

# Wings

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*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## No Partiality

Civic order is founded on the principle that all citizens are equal before the law.

A failure to respect that principle destroys the bond that holds a nation—or a family—together.

“You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's” (Deut. 1:17).

“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor” (Lev. 19:15).

“You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute” (Ex. 23:3).

In Western legal tradition, justice is often personified by the image of Lady Justice holding scales in one hand (to weigh all the evidence) and a double-edged sword in the other (to administer judgment against either party in a dispute). But the most striking feature of this icon is that she is usually depicted wearing a blindfold. The blindfold signifies her impartiality, her refusal to allow any extraneous considerations aside from the evidence in the case to influence her judgment. Justice must be blind, or it is not justice.

As our opening texts indicate, this principle of impartiality in judgment

dates back at least to the time of Moses. When Moses appointed judges to administer justice in the new nation of Israel, he sternly warned them to hear the cases brought before them without prejudice toward either party. Moses understood that in order for a civil society to function properly, it is imperative that those who seek redress for grievances have confidence that the legal system is not stacked against them. “The small as well as the great” must know that verdicts will be rendered strictly on the merits of each case, without consideration to class or status.

This policy of strict neutrality is of special concern to the poor, who do not have the advantages of wealth and political favor with which to influence a corrupt judge. In their book *Representing Justice*, an historical survey of iconography in the legal system, Yale law professors Judith Resnik and Dennis Curtis tell of a public defender in a small Minnesota town who always wore a tattered corduroy jacket when pleading cases for his indigent clients, instead of the usual lawyerly attire of expensive

suits. It was his way of identifying with those who deserved equal protection before the bar of justice.

But notice that this principle of impartiality in justice works in both directions. Moses was concerned that the rich and powerful not tilt the scales in their favor, but he was equally concerned about the danger of sentimentalism tilting the scales in the other direction. Twice Moses warned, “You shall not be partial to the poor.” The poor are deserving of our charity, but when it comes to justice, poverty bestows no special privileges on its victim. All are equal before the law.

This principle of impartiality lies at the foundation of every civic institution. Parents must be impartial in disciplining their children. Supervisors must take care to treat their employees equally. Elders in a church must not show favoritism in dealing with church members. When justice lacks fairness, people quickly learn that they are on their own, and a complete breakdown in civic order will soon follow. Without impartiality, everyone loses.

— David King