

"And the father-in-law of Moshe said to him, 'The thing that you do is not good. You will surely become worn out - you as well as this people that is with you... Now listen to my voice. I will advise you and may Hashem be with you.'" (18:17,18)

Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, gave him advice which was included in the *Torah*, setting the standard for the entire judicial system in *Klal Yisrael*. Was this advice so unique that Moshe could not have thought of it? Why did Moshe not suggest appointing officers for individual groups? What happened to the *zekeinim*, elders, who probably had served as magistrates in Egypt?

Horav Avigdor Miller, Shlita, establishes two reasons for Moshe's initial reluctance to employing the old system - in which appointed magistrates rendered decisions instead of Moshe himself. First, the original code of laws had been based primarily upon human logic, a system which would now cede to Divine dictate. This change in directive would effect a transformation in everyone's lifestyle, a transition - which Moshe predicted would present difficulties. Moshe would train new judges, imbuing them with a different type of approach - *Torah* logic. Everything was to be framed by a new form of reasoning, one that would supersede any previous form of human dialectic. This plan motivated Moshe to take the unusual step of temporarily proclaiming himself the sole interpreter and adjudicator of the law, until others that he had trained were ready to establish their new roles.

Second, Moshe's goal was to teach the people to govern themselves without coercion from higher authorities. To be a *mamleches Kohanim*, a nation of priests, means that the people have an inborn nobility, conscience and self-esteem. It was not Moshe's intent for *Bnei Yisrael* to be scrutinized by a system of magistrates unless it was necessary. A nation of "priests" should be predisposed to self-government.

Yisro once again countered pragmatically. Moshe would be correct in establishing a system of self-government if these people had not recently begun to live by a totally new and unfamiliar set of laws. These people had previously been permitted to eat whatever they pleased, and to perform labor during all seven days of the week; they were not prepared to obligate themselves to these new laws in a vacuum. They required encouragement and supervision in order to prepare to become a great and noble nation. Moshe understood all of this. Hashem gave Yisro the honor of voicing that which Moshe himself understood.