



LEADERSHIP: MAKING THE CONNECTION

ONE OF THE RECURRENT THEMES IN LIFE IS THAT OF LEADERSHIP. There is political leadership, leadership in the workplace, leading figures in culture and the arts, Jewish leadership.

Jewish leadership? What is that? Jewish statesmen in the British Cabinet? Leading figures in the Israeli Government? Famous Jewish sportsmen? Authors? Rabbis? And what does Jewish leadership *do*?

The Sedra¹ this week provides some insights into the function of leadership. Moses is the paradigm for Jewish leadership, and the Sedra starts with G-d addressing Moses and telling him: “You (Moses) shall command the Jewish people, and they will bring you clear olive oil for giving light...”

On the face of it, this is simply saying that the Jewish people should bring olive oil for the golden Candelabrum (Menorah) which will be lit in the Sanctuary. However, this is not the only way to understand these words in the Sedra.

The Hebrew word *tetzaveh*, “command”, has also another meaning: *connect*. The Sages explain that Moses is being told that he has the task to connect the people with G-d. How does he attempt to achieve this? By arousing the spiritual power latent in every individual, the power of the soul.

In practical terms Moses strives to achieve this by means of teaching, communicating and inspiring. Throughout the Torah we see him trying to do this, often coping with very difficult situations. One could also say, Moses carries out this task this by virtue of his own personal dedication and self-sacrifice. Apart from any other qualities, Moses was simply an inspiring example, helping people appreciate what it means to be a Jew.

The effect of Moses, when he inspires and arouses the souls of the people, is to enable each person to discover his or her own unique spiritual illumination. This is then figuratively “brought to Moses”, for Moses unifies all the individual points of radiance so as to create the grand spiritual force of the Jewish people acting together, with love².

This provides a glimpse of the force of Jewish leadership. The Sages tell us that through the generations there are figures who in some sense are the equivalent of Moses, who strive to act in this way. In the time of the Persian exile, for example, Mordechai was just such a leader. Next Friday (14 February) it will be ‘Purim Katan’, the Little Purim, bringing to mind the Purim story. Mordechai inspired the Jews to stand up for being Jewish at a time when they were facing a terrible threat of extermination by the evil Haman. The Sages of the following generations - including the modern period - continue this chain.

Closest to our own time there was the Lubavitcher Rebbe (d.1994), whose teachings fill many volumes, and help to show us the challenge and the joy in being a Jew in the modern world. The Rebbe’s particular focus was on the teaching “Love your neighbour as yourself”³. Connecting with others, we help connect both ourselves and those around us to G-d, through study and observance of the Torah.

Jewish leadership helps us survive in a difficult world by connecting us with G-d and with each other. Through this we will fulfil the true purpose of Creation: to make the world a dwelling for the Divine.

1. Exodus 27:20-30:10. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s discourse *Ve-Atah Tetzaveh* 5741. 3. Leviticus 19:18.

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SEDRA TETZAVEH

NO PUBLICITY PLEASE...?

"Guess what Leah! The school is making a Tzedaka campaign to raise money for the school library!"

Debbi burst into the bedroom where her twin sister Leah was lying in bed, feeling miserable with the flu. "The headmistress says that whoever raises the most money is going to have their name written on a plaque in the library. We all have to sell raffle tickets. I got five books for me and five for you. Let's see who can sell the most!"

The twins got very busy over the next few days, selling raffle tickets to friends, neighbours, relatives, e-mail pals and even the postman. (Debbi did wonder what the latter would do with a silver Menorah - the first prize - if he won it, since he was not Jewish).

One day Leah came in looking very pleased with herself. "I just went to visit Aunt Ida, and she said she would buy twenty books of raffle tickets. She thinks it's a very worthy cause."

"Oh wow!" Debbi cried. "That's amazing. Leah, for sure you'll be written on that plaque for selling the most. You're so lucky."

"Oh, actually I told Aunt Ida that she should buy the tickets from *you*," Leah said casually. "She said you should bring her the tickets tomorrow".

Debbi's mouth dropped open. "Leah! Why did you do that? That's so nice of you!"

"Well, not really." Leah blushed a little. "Remember what we were taught yesterday in school about the Golden Altar in the Sanctuary? How it's written about all by itself, in Sedra Tetzaveh instead of in last week's Sedra where all the other objects that went in the Sanctuary are described?"

Debbi nodded.

Leah continued. "Miss Ross explained that the highest type of service in the Sanctuary was the offering of the incense, on the Golden Altar. For this offering, only one priest was allowed inside. There was just him and G-d. Miss Ross said from this we learn that it's better to do some Mitzvot privately. Like giving Charity. So I thought it's better not to have my name on the plaque."

"But, wait a minute," said Debbie, "don't you remember that Miss Ross went on to say that sometimes it's good to publicise the fact that you are giving charity, because that also encourages other people to give."

"Oh, you're right", said Leah, "I forgot about that".

"So this is what we will do" said Debbie. We will both give Aunt Ida the raffle books, ten from each of us. And then maybe we will get our names on the plaque – and maybe someone else will."

"Okay," said Leah. "Anyway the main thing is getting the books for the Library".

"And reading them!", said Debbie.

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