



Research Paper

## Sociological Analysis of Deut. 16: 18-20 in the Context of the Judiciary and Electoral Justice in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Elections in Nigeria fall short of credibility. As a result, Nigeria is experiencing political problems in terms of governance and socio-economic development. It is equally unassailable that the Nigerian judicial system is on trial, as numerous controversial judgments are delivered particularly concerning election matters. It is indisputable that justice is imperative for any society that desires peace, stability, and development. Being the final hope of common man, the judiciary cannot afford to pervert justice, as doing so would amount to national destruction. This is more so for the Election Petition Tribunals in Nigeria. Against this background, this paper explores Deuteronomy 16: 18-20 to recommend the laid down principles to Election Petition Tribunal judges as recipes for electoral justice in Nigeria. The paper used the sociological, hermeneutical, historical, and discourse-analysis methods to achieve its objective. The paper submits that factors such as corruption, ethnic sentiments, religious biases, and political partisanship are the bane of election credibility and justice in Nigeria; such reality impairs development. It therefore recommends that Election Petition Tribunal judges should dispense justice with recourse to the principles enshrined in Deut. 16: 18-20.

**Keywords:** Deut. 16:18-20, Nigeria, Election, Credibility, Judiciary, and Electoral Justice.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Election is one of the key factors that determine the nature, extent and working of the democracy of any nation and by implication the stability, growth, development, and the general wellbeing of the people. Nigeria, no doubt, is in a precarious political situation owing to the multifaceted problems associated with the process and act of leadership in the country. It is not refutable that democracy in Nigeria is in shambles, and this is because the people's wishes during elections are more often than not subverted. Adelekan and Ashibi (2020) have mentioned electoral bankruptcy among the many problems of Nigerian democracy. It is evident that since the inception of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, there has been seven consecutive national elections contested. Unfortunately, as Ashindorbe and Danjibo (2022) rightly stated, these elections were marred with various forms of malpractice. Democratic governance demands the adherence to core principles such as the rule of law, political equality, majority rule, popular sovereignty, empowerment, a functional constitution, an independent judiciary, and the crucial practice of periodic free and fair elections, along with the safeguarding of human rights and freedoms. In Nigeria, however, these principles are not just underperforming; they are fundamentally failing, especially the principle of free and fair elections, which is vital to democracy. Elections are the cornerstone of democratic practice, serving as the powerful mechanism through which the people's voices are expressed and legitimate leadership is established. Without this, the very essence of democracy is compromised (Isma'ila and Othman, 2015).

It is obvious from the above submission that election is a critical factor in a nation; thus, it is imperative that the rules, regulations and the constitution of a nation are effectively applied to get things in their right places. Such responsibility is a major concern for the judiciary in any sane clime, because where and whenever there is contravention of such rules and regulations or any act of misconduct and there are litigations arising from that, it is the judiciary that is saddled with the task of interpreting the law and determining the appropriate punishments. However, in Nigeria today, the judiciary appears to be compromised; hence

Enweremadu (2011) noted that the judiciary as an institution in Nigeria has become anti-democratic. Apart from its deviation from the established systemic democratic principles of self-regulation and governance, the institution is influenced by the ever-powerful executive arm of government and the very influential individuals in the society. This is evident in the various controversial judgments delivered by the Nigerian courts.

The Nigerian judiciary is facing a lot of credibility problems due to the manifest corruption that has infested the institution, as documented in the work of Chi (2019). Therefore, it is imperative for the judiciary to reenact the core principles that undergird justice administration in Nigeria. Such principles are enshrined in the Holy Bible. The Bible is replete with ethical principles and guidelines that are meant to regulate human conduct and activities in every sphere of life. Concerning the judiciary and justice, Deuteronomy 16: 18-20 is one of the cardinal texts that address the principles; hence, this study takes a recourse to the biblical text (Deut. 16: 18-20) to examine the foundations of justice and emphasize the ethical requirements for any judge sitting over cases, and also recommend same as a model for judges in Nigeria, particularly in election petition cases.

