

Shoftim

Shalom children! We're back with the Yisra'elites this week as they continue listening to Mosheh's instructions. **(Place older Mosheh and Yisra'elites on board.)** He is telling them all about the things they will need to know so that they can live the way that Yahweh wants them to live when they get to the land of Kena'an. **(Place land of Kena'an scene on board.)** Mosheh won't be able to go into the land with them, so it's important that they listen to everything he has to say. Right now, he is instructing them on lots of right-rulings. Do you remember what a right-ruling is? You might have also heard it called a commandment before. It's a rule that Yahweh is giving to the people because He knows that it will help them have a good life. It's a rule; and it's the right thing to do, so it's a right-ruling. So let's talk about some of the things that Mosheh is covering in this part of his speech to the Yisra'elites.

Mosheh starts off by talking to them about the leaders that Yahweh will give them. **(Place leaders on board.)** Who are some leaders that you follow every day? **(Let children answer with mom, dad, teacher, etc. and place parents and teacher on board.)** That's right; those are all people that make important decisions in our day-to-day lives. If those people weren't there to make any decisions or show you the right way to do things, can you imagine how crazy it would be? What if your parents just decided they didn't want to lead your family anymore? The laundry might not get done, the floors might not get swept, and you might never know what you would be eating for dinner! Or what if a teacher just decided to stop leading the class? You might think it would be fun to not have lessons, but then you would never be able to learn anything! We also have leadership on a bigger scale to keep everything running smoothly in our city, our state, and our country. **(Place police officer on board.)** When you have good leaders, everything has order, and you have someone there to instruct you and answer your questions. This is why leadership is so important.

Well, Yahweh knew that just like we need leaders to help us keep our days on track, the Yisra'elites would also need leaders. He tells them that all of the tribes should have judges and officers who can make decisions for the people. **(Place judge and officers on board.)** These would be the people that they would go to if they needed guidance or if they got into a fight about something and needed to know what to do. **(Place judge scene on board.)** But Yahweh also knew that there would be times when there might be a big disagreement about something, and it would be too hard to tell who was right. **(Place arguing Yisra'elites on board.)** If these leaders could not reach a decision about something or if the decision was too hard for them to make, they could go to a special place that Yahweh would pick, and there would be priests, Lewites, and judges who could help them decide. **(Place priests and Lewites on board next to judge.)** They would tell the Yisra'elites Yahweh's right-rulings.

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Once they had given the people their decision, the people were expected to do exactly as they had been told. These leaders were responsible for making the final decisions about how to follow the things in the Torah. And this is something that Yahweh takes very seriously. If any of the Yisra'elites tried to make a big scene about it and did not want to listen to the priests that were serving Yahweh, then Yahweh would not let them be part of Yisra'el anymore. That would be so sad! **(Place person leaving Yisra'el on board.)**

(Remove everything from the board.)

Well, when they all get to the land of Yisra'el, Yahweh knows that they will want a king like all the gentiles—the other nations around them. He tells them that they can have a king that Yahweh Himself will pick. **(Place king on board.)** It will have to be someone who is part of their people—Yahweh doesn't want just anyone coming in to lead them. And there are certain rules that this king has to follow. Yahweh says that this person is not allowed to have lots of horses, and he is also not allowed to tell the people to go back to Mitsrayim to get more horses. **(Place horses on board.)** After it took them so long to get here, I certainly hope that they wouldn't want to go back to Mitsrayim! The king is not allowed to have lots of wives either, or to try to get lots of gold and silver. **(Place wives, gold, and silver on board.)** Do you think that Yahweh wants to make sure the king doesn't get greedy? Maybe He wants the king to be focused on leading the people instead of spending all his time trying to get rich. Yahweh wants the king to write a copy of the Torah for himself, so that he will always have it to remind him that Yahweh is in charge, and that he is to follow His right-rulings. **(Place king writing the Torah on board.)**

Yahweh will also raise up a special Prophet from their brothers to lead them. Mosheh reminds the people of the time when they were in Horeb, pleading with him to keep them from experiencing any more of Yahweh's fearsome voice, His great fire and His thunders, because they feared they might die. **(Place Mt. Horeb, fire with smoke and cloud with lightning on board.)** So Yahweh said, "Okay, you won't have to listen to My voice like this. Instead, I will send you a Prophet, and He will speak My Words that I tell Him to speak. It is important that you listen to Him." **(Place prophet on board.)**

But what if a prophet comes to them who is not really speaking Yahweh's words? How will the Yisra'elites be able to tell that he is a false prophet? Well, if he speaks in the name of other mighty ones instead of Yahweh, then they can know he is not Yahweh's prophet. And if he says that Yahweh wants him to tell the Yisra'elites something, but the thing that he told them doesn't happen, then the Yisra'elites will know that this one isn't really Yahweh's prophet, either.

(Remove everything from board.)

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After Mosheh tells them all of this, he gives them lots of other instructions about the right way for the leaders to judge the people when a crime has been committed or if somebody is killed. **(Place dead people on board.)**

He also tells them not to be afraid when they have to go into battle, because Yahweh is on their side. But there are some men that Yahweh does not want to go into battle. This would be someone who has: 1) built a house but has not had the chance to live in it yet; 2) planted a vineyard but has not been able to use it yet, 3) became engaged to a woman but has not married her yet; or 4) is afraid of going to battle. **(Place house, grape vine, engaged couple, and scared person on board.)**

Whew! That sure is a lot of instructions! It's a good thing the Yisra'elites will have these leaders to help them keep it all straight. Well children, we have come to the end of our story for today. We will see you next week for another exciting Little Gems story!