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Sh'ma 

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Hierarchy — and the critical role of a leader in that hierarchy — has always existed in Judaism. Our leaders exhibit numerous qualities, and charisma — however intangible to fully understand or explain — is one quality of immense importance. Charisma comes into question anew as we wrestle again with the abuses of leaders within positions of power. This issue of *Sh'ma* explores the nature of the charismatic relationship in several contexts and addresses fundamental and poignant questions about how to transform leadership models to build trusting and safe relationships of intimacy and learning.

The Erotic Energy of the Rabbinate

Lori Hope Lefkowitz

Twenty years ago, I keynoted a faculty in-service with a gleeful lecture entitled, “The Erotics of Pedagogy.” I focused on how teachers shape their personal stories differently in different teaching contexts, ideally creating varied versions of themselves that seduce students into a love of the subject. I used the language of romance to describe my own mild nervousness before the start of the semester (“part excitement, part dread, like waiting for the doorbell before a first date”) and I contrasted, in deliberately sexualized terms, the different rhythms that we establish in lecture halls and in seminar rooms: An opening lecture for a large survey course is “breathless” because our time together is too short and “suggestive” in the hope that students, who may be having a “first experience” with this material, will sense that “deeper pleasures are possible if they do it again, more slowly and with others.” The yearlong seminar (more like a marriage than a whirlwind romance) begins slowly, and because the students are more anxious about their performance than the teacher, she tries to be warm and accessible, promising that commitment will be rewarded with deeper intimacy. She is deliberately withholding because “we have to like each other the next morning and the morning after that.”

I come back to that work now because a consideration of violations committed by charismatic rabbis might well begin by acknowledging that the rabbinate, like teaching, is an erotic business. In Symposium, Alcibiades makes clear the erotic effect of Socrates’ speech, representing the philosopher-student relationship as salvational and charged. In Phaedrus, Plato identifies the ideal love relationship as the educational one. When the Talmud, an extended celebration of the rabbinic enterprise, makes the point that the greater the man, the greater the *yetzer* (a word best translated, I think, as “libido”), magnetism is understood to be a feature of the rabbinic calling. What these foundation texts also share, however, is the premise that the teacher has a first allegiance to a transcendent truth, whether philosophy or Torah, and that the relationship between teacher and student is in service of that truth.

Feminism has sensitized us to power dynamics in all relationships, and today we appreciate that, as in the therapeutic relationship, the erotic energy between teacher and student is necessarily circumscribed, regulated, and managed. Conscious of serv-

ing a higher purpose, the professional always shoulders the burden of maintaining self-awareness and professional standards and checking any inappropriate ego-needs that could compromise a sacred trust.

Precisely because of the potential for abuse, we have to appreciate the erotics of pedagogy. Like a good meal or novel, a fine learning experience is a seduction, raising expectations, teasing, surprising, and satisfying. Projection and transference create confusions: "Isn't *midrash* wonderful? My *midrash* professor was thrilling." But if the teacher of Shakespeare can be confused for the Bard, who might the rabbi be in the unconscious? Alan Bennett's play, *The History Boys*, tells a story about the ease with which charismatic teachers can become God in their students' imagination and the case of teachers who need to be God and take advantage of that identification.

Who doesn't remember being in love with a teacher, even if the only exchange of words were those submitted in a term paper and the comments returned on the final page? Students know their teachers' passions, and teachers can look into the wide eyes of a fine student and mistake the object of love. Managed self-disclosure contributes to feelings of intimacy. A rabbi may speak annually from the pulpit on the High Holidays with an uncomplicated faith in the God who gave the Torah on Mount Sinai, but the students in her adult education class, especially those who have attended with devotion for years, harbor a privileged knowledge of the rabbi's more nuanced understanding of God and Sinai, and the congregant who had her own theological crisis and had long, helpful conversations in the rabbi's study, smiles with an inner awareness of the complexity of the rabbi's beliefs and doubts.

In the past few years, scholars have asked what should be next on the agenda of Jewish feminism. In preparation for one such delib-

eration, I queried my rabbinical students, who reported that high on their list was what they called "rebbe-ism" — neo-hasidic educational models that espouse democratic values and the inclusion of women even as they maintain old-world hierarchies. In other words, charismatic leadership needs a feminist analysis.

We do know that the classroom in the round does not undo hierarchy. We should also admit that life well lived is often erotic, made of masked selves and multiple personae; and relationships are inevitably hierarchic, even if there are playful shifts in dominance. We therefore depend upon our professionals to police their boundaries. Historically, when a rabbi was guilty of violations, he often left his position to do the same work elsewhere under the cover that we need to retain our most charismatic leaders. (The community — like a victim of domestic abuse — can feel complicit, loyal, or voyeuristic toward such leaders.) Today, conventional wisdom suggests a several-year suspension, time for analysis and introspection, and after serious *teshuvah* — a return to the job may be possible.

