

## How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels? (1:12)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* seems to express his personal feelings concerning the many difficulties associated with communal leadership. As a result, officers were appointed to ease the load, with only the most difficult issues coming before Moshe. He states three areas of concern: *torchachem*, your contentiousness; *maasachem*, your burdens; *rivchem*, your quarrels. The commentators have their individual ways of interpreting the meaning and ramifications of these terms. Are they that different from one another? Apparently, if the Torah chose to detail each one, they must each have a singular meaning.

*Ben Pores Yosef* explains that there are different demands placed upon a leader: intellectual, emotional and judicial. Thus, these terms are not merely poetic variations, but precise indicators of the multifaceted role of a *manhig/Rav*, spiritual leader.

First are the intellectual demands which require the *Rav* to render *halachic* rulings concerning matters of *kashrus*, business ethics, *Shabbos* observance, husband and wife relationships and life-cycle events. Included under this rubric is the responsibility to teach, explain and offer clear guidance on various issues. This demands a profound knowledge of *halachah* and a skilled ability in how to teach and convey the *halachah* to his constituents. If I may add, it also requires a deep sense of humility, to concede that the final ruling eludes him.

*Maasechem* refers to emotional support, borne of wisdom and common sense. This refers to people who come, not with halachic queries, but with pain and confusion, broken hearts and personal crises, that require empathy and mending. This is where pastoral care enters the equation, where the ability to listen, understand and share emotion is demanded of the leader. This is not the role of intellect, but of the heart. All the knowledge that he has amassed in years of study will not help shoulder the emotional weight of what a congregant is experiencing.

Last, is *rivchem*, interpersonal disputes, litigation, financial disagreements and even family feuds. The *Rav* must mediate using his halachic expertise and *seichel*, common sense, judge fairly and restore peace between litigants after the *halachah* has ruled. Patience, impartiality and courage to make and stick to the correct decisions without fear of negative repercussion. He must expect that not everyone will appreciate his ruling – but *halachah* is absolute, and he, as its exponent, must present it with strength.

Perhaps we may add to the above. I find it hard to believe that Moshe, the quintessential leader of our nation, would be challenged by the varied obligations of a leader. He was certainly capable of fulfilling all three roles. He was the greatest *halachic* authority, the shepherd of our people's hearts and the ultimate judge. Yet, he said, "How can I alone bear your trouble, your burden, your strife? Why would he express such a limitation? Moshe's words were not a cry of weakness, but a

profound teaching. He was acutely aware that, while he could carry the various loads and wear all three “hats,” not all future leaders could follow in his footsteps. They were just not *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Thus, if Moshe were to act singlehandedly, the message to future generations would be that a Torah leader must be all things to all people. He feared establishing such precedent. To impose such a standard carried the risk of burnout, failure, or worse – creating superficial leadership that is more self-serving than serving the people.

Instead, Moshe said, “I cannot do it alone.” Every generation has its *Moshe Rabbeinu*, capable of doing everything. Most communities, however, are not blessed with the *ish ha’eshkolos*, who is everything to everyone; rather, they thrive when they cultivate a team, whereby leaders who each excel in various areas work together cohesively for the betterment of the community. It demands humility to say, “I cannot do it all, because I am not proficient in everything.” True leadership lies not in heroic isolation, but in holy collaboration, in recognizing both the unique and diverse needs of a community and the varied strengths of its leadership: As *Moshe Rabbeinu* bemoaned, *Eichah esa le’vadi?* “How can I bear your trouble, your burden, and your strife all by myself?”