:

Because of the fair and just law enforcement in Plano, the city has one of the lowest crime rates in the country. Residents feel safe, and the city enjoys economic growth and high quality of life. There is a high level of trust between the police and the community, which contributes to social stability and public safety.

2) Frisco, Texas

Frisco is known for its low crime rates, strong community engagement, and proactive policing. The city emphasizes community-oriented policing, where law enforcement builds relationships with residents through outreach programs, neighborhood patrols, and transparency. This approach has helped prevent crime while fostering trust between the community and the police.

Results:

Frisco consistently ranks among the safest cities in the U.S., with low violent crime and property crime rates. The city's growth, both economically and socially, is supported by its safe

environment, making it a desirable place to live. Residents feel secure, and the justice system's proactive approach has contributed to long-term stability.

3) Irvine, California

Irvine is another example of a city that places a high priority on justice, fairness, and safety. It has a reputation for well-organized community-police relations and low crime rates. Irvine has invested in crime prevention programs and initiatives aimed at keeping youth out of the justice system through education and rehabilitation.

Results:

Irvine regularly ranks as one of the safest cities in the United States, with a particularly low violent crime rate. This sense of safety has attracted families, businesses, and investors to the area, contributing to Irvine's economic prosperity and overall quality of life. The city's justice system is seen as fair and effective, leading to high levels of trust between the community and law enforcement.

4) Virginia Beach, Virginia

Virginia Beach places a strong emphasis on public safety and maintaining order through community-based policing. The city has invested in programs to improve transparency, law enforcement training, and engagement with residents. Virginia Beach also focuses on alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders, emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment.

Results:

Virginia Beach enjoys low crime rates and high community satisfaction with local law enforcement. The city's proactive approach to justice has led to strong community ties, economic growth, and a reputation as a desirable place to live. The fair application of laws and commitment to public safety have made it a model of justice.

5) Naperville, Illinois

Naperville has earned a reputation as one of the safest and most just cities in America. Its police department is known for emphasizing crime prevention through community engagement, education, and cooperation with local organizations. Transparency and fairness are at the core of the city's law enforcement practices, contributing to a stable and thriving community.

Results:

With very low crime rates, Naperville has developed into a vibrant community with a high quality of life. Its focus on justice, fairness, and community cooperation has fostered an environment where people feel safe and supported. This stability has also helped the city grow economically and socially.

2. The Consequences of Injustice

Scripture:

Isaiah 10:1-3 – Woe to those who enact evil statutes And to those who constantly record unjust decisions, So as to deprive the needy of justice And rob the poor of My people of their rights, So that widows may be their spoil And that they may plunder the orphans. Now what will you do in the day of punishment, And in the devastation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth?

Explanation:

Injustice leads to societal decay. Corruption breeds further corruption, and soon the entire moral fabric of society is weakened. Those in power may oppress the weak, and inequality and injustice become the norm. Eventually, these actions bring about divine judgment.

Biblical Example:

Sodom and Gomorrah – Ezekiel 16:49 tells us that Sodom’s sin was not just immorality but neglecting justice and failing to care for the poor and needy. Their failure to uphold justice and righteousness led to their destruction.

“Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.”

Application to Us:

As individuals: Every time we turn a blind eye to injustice, we allow the corruption of society to spread. By neglecting justice, we contribute to societal decay.

As a synagogue: We must work together to address injustice within our communities. Our synagogue can take a proactive role in advocating for the oppressed and standing up for righteousness.

As a society: Nations that fail to uphold justice become divided and unstable. Corruption, inequality, and oppression take root, and, as history has shown, these nations often face internal collapse or divine judgment.

Examples of cities that do not advocate for justice:

1) Chicago, Illinois (Ongoing Issues with Corruption and Violence)

Chicago has struggled with corruption, especially in its political and law enforcement systems, for many years. Reports of police misconduct and high levels of political corruption have eroded trust between the city's government and its citizens. Additionally, gun violence and gang activity remain rampant in certain areas of the city, and justice for many victims of crime has been elusive.

Results:

The lack of justice has led to deep mistrust between the community and law enforcement. High crime rates continue, and many neighborhoods feel unsafe. Corruption within the political system has undermined efforts to address systemic issues. Without a reliable system of justice, the city continues to face significant social and economic challenges.

2) Portland, Oregon (Unrest and Lack of Accountability)

Portland, Oregon, has faced prolonged periods of unrest, particularly during the 2020 protests. The city saw significant violence, including rioting, looting, and destruction of property. Although many of the protests were peaceful, there was a lack of accountability for those who engaged in criminal activity. Numerous businesses were damaged, and law enforcement struggled to maintain order. The city's leadership faced criticism for not taking stronger action to restore peace and hold perpetrators of violence accountable.

Results:

The lack of swift justice and accountability for those involved in the destruction contributed to ongoing unrest and a deteriorating relationship between the community and law enforcement. Many business owners suffered significant losses, and some chose to leave the city permanently. The instability has hurt the city's economy, and trust in the local government has eroded. The failure to address these issues in a just manner has resulted in long-term damage to Portland's social and economic structure.

3. The Long-Term Impact of Injustice

Scripture:

Proverbs 14:34 –*Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.*

Explanation:

The consequences of injustice are not limited to one generation. The effects of systemic corruption, inequality, and oppression can last for generations. God holds nations accountable for how they treat their people, and history shows that when nations consistently fail to uphold justice, their legacy is one of shame and reproach.

Application to Us:

As individuals: Every act of justice we perform—whether in standing up for the oppressed, promoting fairness, or seeking truth—contributes to the healing of society.

As a synagogue: Our congregation can be a beacon of justice in our community, advocating for the vulnerable and ensuring that we, as a body of believers, are committed to upholding righteousness in all that we do.

As a society: If we want to leave a legacy of righteousness and justice for future generations, we must ensure that the systems of justice in our nation are fair, equitable, and accessible to all.

Illustration:

Think of a tree that bears fruit. If the roots are healthy, the tree will flourish for years to come. But if the roots are diseased, the tree will wither and die. Injustice is like disease in the roots of society—it may not kill the tree immediately, but over time, it will lead to its downfall.

Conclusion

Call to Action:

As we reflect on this lesson, let us ask ourselves:

- How can I, in my personal life, seek justice and righteousness?
- What role can our synagogue play in promoting justice in our community?
- How can we support leaders and policies that promote righteousness, equity, and fairness?

It is not enough to recognize the importance of justice; we must be actively involved in establishing it in our homes, our synagogue, and our nation. Each of us has a part to play in building a society where justice prevails.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we come before You asking for Your guidance in establishing justice in our nation. Give us the courage to stand against corruption and oppression. Help us, as individuals and as a community, to reflect Your righteousness in all that we do. May we be agents of peace and justice, and may Your kingdom be established here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.