I disagree. When we support a charismatic teacher in the belief that he alone is needed to be a teacher of Torah, we support the very hubris that allowed that teacher to confuse himself for the object of love. Only by abdicating his role can the charismatic rabbi who has violated sexual boundaries begin the work of *teshuvah*. The rabbi's professional history must remain transparent in future employment searches, and he must do work where his history has little potential to have traumatizing effects. There is good work that rabbis can do without the *title* rabbi. Just as an alcoholic should forever avoid strong drink, it is precisely because the rabbinate and teaching are erotic businesses that healing from abusive behavior is signaled by leaving the profession — humbly and for good. 

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Since the days when the rabbis chose to omit Moses' name from the haggadah, charismatic leadership has been seen as having a dangerous dark side, carrying a risk of *avodah zarah* — worshipping a leader instead of God. It may be that the association to *avodah zarah* comes from the roots of the word charisma, which are Greek and Christian. Charisma comes from the Greek root "charis," meaning "grace" or "favor." Interestingly, in Greek, the word charisma is mostly found in the New Testament, meaning "a gift from God," i.e., Jesus. By the time the word comes into English, it is defined more ecumenically as "a gift bestowed by God." There is no Hebrew word for charisma; the Alcalay dictionary translates charisma as *kedusha*. (When I asked Israelis to translate for me, the answer I inevitably got was "kareezma.")

—Anne Ebersman

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Charisma and Narcissism in the Jewish Community

Naomi Mark

In the Greek myth, Echo loves Narcissus, but she has lost the ability to form her own words. Though she waits for his acknowledgement, he is unable to notice her, and both characters die tragically and alone. Had Narcissus been able to 'hear' Echo, a different ending might have unfolded. What is that mysterious and complex force at play in Narcissus?

Among psychologists who have studied charisma, psychoanalyst and scholar Heinz Kohut has noticed the strong correlation between charisma and narcissism. Describing the narcissistic personality, he noted the high energy levels, the apparent confidence and lack of self-doubt, and the strong sense of mission. (This is not to say that all narcissists are charismatic or that all charismatics are narcissistic.) As in most mental health frameworks, though, a continuum of personality traits exists, and while categorical constructs serve to create order and understanding, there is a very wide range between what is considered "healthy narcissism" and what is considered "excessive" or "pathological." As Freud noted, we are all somewhat narcissistic, and reasonable doses of narcissism can be useful and necessary in order for us to assert our needs, be productive, and achieve great things. In fact, those with this personality type (within the range of normality) are often especially suited to leadership roles, given their risk-taking tendencies, their confidence, and their ability to inspire. Narcissism becomes pathological when the grandiosity, fantasies of success, lack of empathy, excessive need for attention and approval, and inability to tolerate threats to self-esteem interfere with the individual's functioning in work and love.

Exploring the psychological aspects of charisma is complex and today urgent as well. What psychological factors contribute to the making of a charismatic leader? What is the relationship between leadership and personality type? How do we weigh the benefits of charisma as a positive phenomenon that inspires and transforms people with the propensity for abusing its power?

One of the outstanding characteristics of a charismatic is charm. People with charisma

are often exceptionally skilled socially; aware of their own need to be acknowledged, they make others feel good through compliments and admiration. To compensate for their own inability to truly empathize, narcissists often attempt to activate other talents such as social finesse, which enables them to gain more control over their world. For the followers, being a part of an important social movement offers an opportunity for transcendence and meaning. It is not hard to imagine how this dynamic feeds off itself. It is also apparent how a narcissistic need to feel special and receive public acclaim may attract certain personality types to communal leadership positions, especially the rabbinate where congregations and students can provide an ongoing supply of admiring followers. While most people in

What distinguishes someone with a character disorder is the pervasive pattern, the inability to experience guilt or remorse, and the tendency to externalize responsibility for the inappropriate behavior.

leadership positions use narcissism in healthy ways, the celebrity status that can accompany some leadership positions is a strong magnet for the unhealthy narcissist who craves attention and recognition.

How might we begin to distinguish between "anti-social" and "pro-social" leaders, "personalized" and "socialized" charismatic leadership? Or, as psychoanalysts may prefer, how do we distinguish between "productive" and "unproductive" narcissism? Socialized leaders and productive narcissists are capable of some degree of self-reflection, perspective, and humor in face of negative feedback or criticism. The litmus test, in a nutshell, seems to be the extent to which the leader is capable of accepting limitations, is able to empower others, invite and be responsive to feedback and advice, thereby keeping the narcissism in check. Is the charismatic leader able to recede when necessary, adhere to societal rules and a higher moral code? While many people have narcissistic traits and all of us can behave nar-

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cissistically at times, what distinguishes someone with a character disorder is the pervasive pattern, the inability to experience guilt or remorse, and the tendency to externalize responsibility for the inappropriate behavior. These distinctions usually become clear over time and in some situations can be kept in check when structures are in place to limit the leader's power preventatively.

