



Parashat Vayeshev



English version

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LEADERSHIP WAZE

Most people think that the qualities necessary to become a leader are virtues such as honesty, integrity, the ability to be committed and passionate, communication skills, decision-making capabilities, accountability, delegation, creativity, etc. etc. Those are all important, but they are not the key virtue.

According to President Eisenhower, *Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.* The difference between a leader and a manager is that a leader is able to set a vision for someone else and help inspire them to reach that vision. A manager just manages, but does not lead. The list above are traits that may be important for managing, but not as crucial for leading.

People ask others to lead them, in all areas of life. It could be not such important decisions, such as choosing the right dish in a restaurant. My wife does not like it when I ask the waiter what is the most common dish in the restaurant. She says that I should just order what I want, not what most people want. But I like my food fresh, and usually the freshest is the item that sells the most. Or, it could be bigger life decisions, like what type of partner in life is most suitable, what type of career to choose, or how to bring up children and direct students. And it is up to you to decide if you want to be able to help those people to do what you want them to do *because they want to do it.* So, the golden question is, how do we genuinely lead others?

R Yeshaya from Krastir, a.k.a the "Rat Rabbi" (famous for his picture that repels rats, ridding infested areas of them), was among the most humble of Hassidic Rebbes. Someone approached R Yeshaya and confided in him. "Rabbi, I want to commit suicide." "How do you want to do it?" "I want to jump out of the window of my fourth floor apartment."

The Rabbi responded, "Oh. What a shame. Such a respectable man. To die in such a fashion. Eyes here, nose there. Arms and Legs scattered on the floor. Isn't there a better way to do this?" The man thought a bit. "Okay, Rabbi. So, I'll jump into the raging river." "Oh. What a shame. Such a nice, sweet guy like you, not to have even a proper burial! Isn't there another way?"... Until the person realized his worth. Until he realized that someone accepts him, someone respects him, and someone loves him. He finally found a person who would admire him for who he is, and not judge him for who he is not. This is an example of subtly leading a person to the choice that he subconsciously wants to make.

Ever wonder how, when Yaakov came to Charan with nothing but a walking stick, the first thing he did was to rebuke the local shepherds at the well? *הָיוּ עֹדֵי הַיּוֹם גְּדוּל לֹא-עֵת הָאֶסְפָּר הַמְקַנְנָה הַשְּׂקִי הַצֵּאָן וּלְכוּ רְעוּ: The day is still long; it is not yet time to gather in the flocks; water the sheep, and let them graze ...* Why would they listen to him? Would you listen to a homeless foreigner who told you what to do or what not to do?



The answer is simple. Yaakov did not *first* give rebuke. Before he gave rebuke, he said... אָתִי מֵאַיִן אַתֶּם. *My brothers, where are you from?* He first showed Affection, by calling them “my brothers”. And then, Attention, by asking *where they are from*. The R Yeshaya was able to help this suicidal character by treating him like a person, a friend, not like a “character”.

It is so interesting to watch Yosef's life unfold. What got him into trouble was telling his brothers his prophetic dreams. The Malbim helps us understand the conversation between Yosef and the brothers. After Yosef tells them the first dream of the sheaves, that his bundle of grain will rise amongst his brothers' bundles, and the brothers' bundle would surround the bundle of Yosef and bow down to it; the brothers' response was הֲמֶלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם-מִשׁוּל תִּמְשַׁל בָּנוּ *Will you be king over us? If you will rule over us?* What was the double talk? And why aren't the words in both cases parallel? Why, in the Hebrew, does the word "if" appear?

