

In this week's Torah portion, Moses reviews the appointment of leaders over the Israelites in the wilderness. These leaders are chosen from the wise and knowledgeable heads of tribes. They are responsible for governing various groups, ranging from thousands to tens. Moses charges the judges to uphold justice by impartially settling disputes between their brethren and strangers among them. They are to fearlessly judge without showing favoritism, as the ultimate judgment belongs to God. If any case proves too difficult, it can be brought to Moses for resolution.

This description presents the foundations of a free society, where every individual, citizen, or stranger, has direct access to leaders who are obligated to render fair judgments. In such societies, the rule of law governs all, regardless of their status, allowing people to express their opinions freely without fear of harassment by the government. The presence of just laws and the impartial administration of justice maintains safety and security among the people.

However, not all nations in our world today embrace these principles. Some are ruled by those who suppress free speech and manipulate their populations through fear. Independent voices are silenced, and propaganda is used for self-serving purposes. The observation made by Andre Sakharov is relevant here: nations that disrespect the rights of their own people are unlikely to respect the rights of other nations.

The consequence of this situation is a world often troubled by war and terrorism, fueled by extreme religious or political ideologies. Even in democratic societies, we witness an increase in violence perpetrated by extremist groups seeking to silence or harm those with differing opinions. It is crucial for free societies to firmly oppose tyranny and terrorism, as compromising with such forces not only endangers the lives of those oppressed but also threatens the safety and security of people living in free nations. In this global landscape, standing up against oppression and promoting the values of freedom and justice becomes essential to create a safer and more stable world.