

Judges and officers shall you appoint ...and they may judge the people with righteous judgement. (16:18)

The *Midrash Tanchuma* translates "*shoftim*" as judges and "*shotrim*" as executive officers who guide the community in the spirit of the law. Together, they unite the Jewish nation around Hashem and His law. In this way, Hashem's imprimatur is established on the land, giving it the character of a *Torah* state. **Horav Shlomo Breuer, zl**, feels that this was the underlying meaning of king Yehoshafat's admonishment to the judges when he warned, "*Behold what you are doing; you do not sit in judgement of men, but of G-d, for He is with you at every pronouncement of the law.*" (*Divrei Hayamim II 19:6*)

The *Midrash* explains that "sitting in judgement of G-d," means that Hashem declares to *Klal Yisrael*, "If you uphold the law I stand highly exalted," As it says in *Yeshayah 5:16*, "*Highly exalted is Hashem Tzvaos, G-d of Hosts, through the Law.*" The responsibility of Jewish judges and leaders is to exalt Hashem through the law. This is an overwhelming responsibility that defines the essence of leadership.

Horav Breuer advances his explanation of the role of the judges. He questions the choice of the word "*tzvaos*" in connection with this thought. He cites **Horav S.R.Hirsch, zl**, who explains the profound meaning of his word. A crowd of men does not in itself form an army. Responsible and thoughtful leaders assign each person to his rightful position. Thus, a multitude of men is transformed into a disciplined army in which each man vies to carry out the orders of his leader. When we apply this idea to Hashem, everything that He has called into existence -- regardless of its size or significance -- forms a great *tzavah*, army. Each component is delegated to its specific position, so that it may contribute its unique qualities towards enhancing the purpose of creation. Man, too, is a component who finds his place in Hashem's army. The Almighty assigns him the scope and direction of his life's work, defining his role amidst all of creation.

Hashem gave us the *Torah* which is designed to eradicate violence, brutality, greed and egotism from mankind and to introduce the tools to attain peaceful coexistence. The *Torah* governs our individual and communal lives. The *shoftim* are charged to administer the law, so that harmony may reign among man. Their fidelity to Him causes others to recognize Hashem as *Hashem Tzvaos*. If the judges fail to uphold the law, if they permit Jewish life to become a moral shambles, then Hashem ceases to rule as *Hashem Tzvaos*. His army is no longer a harmonious group; they are a group of disparate individuals. The challenge of the judges and *shotrim*, leaders/administrators, is to see to it that Hashem's law is established and maintained in all circles of Judaism; to inspire each Jew to devote all of himself to his Divinely assigned tasks, so *Hashem Tzvaos* will be exalted in His reign over us.