## **II. CONCEPTUALIZING JUSTICE**

The term justice is a concept that has received attention from various persons, reflecting different disciplines and orientations. As a moral concept, justice has therefore been understood in various but related ways. According to Vallentyne (2003), justice deontically refers to the fact that some things are allowed while others are not. This means that certain actions are considered just, and vice versa. Justice as a moral concept evaluates actions and character traits. As David (1999) observed, justice could also mean moral permissibility either in terms of socio-political behaviour or how actions benefit or burden others. In another stroke of meaning, justice implies what one morally owes others. In this sense, it concerns itself with personal wrongdoing or otherwise to another person.

Another conceptual sense of justice borders on fairness, in which case it refers to the act of ensuring that people appropriately, sufficiently, and equally receive what they are entitled to or due to them. It is in this broad sense that Margaret (2021) held that as a concept, justice means that people should be treated equitably and fairly; hence, to achieve justice in a society, people must get what they deserve. Brian (1995) similarly construes justice as impartiality. Justice could also be conceived in terms of that which is legally compliant and consistent with the laid down rules and laws of the land in dealing with people and/or functioning within a social system or structure.

From a legal perspective, justice refers to the legal system that ensures fair and proper application of the laws by means of which individuals and their causes are well judged (Garner, 2019). This inevitably links justice with the courts systems. In the light of this conception, it is therefore the case that the law courts have the responsibility of administering justice at any rate and level, and what this apparently means is that the judiciary has the powers to make a nation or a people get things done the right way.

The above perspectives on justice hold relevance for this study. A synthesis of all the dimensions would yield the fact that justice simply means, as it implicitly demands, doing what is right, acceptable and fair to individuals, groups, social systems or structures as well as the society at large to avoid any form of injury or negative effects on the corporate wellbeing of either the individuals, entities or the society at large. This would also imply that there are sets of behavioural norms, ethics, principles, and even legal frameworks that guide actions and processes in a social system or an environment. Non-compliance with such norms, ethics, principles, and legal precepts, to the extent that such unchecked subversive deviant actions affect an individual or persons negatively, would amount to injustice.

## **III. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING: THE ALIENATION THEORY**

The theory upon which this work rests is the Alienation Theory. The theory as used in this study was propounded by Karl Max in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This theory is embedded in or derived from the Maxian Social Conflict Theory. Though a sociological theory, it has a bearing on politics and power dynamics in a state (Prayogi, 2023). Max was especially worried by the economic and social disparities brought about by the capitalist system and the Industrial Revolution. Max's Conflict Theory highlights the conflict between various classes, especially between the have-nots and the bourgeois. The theory highlights how those who have the economic means seek to dominate and control the economically less privileged whom they alienate. Although Max was particularly referring to the exploitation of the masses who provide labour by the capitalist employers/industrialists who underpay, suppress and thereby alienating them from their labour, his theory equally implicates the political class who also make merchandise of power and governance, estranging the people from the socio-political structure that they ought to be the key stakeholders and core determinants of the processes. When the political rights of the masses are so undermined, conflict exists and revolution could be resultant. The socio-political implication of this idea is that conflicts between various groups and power dynamics influence social behaviour and institutions like the court and political system. The political class struggles among and against themselves over the control of power and the masses, leading to judicial

alienation of the people. Thus, the Alienation Theory as a strand of the Social Conflict Theory can be used to examine how power relations affect the way justice is administered in Nigeria, especially in situations of disagreements about the outcome of elections. Furthermore, the theory provides insight into how various organizations – including social movements, interest groups, and political parties – interact and impact the electoral process. Also, the judiciary's role in the processes of election in Nigeria can be comprehended by applying the theory of judicial politics.

#### **IV. ELECTORAL INJUSTICE AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA**

Elections in Nigerian, beginning with the processes are fraught with problems. To begin with, the fact should be noted that electoral injustices in Nigeria cannot be discussed completely without referring to the ailing judicial system in place. This is because arising from dissatisfactions and grievances over the conduct of elections, parties and individuals institute legal actions to litigate and redress perceived injustices and as a result of that, election petition tribunals are set up to examine the claims of the litigants and pronounce judgments. Ideally, the judiciary ought to discharge the responsibility of regulating and addressing the problem of electoral fraud in the country. But whether this responsibility is being discharged credibly is a serious question to be answered.

