



INSPIRATION AND ORGANISATION

EVERY NATION NEEDS LEADERSHIP. SO INDEED DOES ANY GROUP OF PEOPLE whether a school, a business concern or a football team. A scene in the Sedra¹ this week brings us to the question of Jewish leadership. We see the great Moses, knowing he was soon going to leave this world, asking G-d to appoint a leader for the Jewish people in his place². Then we have the long course of history from Moses till our own time, with many leaders of different kinds.

In general, there are two kinds of leadership. One is spiritual leadership which provides a sense of purpose in terms of the question of why the world exists and what we are doing in it, values, ideals of goodness and holiness - and inspires to reach towards those ideals.

Another is political or practical leadership: in terms of a modern state, this leader guides the country in practical terms including housing, education and health care, and how to defend the country against its possible enemies. The same two aspects of leadership apply in every structure in life, including a football team.

When the Jewish people first became a nation in the time of Moses, we had one leader who combined both functions. Moses received Divine teaching and transmitted it to us, inspiring us and making us want to keep the instructions of the Torah. But Moses was also our leader in practical matters. For example, he led us in a

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defensive war against the Amalekites³ and was also able to keep the uneasy peace when we passed near the land of the Edomites⁴.

In our Sedra, instructed by G-d, Moses passed the mantle of leadership to Joshua⁵. He laid his hands on his head in an action called “Semicha” which to this day is the term for ordination of a Rabbi. This gave Joshua authority as the transmitter of Torah teachings, as we see in the opening lines of Ethics of the Fathers: Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and so on, eventually reaching our own time.

Joshua was also the practical and political leader of the Jewish people, as described in the Book of Joshua: he conquered the Land of Israel and successfully divided it up among the various Tribes. Like Moses, Joshua combined the qualities of spiritual and political leader.

In later generations, however, there was a King providing practical and political leadership, such as King Saul, and the Nasi, the head of the Sanhedrin, providing spiritual leadership, who was generally also a Prophet, such as the Prophet Samuel. Many of the accounts in the Bible are about the uneven relationship or sometimes conflicts between these two kinds of leadership⁶. The ideal of a combination of wise, inspiring Rabbis with good organisers continued through our history till the present.

This reminds us that there are two disparate aspects of our lives, both as individuals and as society as a whole: the spiritual and the practical. The goal of Jewish teaching is to draw these two elements together. In the coming week we will be particularly remembering the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem leading to the destruction of the Temple, commemorated by the Fasts of the Seventeenth of Tammuz (Tuesday 19 July this year) and then Ninth of Av (9 August). Our hope for the rebuilding of the Temple includes the hope for the restoration of Jewish leadership: the Messiah.

This ultimate King will include the qualities of both spiritual leader, Torah Sage, inspiring the Jewish people and all humanity, and also political leader. He will unify the world, focusing everyone's attention on G-d, and on the Temple in Jerusalem, and in all aspects of life the spiritual and the practical will at last be truly joined⁷.

1. Numbers 25:10-30:1. 2. Numbers 27:15-23. 3. See Exodus 17:8-16. 4. See Numbers 20:14-21. 5. Num. 27:15-23. 6. In addition the High Priest also sometimes provided spiritual leadership on a public level. 7. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.23 pp.190-197.

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SEDRA PINCHAS

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

"MICHAEL AND LEAH!! WE'RE GOING TO THE SYNAGOGUE IN FIVE MINUTES! BE QUICK" Mrs Kahn called up the stairs.

No! Only five more minutes, thought Michael. Quickly, he buttoned up his shirt and grabbed his suit jacket, and ran down the stairs. "Can't be bothered going," he mumbled to no one in particular whilst pouring himself a drink. "Why do we need to go pray *again*?"

As Leah fixed her headband in place, similar thoughts entered her mind. Come on, she thought, does G-d really care if I go to synagogue or not?

Walking out of the house, together with her husband and two children, Mrs Kahn couldn't help but notice Michael and Leah's glum faces. It was Shabbat morning and whereas usually they were excited to go to the synagogue, today they did not seem so pleased.

"You both ok?" she asked, turning towards them. "Yeah I'm fine," they answered unanimously.

"Well, actually," Michael said after a moment of silent walking, "I was just wondering why we have to pray so much. I mean every day, again and again? What's the point?"

"Yeah," added Leah. "Do you think it would really bother G-d if we just didn't go to synagogue?"

“Well, that’s a good question. Do you know why we pray? In the time of the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple, the Jews used to offer up Korbanot – Offerings to G-d. Now that we have no Temple, and so can no longer offer up sacrifices we say prayers instead. That is our way of connecting with G-d. ”

Both Michael and Leah thought for a moment, digesting these words.

Suddenly Mr Kahn, who had been quietly listening, added, “In fact in this week’s Sedra – Pinchas, it talks about the different Korbanot-Offerings brought for Shabbat and for the different festivals. But you know what’s interesting? Although the word Korban is generally translated to mean an offering or sacrifice, it actually comes from the word karev which means to come close. Because, like Mum said, praying to G-d is now our way of coming close to G-d and having a personal relationship with Him. Praying is not just about asking G-d for things we need. It’s how we have a relationship with G-d as individuals.”

“Wow, so you mean now when we go into the synagogue to pray we are each coming closer to G-d? Cool!” Michael grinned with enthusiasm. “And I guess if praying is how we have a relationship with G-d, then that explains why we pray so much!”

“Exactly Michael!” Mr and Mrs. Kahn both smiled.

“Y’know,” said Leah as the synagogue slowly came into view, “I hear what you say about praying meaning a lot. But you have to *do* good things as well.”

“You’re right,” said her mother. “There’s prayer and action. Both are important.”

“But now is the time for prayer,” said Leah, as she turned towards the women’s section of the synagogue, smiling sweetly.

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