

"Dan shall judge his people . . . Dan shall be a serpent in the way." (49:16,17)

The *Kli Yakar* notes the fact that Yaakov compared Dan to a serpent, while, in contrast, Moshe compared him to a lion. He suggests the disparity in metaphor is due to the dual challenges facing a judge. Some litigants openly confront a judge with defiance and impudence, casting aspersion on his legal decisions. On the other hand, others cloak their evil intentions under a facade of acceptance, while they secretly slander the judge with venomous gossip.

The judge must be strong and resolute in responding to these divergent critics. At times, he must maintain the strength and courage of the lion retaliating those who confront him openly. Other situations warrant the surreptitious response of a serpent. The judge must be well prepared, so that his *halachic* decision will never be challenged by anyone.