

**"Let Hashem set... a man over the congregation... who shall go out before them and who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in; that the congregation of Hashem (be not) as sheep which have no shepherd for them." (27:16,17)**

The commentators derive a variety of lessons from these *pesukim* concerning the *Torah's* concept of the consummate leader. What is the analogy between the relationship of a shepherd with his flock and a *Torah* leader's relationship with *Klal Yisrael*? As he lay on his deathbed, the *Ksav Sofer* answered this question in the following manner. A shepherd will invariably lead his flock to places that have the best grazing, lush grass, cool waters and the finest climate. The shepherd does this in order to serve his personal interests. The sheep are his property. Their health and welfare represents money in his bank account.

A *Torah* shepherd/leader, in contrast, is much different. He is interested purely in benefitting his flock. Everything he does is only for his congregation. His devotion to the point of self-sacrifice for his people is the benchmark of his leadership. This is the *pasuk's* message. Let Hashem appoint a leader who will dedicate himself to his people, who will lead them through all situations at all times. Consequently, *Klal Yisrael* will not be like sheep that *do not have a shepherd* who is dedicated to their own best interests.

The *Malbim* asserts that even sheep who do not have a shepherd have a he-goat who "leads" them. Although he is leader of the pack, he is nothing more than another sheep with tendencies similar to those of the "other" sheep. A *Torah* leader, however, is distinct in that he is "above" the rest. His scholarship, character, and total devotion to the *Torah* way of life are exemplary, distinguishing him from the congregation. The *Torah manhig*, leader, must differentiate himself from his flock, as the shepherd apparently remains distinct from his sheep.

*Horav Shlomo Eliezer Alpandri* questions the choice of wording in this *pasuk*. First, why does the *Torah* emphasize *over the congregation*? Second, why is the word before them, mentioned twice? Third, why is the *Torah* so verbose in expressing the sheep's lack of leadership? It should have written as sheep without a shepherd, rather than "as sheep which have no shepherd for them?"

*Horav Alpandri* explains that this *pasuk* defines the concept of *Rabbanus*, the rabbinate. It outlines the qualifications of a *Rav*, suggests how a *Rav* should conduct himself, and specifies his functions as spiritual leader. There are communities who have been so brazen as to diminish the position of the *Rav* to no more than the *posek*, judge and adjudicator of *Torah* law: These communities have prevented the *Rav* from guiding the community's "mundane" affairs. This role has been relegated to lay leadership on the premise that they are more proficient in this area and that the *Rav* belongs only in the realm of learning. This kind of lay leadership invariably seeks to "impress" upon the *Rav* their own perspective concerning the correct course of action to take in attending to communal

issues. This attitude does not represent a *Torah* orientation. First, the leader must be an *a man above the congregation*. The leader must lead and not be led! Second, he must go out and enter before the members of the community. The leader goes in front at the head of the community, leading in every issue. He must take a stand in order to influence and inspire, moderate and preside over the community forum in all areas of endeavor. He should determine and express the *Daas Torah*, the *Torah's* perspective on community issues. Third, his opinion should be known by all. He should be an entity who relates to people, whose compelling character and presence is felt in the community.

The *Torah* community should not be as *sheep who have no shepherd among them*. The members of a Jewish community must be acutely aware who their leader is. He must truly act in a leadership capacity. If this is not the case, then the community does not truly have a leader!