

# Deuteronomy 25:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

## Analysis

**If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment**—the Hebrew *riv* (רִיב, controversy/dispute) requires formal adjudication. **That the judges may judge them** (*shaphat*, שָׁפֹט)—the verb for rendering judicial decisions based on Torah. **Then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked**—the terms *hitsdiq* (הַצִּדִּיק, declare righteous) and *hirshi'u* (הַרְשִׁיעֵי, declare wicked) use causative forms, meaning judges actively pronounce legal status.

This establishes judicial principles echoed throughout Scripture: impartial judgment (Deuteronomy 1:17), evidence-based verdicts (Deuteronomy 19:15), and clear distinction between innocent and guilty. These earthly judges foreshadow God's perfect judgment where every person is justly assessed (Romans 2:5-11, Revelation 20:11-15).

## Historical Context

Israel's judicial system operated at multiple levels: elders at city gates for local disputes (Ruth 4:1-2), appointed judges for regional cases (Deuteronomy 16:18), and difficult cases appealed to the central sanctuary (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). This verse establishes foundational principle that justice requires active discernment, not passive neutrality.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's requirement for judges to actively distinguish righteous from wicked challenge modern relativism that refuses moral judgments?
2. What does this verse teach about God's own character as the ultimate Judge who perfectly justifies the righteous (Romans 3:26)?

## Interlinear Text

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כִּי	הִנֵּה	רִיב	בֵּין	אֲנָשִׁים	וְנִגְשְׁוּ	אֵל
H3588	H1961	If there be a controversy	H996	between men	and they come	H413
		H7379		H582		H5066
בְּמִשְׁפָּט	וְשִׁפְטֵם		וְהִצְדִּיכְתּוּ		אֵת	
unto judgment	that the judges may judge		them then they shall justify		H853	
H4941	H8199		H6663			
אֶת	וְהַרְשֵׁתָיו	בְּאֵצֶד יַקְרִבּוּ				
the righteous	and condemn	H853	the wicked			
H6662	H7561		H7563			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 17:15** (Righteousness): He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.