

Decisive Leadership

By: Yosef Vogel

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, yet the word - as highly charged as it is - remains ambiguous.

Perhaps the greatest leader in history was our first leader, Moses. He led the Jewish people at the birth of our history, took them out of slavery and prepared them for revelation at Mount Sinai. Although not much is said about his character, if we look closely at the verses that introduces him, a certain pattern emerges which brings together all the seemingly disparate episodes of his life story.

His emergence as a mature adult begins with a story. One day he leaves the palace and takes a walk amongst his people. The contrast is vivid. He comes from a world of wealth and power and enters a world where his people are helpless and enslaved.. Although he is brought up in one world his heart tells him he comes from another. Perhaps he wonders, he can reconcile the two worlds. However, all this change as suddenly, 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 here that a leader is born.

At this point he has two options. He can choose to ignore the incident completely by arguing quite compellingly, that there is not much he can do to make a difference. And besides, perhaps he might jeopardise his position of influence in the palace from where he could be more effective in the future. Or he could choose to take a decisive stand and act with conviction when faced with a grave injustice being perpetrated against an innocent victim.

It is at this point that his core being was provoked and his response is immediate as it is unequivocal. He comes to the defence of an individual Jew whom he does not know, without hesitation, notwithstanding the consequences.

A leader is someone who has total empathy with each and every one of his people. He does not concern himself with how those in power might react. Nor does he spend time thinking about the long term strategic intricacies of the impact his actions might have. A great leader is able to act decisively and unequivocally, because his greatest concern is not for himself but for his people.

The Zohar teaches us that there is little part of Moses within every one of us. May that part of Moses within us manifest itself especially in moments of uncertainty.

13 January

Shemot

Shabbat Begins: 4:02 pm

Shabbat Ends: 5:11 pm