

Idealism vs. Pragmatism

By: Yosef Vogel

When G-d asked Moses to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt, he initially resisted. Eventually after much convincing he agreed. One of the conditions he set was that Aaron would join him. As we find at each stage of negotiation with Pharaoh, it was both Moses and Aaron who played an integral role in communicating G-d's message to him. Why was this so paramount?

Our sages explain that Moses represents "Truth" while Aaron embodies "Compassion".

Whilst these two traits are distinct from each other, it is only through the pairing of these great leaders who represent these two cardinal attributes that the maximum impact on a people is achieved.

In our own lives we find that we are constantly fluctuating in our behaviour, between the pure ideals in which we believe and a more realistic approach which recognizes our inherent weaknesses. In our relationship with our family and friends others and the influence we hope to have on them we are also confronted with the same dilemma. To what extent do we hope to have an impact on their lives? Should we hope for an ideal level of behaviour or for something more realistic?

As with most conflicts in life, the ideal lies in the reconciliation of the two opposing forces concerned. Whilst "truth" is an ideal backdrop against which we should all strive towards, it has its limits in its inability to empathize with real life and people. Compassion on the other hand, whilst it can connect with people and understand complex situations, it has no moral compass.

It is only when we appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of these two powerful forces within us and being able to use them both in a balanced way, that we can achieve maximum results in our own lives and in the lives those we seek to influence.

20 January

Vaeira

Shabbat Begins: 4:13 pm

Shabbat Ends: 5:22 pm