Election is a democratic instrument used in selecting those that should rule a given people. But as Alara (2016) has aptly stated, Nigerian electoral process is not only embarrassing but also a serious threat to the survival of the country. According to Ebirim (2013), electoral malpractice is the manipulative process of violating the laws, rules, acts and regulations governing elections so as to safeguard the interests of certain individuals. Othman and Isma'la (2015) have aptly observed that the general elections held in Nigeria since the re-establishment of democracy in 1999 – specifically in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 – have fundamentally failed to deliver the democratic governance that the country demands; and it is sad that, despite the essential role of credible elections in fostering democracy, electoral malpractice is rampant in Nigeria as the elections are plagued by fraudulent practices that directly sabotage the democratic aspirations of the people. It is imperative that this situation is addressed to ensure a true democratic process in the future.

The 2019 and the recent 2023 general elections are not exempted from the rot of manipulations. Election malpractices in Nigeria are in many shades, including dubious and unlawful nomination of candidates, subversion of the will of party members during party primary elections, militarization of the election processes, disenfranchisement of eligible voters, ballot box snatching and massive rigging, deliberate compromise of the electoral guidelines by the electoral umpires (INEC), writing and announcing fictitious results, forgery and falsification of data and qualifications, among others. The inordinate quest for power has led to very disturbing corrupt practices in Nigeria.

The judiciary and the judges on their part have not leaved up to their calling. As Chi (2019) rightly noted, "There is no doubt that the judiciary in Nigeria is grappling with many corruption allegations...Transparency International ... listed the Nigerian judiciary as the second most corrupt public institution in Nigeria" (pp. 36, 38). He went further to describe the debacles of the Nigerian judiciary in relation to elections and Nigerian politics thus:

Because the judiciary and the masses have failed to be the watch dog of the society, corrupt Nigerian politicians have succeeded in dividing the country along religions and ethnic lines. Elections to leadership roles is no longer based on the capacity and ability of the person to deliver, most Nigerian are more interested in seeing their kinsmen occupying the corridors of power (p. 36).

As the saying goes, the judiciary is the hope of the common man. What this means is that the judiciary ought to be the defender of the oppressed by ensuring that those who are denied their entitlements are aided to reclaim them through the interpretation and enforcement of the relevant laws governing the concerned issues. It follows that the way and manner in which those handling such assignments go about it determines whether there will be credibility and satisfactory outcomes in the process. In Nigeria, it is often the case of "he who pays the piper dictates the tune". Therefore, the judiciary is largely an instrument of manipulation in Nigeria.

Many factors affect the performance of judges in the administering justice in Nigeria. These include corruption, ethnicity, religion, and intimidation of the judiciary. From dubious court injunctions to outright and deliberate suffocation of the law and subversion of justice, the Nigerian judiciary has contributed to the culture of electoral fraud in the country. In their discussion of the problem of corruption as the bane of the administration of justice in Nigeria, Odukoya and Ayodeji (2014) lamented the acts of some staff destroying evidence filed in courts after taking bribes as well as judges engaging in what they called operational corruption in which fundamental legal norms are suppressed for economic gains often leading to the unpleasant delays through unnecessary adjournments and technicalities.

A survey of newspaper headlines during the period of election litigations and critical interrogation of judgments on television by luminary experts reveal the dimension of the problem of the judiciary particularly the election petition tribunals in Nigeria, which is indeed a worrisome situation. To further substantiate the fact

that the judiciary is enmeshed in the pool of corruption and malpractices, Ejekwonyilo (2022) reported that Justice Ejembi Eko (Rtd) decried the rot in the Nigerian judiciary. Even though this report is in connection with the financial misappropriation in the system, it has a bearing on the factor of finance in the country's defective justice administration. More poignant is the report of Sani (2020) on the findings of ICPC that not less than N49.4b was paid to justices as a bribe in two years. The report of the Editorial Board of Punch Newspaper further exposes the rot in Nigerian judiciary. According to the report:

Like a malignant genie, corruption allegations are sticking stubbornly to the judiciary. In the latest assault on the citadel of justice, the Chairman, State, and House of Representatives Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Kano, Flora Azinge, raised the alarm that a senior lawyer was attempting to bribe her to influence the court. This has again illustrated the urgency of rooting out corruption and restoring public confidence in the judiciary.