The Malbim writes that there is a difference between a מלך and a מושל. A מלך is someone who is appointed out of the will of the people, a leader (the word מלך is similar to the word מוליך), while a מושל is a ruler that rose to power by force. So, the Malbim continues... The brothers were challenging Yosef's prophecy by bringing to his attention the contradiction that the dream entailed. והִנֵּה קָמָה אֶלְמָתִי וְגַם-נִצָּבָה וְהִנֵּה תִסְבִּינָה אֶלְמָתֶיךָ. *And behold - my bundle arose (amongst the bundles), and it also stood strong. While your bundles surrounded my bundle...* The first part of the dream connotes that Yosef would rule his brothers against their will. *And behold - my bundle arose*. But then, the dream says, *While your bundles surrounded my bundle, and bowed to it*, which seems to indicate that the brothers willingly accepted Yosef as their ruler...

This is the meaning in the two-part question; *Will you be king over us (a leader), if you are a ruler over us?* Yosef, once you try ruling, you can't lead! Being above, managing, is contradictory to leading. The same person cannot be both a leader and a

ruler! (Ultimately the prophetic dream turned into a reality. Yosef actually started off as a ruler to his brothers, but eventually they accepted his leadership.)

So, Yosef burnt his relationships with his brothers by telling them of his dreams that he would be above them and by giving them the feeling that he wanted to rule over them. By giving them the feeling that he did not care if they wanted his guidance or not. And once the damage was done, no matter how much Yosef wanted to restore the feeling of brotherhood, אֶת-אָתִי אֲנִי מִבְּקֶשׁ, it was too late. No one wanted Yosef as a brother anymore.

Fast-forward 12 years. Yosef finds himself in jail, as a slave who was accused for immoral behavior with his master's wife. What got him out of all his mess? What brought Yosef out of his situation? What got the ball rolling, to take him from the bottom of civilization to the leader of the world? Listen closely to his first words, when he met the Butler and the Baker in prison. When he saw them looking confused in the morning after their dreams, he asked them הֲיִזְמוּן הַיּוֹם מִדְּרוֹעַ פְּנִיכֶם רְעִים הֵיִתָּם *why do you look so sad today?* From there, Yosef became known as the interpreter of dreams, and was brought to Pharaoh... and the rest is history.

Real leadership is not taking over the steering wheel. It is much more like being the Waze for the driver. It is about putting your will aside, so that the will of others will shine. It has been said that the Hebrew word רשע, is an acronym of the words רצון של עצמי. Concentrating on one's own desires negates one's ability to recognize the needs of others. And it negates one's ability to recognize the Will of G-d. Without the awareness of the will of others, one can never be a true leader.

So, if you want to lead those you love, instead of asking yourself what *you* need in the relationship, ask what *they* need in the relationship. Instead of asking yourself what is bothering *you*, ask yourself what is bothering them. Instead of thinking of how you wished your dream spouse/ child/ parent/ boss would be, think of what *their dreams of you* would be... Then, and only then, will you be able to lead.

THE SECRET OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

Yosef, one of the most handsome men ever, was tested by Potifar's wife in a way that we cannot begin to fathom. The seduction was obsessive. This wicked woman threatened to kill Yosef, to defame him and otherwise cause him harm. It would have been so much easier for him just to sin and get it over with. Whoever learns the Midrashim cannot believe the trials that the Midrash says this woman put him through. What gave Yosef the strength to avoid being with this seductive, married woman?

R' Zacharia Wallerstien draws a beautiful concept from here, a concept that he teaches all teachers, the secret to being the successful mentor. "Never give up belief in your students that they can turn around and become successful! Once you stop believing in the student, you have lost him!" As a coach, I know that the only way a coach can be successful is if he internalizes the following mantra: "There is an invisible sign hanging on everyone's neck, that reads, 'Please! I beg of you! Believe in me!'"

When Yosef was at the threshold of sin, he "saw" the reflection of his father's face in the bedroom, and that gave him the power to run out. What did he "see" that gave him this superhuman strength? The passuk says וַיִּמָּאן, *And Yosef refused* the seduction. The Taamim, the Trup, the tune for that word, is Shalsholet. The Shalsholet looks like a chain, and it is linked to the previous word וַיִּמָּאן that is written in the Parasha earlier. When Yaakov was told by his sons that Yosef was dead, וַיִּמָּאן, *he refused to accept consolation*. We know that it is inappropriate to mourn for a longer period than is allowed by Torah law. So, why did Yaakov refuse to be consoled as long as he lived? The answer is because he just could not believe the news; he could not accept that his son, in whom he had invested so much, in whom he had placed so

much hope, who was the source of his power to stand up against Esav, was really, really dead. He believed in Yosef, and he refused to give up on him. "Until I am shown his corpse, I will continue to believe that Yosef lives."

