



DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center
mpersoff@ou.org

Great Expectations!

In this day and age, when leaders in Israel are transitioning, we might ask ourselves what our expectations of the (new) leadership are. We might recall Yitro's advice to Moshe to gather men of accomplishment, God-fearing people, men of truth, and people who despise money (to judge the people).

And so, in our Parsha, Moshe recalls that he took "the heads of your tribes, distinguished men, who were wise and well-known," and he instructed them not to favor anyone, nor tremble before any man, and to listen diligently to peoples' issues (Devarim 1:15-17).

Notice the difference in wording between Yitro's advice and what happened in practice. Are the heads of the tribes necessarily persons who fear Hashem and despise money? Are they, indeed, men of truth?

We expect so, but we do not know for sure. What we do know is that the expectations of people in authority should be high. We expect them to be examples of righteousness and ethical behavior. We expect them to be role models of truth and honesty. We expect them to bring a good name to their rank and to represent a *Kiddush Hashem*.

The judges would need to be accepted and respected by the rank and file. No wonder, then, that the new leadership consisted of tribal leaders. That representation indicated the importance of knowing one's community and thus passing judgment that matched local circumstances. There were judges of thousands, hundreds, and tens – each with their given responsibilities – and all answerable to Moshe Rabenu.

So careful and cautious do our judges, rabbis, and teachers have to be! Let them – and we, too – learn a lesson from our rabbis of old (Yoma 86a). For R. Yitzchak of the School of R. Yannai proclaimed: "If one's colleagues are ashamed of his reputation, that constitutes a *Chilul Hashem*."

On the other hand, Abaye exclaimed: "If one who studies Torah attends to the disciples of the wise, is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly, what do people say about him? 'Happy is the father who taught him Torah...look how fine are his ways, and how righteous are his deeds!'" ■

Shabbat Shalom!

Menachem Persoff



Having a Brit?
KISEI SHEL ELIYAHU

Available to borrow
from the OU Israel Center

For details, call

Ita Rochel 02-560-9125