With the foregoing, it is evident that the Nigerian judiciary is in want of credibility and moral uprightness. It is against this backdrop that the application of the principles of justice as espoused in Deut. 16: 18-20 becomes imperative.

## **V. HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF DEUTERONOMY 16: 18-20**

### **The Hebrew Text and Translation (RSV) of Deuteronomy 16: 18-20**

שָׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּמְוֹלֵךְ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפָּט־צֶדֶק.

“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God gives you, according to your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

לֹא־תַטֵּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא־לֶקַח שֹׁחַר כִּי הַשֹּׁחַר יַעֲוֶה עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים וְסֹלֶף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים.

You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eye of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תַּחֲיֶה וְיִרְשָׁת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ.

Justice, and only justice you shall follow, that you may inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you).

### **Analysis of the Text**

Deut. 16: 18-20 is a unit of discourse within a larger schema of instructions pertaining to festivals. This pericope qualifies as a distinct passage because it departs from the matters pertaining to the observance of festivals and religious practices to address civil matters relating to the justice system of the people of Israel. The passage is a re-enactment and a re-emphasis of the instructions given by Yahweh through Moses to the people in Exodus 23: 8, where the same instructions were given.

Deuteronomy 16:18–20 presents the instructions of Moses to the Israelites whom he charged to appoint officials and judges for each of the towns in the Promised Land when they eventually arrived there. In the passage, the terms of reference for the judges are enumerated. Thus, the passage embodied the fundamental principles that would guide the operation of the judges and other officials (Lundbom, 2013). By the same stroke, the passage reflects the community's stake in the justice system. As Christensen (2001) rightly stated, the passage does not only serve as a veritable preface to the larger section dealing on Israel's socio-political and religious leadership, but it also clearly outlines the principles and ethical codes of conduct for the civil and religious administration which are foundational for all ramifications of judgment in Israel. Wright (1996) aptly held that the focus of the passage is on moral credential of the judges and the officials and not on the technical and administrative details of the judicial system.

According to Coetsee (2021), in a three dimensional address given on the plains of Moab to the Israelites at the verge of entering the Promise Land, Moses provided a theological insight on the people's past in order to stimulate their obedience and commitment to the service of Yahweh; hence the objective of the address was to motivate, sway perceptions, and influence conduct. Verses 18-20, being homiletically in nature (Lundbom, 2013), it establish a wide range of moral templates for judicial propriety, which the judges and officials were obligated to embrace (Tigay, 1996).

As mentioned earlier, the establishment of a judicial system that is morally and ethically upright does not lie solely in the moral rectitude of the judges and other allied officers to be appointed, but the process and manner of their appointment is of the essence. Hence, the text of this study (Genesis 16: 18-20), as amply discussed by Coetsee (2021), embodies the principles that reflect the involvement of both the individuals and the community to realize such a system.

#### **a. Community Involvement in the Appointment of Judges**

From the text, the community has to be involved in the process of appointing judges, which could be in the form of not only recommending suitable individuals to occupy such sensitive positions but also to have an eye on them, ensuring that they discharge their responsibilities faithfully (Otto, 2016). By this token, they are to collectively call them to order whenever there is a perceived tendency to pervert justice or misrule the people.

Apart from considering moral propriety, an important factor to be considered by the community is wisdom (חָכְמָה). As Olson (2007) submitted, it was a requirement in Israel for judges to possess practical and intellectual wisdom. To be wise (חָכֵם) in this sense is to have discerning understanding (בִּינָה) and reputable experience (יָדָע). Müller (2013) rightly stated that such wisdom is possible by paying attention to divine commandments.

#### **b. Fairness in Adjudication and Judicial Administration**

Judging a people requires justice. What this means is that he who judges or rules the people must be fair in applying the laws of the land and abiding by the principles of humanity, avoiding bias and partiality. Block (2012) was trite in his remark that the expression in verse 18 *וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפָּט-צֶדֶק* means that the people should be judged with “righteous judgment”, which is to be upright in judgment (Merrill, 1994). Given the synchronic context of the Torah, this Deuteronomic text indicates the covenantal standards of judgment (Vogt, 2006). This means that, as God is a fair judge who always keeps his part of the covenant with the people, those who are sworn into such office as judges in Israel must also abide by the binding oath of office, which is to uphold justice at all costs.