Yosef felt that! He felt that his father believed in him, long distance! He felt that his father did not give up on him, no matter where he would find himself! Egypt, the point of lowest morality on Earth, was not a place where Yosef would be weakened. Even in the face of almost irresistible temptation, Yosef knew that his father believed in him, and that he would remain the one and only, Yosef Hatzaddik! He is the only one with the title Tzaddik, for he is the only one who was able to remain righteous in a test like that, *where no one else believed in him!* No one else, except his own father! *If my father did not give up on me, how can I give up on myself?*

The greatest present you can give your son, the biggest favor you can do for your disciple is to honestly, sincerely, believe in him. Express it in whatever way you can. Believe that he can make it, believe that he can turn around! That is what your son needs from you, more than anything else you can give him! I know; I've coached orphans, and the only thing that gives them the strength to face life challenges on their own is knowing that their deceased father believes in them, long distance!

Until our last moment, G-d does not give up on us, either. עד יום מותו תחכה לו, G-d waits for a person to do Teshuva, until the last day, until the last breath, until there is a lifeless body! This is the greatest motivator for all of us to do Teshuva. For as long as G-d keeps us alive, that means He still believes that we can become who we need to become.

THE INNOCENCE OF CHEESE

There is a custom on Chanukah that women refrain from doing work while the candles of the Menorah

are burning. This custom commemorates the miraculous routing of Syrian Greek troops by



Yehudit, daughter of Mattityahu (Maccabee), the Kohen Gadol. Yehudit's victory took place on her wedding day in that terrible period when all Jewish brides were forced to be with the Greek general just before starting their marital life.

On that fateful day, Yehudit approached the general with a bag containing a flask of wine and a block of cheese. Once in seclusion with him, Yehudit opened her bag and offered the general a taste of enticing cheese. The general could not resist, and ate the salty cheese – which made him thirsty. Yehudit then made her next move: she offered the general the wine she had brought along so that he could quench his thirst. As she had hoped, the wine got the better of the general, who fell into a deep slumber. When the Greeks soldiers were shown that their leader had been assassinated, they fled for their lives. This well-known episode is also the source of the custom to eat dairy products during the eight day holiday of Chanukah.

Although this custom and story are well known, the deeper meaning is not. *Why do we commemorate the cheese, but not the wine? If Yehudit's plan was to get the general to sleep, then the main ingredient of her plot was wine. The cheese was just a means to the end of getting the general to thirst for wine. Why, then, do we ignore the wine, and make a big deal about the cheese?*

The answer is inspiring. Every *general knows not to drink wine in wartime*. Cheese, however, is not necessarily on the radar screen of a general at war. If Yehudit would have brought only wine, then her plot would not have gotten off the ground. The only way to have gotten the general to drink wine was to first give him some cheese that would make him thirsty. The failure of the general was in thinking that he could eat cheese, but not get thirsty enough to need a flask of wine to quench his thirst. This is why we commemorate the cheese, but not the wine.

We are all 'generals' in a battle to be better, more G-d fearing, observant Jews. Often we are confronted with temptations that could cause us to make mistakes. The obvious sin is more easily avoided. No one is ordering 'bacon and eggs', but sometimes we could fall into a trap of something (metaphorically, 'the cheese'). We may say to ourselves, 'There is nothing really wrong with this' or 'Only this one time' or rationalize to ourselves 'I know my limits, I won't go too far'. These and other similar situations cross the minds of many 'generals' in the battle for Torah values.

It is not the "wine" that we have to fear. "Cheese" is much more of a threat because it is, we tell ourselves, "only cheese."

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