

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Yitzchak Kasdan

It is with immense pleasure that I welcome you to the Mikvah Emunah Society of Greater Washington dinner at which we are honoring Mrs. Robin Niman. The Society is grateful to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for gracing us with Robin's extraordinary talents and dedication over the years. We thank Robin who, despite her modesty and sincere reluctance to be honored tonight, humbly but graciously allowed us to bestow upon her the recognition that she so richly deserves. Thank you Robin for everything you have done to expand the observance of *tabaras hamishpacha* in our community. We wish you and your family only the best in all your future endeavors.

In our tradition, there are different forms of leadership. One is derived from the laws applicable to the Jewish monarchy, and grants the individual leader coercive authority to dictate policy and compel others to act and conform as commanded.¹ By contrast, a second type of leadership concentrates authority not in a single individual such as a king but in more than one person. Thus, the *gemarab*² explains that we do not appoint "*s'raros*" [an authority] over the community of "less than two" based on the verse in *Sh'mos* 28: 5 which states: "And they [*i.e.*, at least two] shall take the gold ..." The "they" in the verse are the "*chachmei lev*," the "wise-hearted people"³ -- to whom the Children of Israel contributed their gold and other materials for the building of the *mishkan*, the Tabernacle, and the making of the vestments for Aaron and his sons in their service in the Tabernacle.

Who were these "*chachmei lev*," the "wise-hearted people"? They were both men and women.⁴ They toiled on behalf of the community in the service of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in constructing the Tabernacle and preparing the holy garments of Aaron and the other *kobanim*.

The presidency of the Mikvah Society of Greater Washington clearly is a leadership position. Yet, the president is no king and has no coercive authority. Rather, the president serves together with the men and women of the Society's Board of Trustees in the tradition of the "*chachmei lev*," the "wise-hearted people": We are elected by the membership and operate collectively as a group -- without the concentration of power in one person -- on behalf of the "*tzibbur*" *i.e.*, the community at large.

As president of M/ES I am surrounded and led by a Board truly comprised of wise-hearted people. The talents of many of our Board members are on display tonight, and we are particularly indebted to Amy Sukol and Caroline Namrow and their committee of volunteers who have worked so long

¹ See, e.g., *Rosh* on *Y'vamos*, *perek* 12, *siman* 2 (referencing the verse in *D'varim* 17:15 relating to the commandment to anoint a king and explaining that "*s'rarah*" *i.e.*, authority, is only with "*ke'fiab*" *i.e.*, through coercion); *Shabab* YD 269:15 (referring to the *Rosh* and *Tur*). See also *Igros Moshe* YD 2:44-5 and YD 4:26.

² *Bava Basra* 8b.

³ See, e.g., *Sh'mos* 28: 3

⁴ See, e.g., *Torah Sh'laimah* on *Sh'mos* 28: 3, *os* 20 (citing *medrash agadah* based on *Sh'mos* 35:25) and *Torah Sh'laimah* on *Sh'mos* 35:10, *os* 52 (citing *medrash bagadol*).

and hard to make this dinner such a fitting tribute to Robin. Special kudos also go to Lori Tolchin for her hard work on the Journal.

We must also take this opportunity to recognize the unique abilities of two other Board members and their special families who, like the "*chachmei lev*" who built the Tabernacle, can be said to be the true "builders" of our new *mikvah*: Alan Broder and his wife Fran, and Jeff Lawrence and his wife Donna. I cannot adequately describe the amount of time, resources, dedication and love devoted by Alan and Fran, and Jeff and Donna that has finally culminated in the beautiful edifice known as the Yitzchok Wallerstein Mikvah of Greater Washington. Speaking on behalf of the entire community who will benefit, *iy'H*, from the new *mikvah* for decades to come, we thank *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for favoring us with the presence and diligence of the Broders and Lawrences. We are also grateful for the initial donation from the Wallerstein family that helped launch the project; the persistent and consistent efforts of Jessica Eizenstat, Naomi Baum and Liz Diamant in keeping the endeavor of building a new *mikvah* alive through many trials and tribulations over many years; and the contributions of all those other unnamed benefactors, volunteers and workers, whose collective efforts have now resulted in a wonderful *mikvah* befitting our community.

On an equal, if not greater, note of thanks: We would never have been able to build a new, beautiful *mikvah* without the guidance and support, in so many important and different ways, of our local *Rabbonim*: Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, *z'l* -- who inspired so many of us and whose memory the Society, *iy'H*, will be commemorating appropriately in the new *mikvah* building in the near future -- and *yibadlu l'chayim*, Rabbi Kalman Winter (may he have a speedy *refuah sh'laimah*), Rabbi Yaakov Bieler, Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum, Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky, Rabbi Herzel Kranz, Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz and Rabbi Berel Wolvovsky. So too, the past M/ES presidents, officers and Board members, especially those "behind the scenes" who deal with such mundane matters as maintenance and repairs, membership dues and donations and who are absolutely indispensable to the operation of a *mikvah* -- including but hardly limited to Gila Wakschlag, Irene Lawson and Nancy Finkelstein; the founders and builders of the Ballard *mikvah*; Rabbi and Mrs. Yehuda Fleischmann and Mrs. Bracha Fuchs, whose labors at the Ballard *mikvah* have been highly dedicated and unstinted labors of love for so many years; and the current and past *mikvah* attendants throughout the years -- they all have a *chelek* in the new *mikvah* and deserve our everlasting thanks.

Last but of most significance, a *mikvah* is a *mikvah* only if it is a *kosher mikvah*. In that regard, we were fortunate to have the *mikvah's* construction overseen from a *halachic* perspective by the nationally-recognized *mikvah* expert, Rabbi Moshe Heinemann of Baltimore. As both Jessica Eizenstat and Alan Broder can attest, Rabbi Heinemann was always there, ready, willing and able to help. He is the *chacham lev* par excellence uncommonly dedicated to the service of the Jewish community at large, in the service of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. We are truly indebted to him and wish him continued *bracha* and *batz'lacha* from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for many years to come.

I hope that you have been inspired by this dinner and by those who have helped M/ES achieve what we have in building the new Yitzchok Wallerstein Mikvah. We all have roles to play and M/ES is always in need of help and volunteers. May we continue to be blessed by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and may we continue to benefit from the *chachmei lev* in our community. We of M/ES look forward to serving you, as well as in benefiting from all of your individual commitments to the important work of increasing the observance of *mikvah* and *tabaras hamishpacha* within *Klal Yisroel*. Thanks for your support in attending this dinner and in contributing to the Journal. Enjoy the evening!