Using the Hebrew word (לֹא), which is a negation of action (not), the text specifically prohibits three things, namely, pervasion of justice, partiality, and bribery. In verse 19a, the judges were debarred from “turning” (מָטָה) “judgment” (מִשְׁפָּט), which Gesenius & Tregelles (2003) refer to as turning aside someone’s right in judgment. Coetsee (2021) further emphasized that this motif is found in several passages of the Torah, such as Exodus 23: 2, 6; Deut. 24: 17; 27:19, where judges are warned against “failing” the poor, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow in their lawsuits. In the same vein, verse 19b speaks against “recognizing faces” (לֹא תִכְיֹר פָּנִים) to deter partiality in judgment. Similarly, the final clause in verse 19 discourages the act of taking (לִקְחָה) “presents” or “gifts” (שֹׁחַב), which implies taking bribes by judges, because it blinds the wise and derails the cause of those that are in the right.

#### **c. Justice Should be a Community Concern**

A syntactical analysis of verse 20a of the text of this study would reveal that the statement was not directed to the judicial leaders and officials only but also to Israel primarily (Coetsee, 2021). Israel as a community of faith was admonished to vehemently pursue justice. Justice should be a collective concern; hence they were all expected to be reasonable, fair and act right in accordance with the Torah. This means that it should not matter who is involved in the matter requiring justice; rather, what should matter to all is that which is just and righteous. The significance of this is that when justice becomes the collective concern of a community, those saddles with the responsibility of justice administration will not find complicity in the masses to pervert justice. The particular principle is very vital because in most cases the maladministration orchestrated by many officials derive from the complicity or docility of the people.

### **VI. IMPLICATIONS OF DEUTERONOMY 16: 18-20 FOR THE JUDICIARY IN NIGERIA**

From the analysis of the text under study, it is incontrovertible that there are certain principles that, if entrenched and religiously practiced, will promote and enhance the course of justice in Nigeria. The principles derived from the text include: (1) that appointment of judges should involve the community, (2) the judges and officials must be fair in their judgments, (3) intellectual judges with wisdom and good understanding should be appointed and (4) justice should be the concern of every citizen. The four principles are relevant and critical for proper, effective and profitable justice administration in Nigeria as they strike at the root of the major courses of electoral injustice in Nigeria.

The first principle, which is community involvement in appointing the judges, is apt in Nigerian context. Appointments are made in Nigeria to compensate political loyalists at the expense of moral probity, credibility, and competence. Accordingly, he who pays the piper dictates the tune. The involvement of communities should be to the effect that those to be appointed must be recommended, not by politicians but by those who are the core custodians of the values of the society. Tritely, Omosor (2020) has observed that the erosion of African values is an inhibitive to Nigerian development. Among the core values of Africans, Nigeria in particular, are respect for truth and honesty, and sanctions for the violation of moral principles. By allowing persons of questionable character to hold such sensitive offices as judges and failing to speak in unison against judicial misbehavior, the society or communities enhance the propensity for the judicial officers to compromise justice. This is a very serious problem manifest in the Nigerian electoral system. To solve this menace, stakeholders at the community level, including traditional institutions and non-partisan religious leaders must be involved in the process of appointing persons into such offices to ensure good governance and development (Omosor, 2019) particularly as it concerns elections in Nigeria.

The principle of fairness is a cardinal requirement for justice. Deut. 16: 18-20 is explicit in demanding that judges should be just and fair. To achieve this, judges are enjoined to desist from distortion, bribery and partiality. In essence, the last two, namely, bribery and partiality lead to the first, which is distortion. This moral

responsibility of being fair in judgment must be taken seriously by Nigerian judges, particularly those sitting over election litigations at election tribunals. This is imperative because the Nigerian electoral space has become a jungle where only the fittest can survive. The stronger political actors arm-twist others and rub them of their mandates; hence, Ibrahim (2007) was trite in noting that results of many elections are so dubious that they are always disputed, and this has the adverse effect of endangering the prospects of the survival of democratic ideals, thereby making the future of the nation's democracy bleak rather than promising. Rather than being the true hope of the common man, the courts have also deepened the problem by commercializing judgments.

