



A LEADER IS BORN

Throughout the ages there have been many great leaders who have inspired thousands in their generation. Some continue to inspire us to this day. Many words come to mind when the word leader is mentioned; conviction, courage, nobility, idealist. Yet the word, as highly charged as it is, remains ambiguous and means different things to different people.

In looking closely at the story of Moses, a certain pattern emerges that connects all the seemingly disparate parts of his life's events.

The tale begins when Moses one day decides to leave Pharaoh's palace and take a stroll amongst his people. The contrast is vivid; from a world of power and wealth to a helpless and enslaved people. He is brought up in one world, but knows he comes from another. Perhaps, he thinks, I can reconcile the two worlds. Suddenly however, something happens that changes his world forever and sets him on a course from which there is no return. He sees an Egyptian beating a Jew (perhaps the first anti-Semitic incident ever to be recorded) and it is here that a leader is born.

He can ignore the incident completely and pretend he did not see it or that there is not much he can do to make a difference. He could also argue that by getting involved, perhaps he would jeopardise his position of influence in the palace from where he would be more effective in the future. His response however, is immediate as it is unequivocal. Without hesitation, he comes to the defence of an individual Jew whom he does not know, notwithstanding the consequences.

The same point is even more pronounced in the story told by the *Midrash*. Moses was a shepherd like many of his ancestors. One day, as he is managing his flock, he notices that a single sheep is missing. Immediately, he goes to search for the stray animal. It was at this point

the *Midrash* tells us that G-d chose Moses as a leader for the Jewish people.

A leader is someone who has total empathy with his people – regardless of the difficulties in which they find themselves. He does not concern himself with the intricacies of long term strategic thinking, nor is he thinking about the response of the masses or those in power. He cares for all his people unconditionally, especially those who have strayed. He acts decisively and unequivocally.

This week's *Parshah* is not just about the birth of a people but just as importantly the birth of a leader. A leader who led his people out of exile by demonstrating his unconditional love for each and every one of them. A leader who inspired them to believe that exile was not the end game and that a life of freedom from tyranny awaited them. A leader who in the words of the *Zohar* has impregnated within every one of us a part of him.

May that part of Moses within us manifest itself in all our endeavours.

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