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*Learning from  
others...*

*Rabbi Alon Meltzer*

*A New Page of Talmud*

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*Yitro 5782*

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Next day, Moses sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" – **Shemot 18:13-14<sup>1</sup>** The Sages taught in a baraita: The descendants of Noah were commanded to observe seven mitzvot: a) judgment; b) blessing the Name; c) idol worship; d) forbidden sexual relations; e) bloodshed; f) robbery; g) [eating] a limb from a living animal. – **Sanhedrin 56a<sup>2</sup>**

Only wise and intelligent men, who are eminent in Torah scholarship and possess

extensive knowledge, should be appointed members of either the Great or the Small Sanhedrin. They should be somewhat aware of such branches as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, forecasting constellations, astrology, methods of soothsayers, augurs and wizards as well as idolatrous superstitions, and the like, in order to be competent in dealing with them... **Mishneh Torah, Sanhedrin and the penalties within their jurisdiction 2:1<sup>3</sup>** How frustrated Moshe must have felt before the reforms of Yitro, for though he labored mightily he could not retire the backlog. Why is it then that Moshe himself, so overextended, did not foresee from the outset the faults of a system so patently flawed? Why does it require the arrival of Yitro to identify the

...Why do you act alone...

**מִשְׁנֶה אַתָּה וְעַבְדֵל בְּגֹעַךְ**

**Shemot 18:14**

problem and to remedy the situation? Had no one else noticed that the wheels of justice were slowly and noisily grinding to a halt while the tired lawgiver stood hunched over an accumulation of cases that even a well-organized and efficient court system would have found daunting? – **Rav Michael Hattin on Parashat Yitro<sup>4</sup>** Another aspect of lomed m'kol adam is that even the minority opinion is important. It is important to note that Judaism suggests that we can never truly and fully know what another person

feels or believes, but it does ask us to be in consideration of each other. The rabbis of the Talmud decreed that in making any decisions, all opinions and precedents

must be presented before the court to ensure all sides are accounted for. As a result, we can, as Hillel taught, be disciples of Aaron and love peace, pursue peace, love all of humanity, and in doing so, attract all to living and studying the Torah (Pirke Avot 1:12). Pirke Avot 4:1 furthers this notion by explaining "Who is wise? The one that learns from every person ... Who is honored (given respect)? The one who gives honor (respect) to others." In other words, the greatest sign of an individual who understands the concept of kavod is when they give the same respect to others as they would want for themselves.

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