Corruption has bastardized justice in Nigeria. This corruption owes its life to bribery, ethnicity, religious considerations and the complicity of citizens. To buttress this, Olasunkanmi (2019) lamented that chauvinistic emphasis on ethnic and tribal identity is inhibitive to the entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria. This is not different from the factor of religious identity. Ottuh and Omosor (2022) have pinpointed religionphobia as a factor in the politics of a state with religious pluralism such as Nigeria. For them, a major blind spot of the Nigerian nation is the politicization of religion. Religious affiliation and the need to protect the interest of particular individuals involved in electoral litigations often lead to compromised judgment and subversion of justice. Thus, the principle of impartiality, which Deut.16: 18-20 advocates, implicitly addresses the Nigerian judges and charges them to be objective in dispensing justice. Apart from ethno-religious leaning which breeds partiality, there is the problem of economic gains vitiating the credibility of electoral judgments in Nigeria. It is a commonplace knowledge that some judges have been accused and charged for collecting bribes from litigants. This claim has been substantiated above. But for further emphasis, Obiejesi (2017) gave the report of the investigation conducted by *International Center for Investigative Reporting* that judges and police are the highest bribe takers in Nigeria. As a principle, Election Petition Tribunal judges must ensure that they redeem the image of the judiciary by eschewing the act of taking bribes from litigants and influential politicians. This is canonically prescribed in Deut. 16: 18-20 as a divine injunction.

Having discussed the principle of fairness which is against distortion of justice, bribe taking and partiality, it is important to also address the problem of citizens' commitment to justice. As could be gleaned from the text under study, citizens have a part to play in ensuring justice. This is because the concern for social justice is an issue that borders on community conscience and consciousness. It is an established fact that Nigerians sway support on the basis of self-interest and not on the basis of principle and common good. Due to political affiliation, religious sentiments, ethnic bias, docility and indifference, citizens support injustices meted against others advertently and inadvertently. When citizens demand justice and also act justly, there will be an established paradigm within which framework they can critically and objectively interrogate the judgments of the judicial umpires.

As Adelekan and Ashibi (2020) rightly stated, the most appreciable fruit of democracy is the chain of periodic elections in which the masses have the opportunity to participate. In Nigerian parlance, democracy is to a large extent tantamount to electoral democracy. Apparently, the essence of election in Nigeria, which is for the people to make choice of who leads them, is illusive. Thus, when electoral process is manipulated such that mandate of the masses is transferred to the wrong person, the judiciary becomes the beacon of hope for the people who eagerly wait for them to assume the role of restoring the stolen mandate of rightful winners of elections through proper delivery of judgments at election tribunals. It is the masses' responsibility to act in such a way that would cause those holding the saddle as judges to be just and fair in upholding justice.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The failure of Nigeria as a nation derives from failed leadership. Election is a veritable means of expressing displeasure against bad leaders and a means of making choice of preferred candidates to lead the country. But because of electoral malpractices, Nigeria is always in the web of leadership malfeasance, leaving the masses with the dire consequences of underdevelopment and chronic poverty. Those who have the political and economic might impose themselves on the people by all means while the judges compromise the justice system for so many reasons bordering on financial gratification, ethno-religious sentiment and patronage among others. There is no doubt therefore, that the country is in search of an ideal system built on solid principles that would mediate and midwife sanity. It is through electoral justice which only the judiciary can guarantee that can salvage the situation. The text of Deut. 16: 18-20 has shown that the quest for social justice demands that appointed judges should arm themselves with ethical principles such as fairness and godliness which are required to execute judgments without fear or favour. Despite ethnic, religious and political leaning or economic status, judges are to avoid distortion of justice, favouritism and jettison all forms of corrupt practices.

As this study has shown through the analysis of the text, justice must be ingrained in the collective consciousness of the community, such that every citizen will operate within that established paradigm. Justice ought to be the philosophy of life of the judges. In this way, judges, leaders and the masses would naturally align themselves with the spirit and letters of justice. Judges must move against all odds and influences to be fair and just in dealing with election matters so as to help evolve a sane society where the law is supreme. With that,

the problems in Nigeria will be monumentally reduced as elected leaders would be more accountable, responsible and committed to addressing the challenges of the nation.

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