In our Parsha that opens Sefer D'varim, Moshe recounts the events that the people experienced during their travels in the desert. Uncharacteristically of our current leaders, Moshe describes the difficulties of judging Bnei Yisrael; he laments the burden that was placed upon his head. Moshe then continues to portray how he appointed "the heads of your tribes... as heads over you, leaders of thousands... hundreds... fifties... and tens - and officers for your tribes" (D'varim 1:15).

For every thousand people, there were now 131 lieutenants! Why so many? The Vilna Gaon indicates that each category of leader had a specific task. In order: military commanders over thousands; judges over hundreds; teachers over fifties; and over the tens, policemen, while the officers were to enforce the decisions of the courts.

The goal was to reduce the burden on Moshe's shoulders. But another no less critical objective was achieved. Many people were now sharing the responsibility for the moral fiber of the community. They were beginning to actualize the (rabbinic) maxim that all Jews are responsible for one another (Shevu'ot 39a).

In these days of the Three Weeks (and Nine Days), may we be so inspired to take on the mantle of leadership with that convivial care and concern due to our fellow brothers and sisters, thus to hasten the Redemption, speedily and in our days.