Another way of understanding the relationship between charisma and narcissism is explained in Marie Fortune's *Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship Workshop Manual*. She suggests that we consider viewing clergy sexual abusers on a continuum between two extreme types: "The Wanderer" who wanders across boundaries due to self-control difficulties, and the "Predator" who seeks out victims deliberately and is lacking in conscience. Along the continuum are those with "acquired situational narcissism" who, as a

result of their charisma, become carried away by the newfound power and success. In these cases, charismatic leaders can overestimate their capabilities; they develop an overpowering sense of self-importance and a distorted sense of their own limits. At one end of the continuum is someone who cannot be helped, and this must be acknowledged. But at the other end are people who can rather easily be helped; a whole spectrum lays in between.

For many, charisma offers a release from being tethered to the attachments of conventionality. As such, the attraction to leaders with "prophetic charisma" may be part of the human condition as we naturally seek to transcend the mundane aspects of our daily lives. Echo had reason to love Narcissus. His charisma, his alluring offer of escape from the ordinary was real and, indeed, alluring. While insightful therapy tries to heal, mythology can only warn.



Disciples, Rebbes & Jewish Renewal

Chava Weissler

American society views charismatic leaders with suspicion: we picture the fictional corrupt preacher Elmer Gantry or the all-too-historical populist demagogue, Huey Long. Such leaders go against the democratic grain, the deeply held principle that all humans are created equal. We fear their power to mislead their followers, to play on their needs or their ideals for their own psychological, sexual, material, or political ends.

American Judaism has, for the most part, adopted the American democratic model, giving unprecedented power to the laity in Jewish communal institutions. Certain groups within the American Jewish community do, however, hark back to earlier, more hierarchical models of leadership. For example, most Orthodox Jews defer to recognized halakhic authorities, although for the most part these leaders have been respected more for their scholarly achievements than their personal charisma. Only in Hasidism has the charismatic figure of the rebbe maintained its power.

Until recently. With the turn toward spirituality in American Judaism has come recognition of the value and power of charismatic leadership. A spiritual journey most often be-

gins with the search for a teacher, a guide and mentor along the path. For many, finding a spiritual master is essential to the quest for deepened understanding and enhanced spiritual practice, whether it is daily meditation or daily *davvenen*. Nonetheless, putting oneself in the hands of a spiritual teacher is always a risk — as is a commitment to any intimate relationship. The master-disciple relationship, like the therapist-client relationship, has particular potential for abuse in that it almost always begins with the disciple giving up personal power to the spiritual master. Will the teacher have the maturity, discipline, and healthy boundaries to put the student's needs first?

The hasidic model of the rebbe-disciple relationship plays an important role in ALEPH — Alliance for Jewish Renewal, founded by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi in 1968 as B'nai Or. Coming out of Lubavitch Hasidism, Reb Zalman (as he is known to his followers) has shaped ALEPH as a "neo-hasidic" movement and done much to rethink the role of rebbe. Arthur Waskow tells the story of a gathering at which Reb Zalman sat at the head of the table and "said Torah." After about fifteen minutes, he said, "Okay, now everyone move

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over one seat.” Someone new was in the “rebbe chair,” and that person now “said Torah,” and so it went, around the table. That is, Reb Zalman was helping each person find the “rebbe within,” the spark of the charismatic leader deep in one’s own soul.

The goal of all spiritual teachers should be to enable the disciple to “do it for herself.” But sometimes, the power that the disciple gives to the teacher is abused and used to aggrandize the teacher. This happens more often when the teacher is seen as the only vehicle through whom the student can reach spiritual ecstasy.

Recently, a situation arose in which the pitfalls of ALEPH’S commitment to charismatic leadership were made very clear. In May of 2006, several women lodged a formal complaint of sexual misconduct with the Israeli police against a popular and charismatic teacher who often appeared at the group’s events. For many years, there had been suspicions about his domineering behavior in classes and services and ambitions to use the network as a power base, as well as rumors of sexual misbehavior. ALEPH’s leadership had placed certain conditions, restrictions, and even surveillance on his activities. Nonetheless, he was much in demand — as a popular teacher, he increased attendance at Renewal events — and there was a reluctance to exclude him altogether. But in the wake of the explicit revelation of his behavior, the leadership severed all ties with him. Further, both the leadership and the membership, including some of his close disciples, took stock of their own complicity, asking how they could have been taken in and how they could better have protected themselves and others. The incident was especially troubling because ALEPH already had in place a clear official statement about the ethics of the teacher-disciple relationship and tools for enforcing it. Why, then, had this “dangerous, toxic person” been allowed to continue his association with ALEPH for so long?

A vigorous discussion of the issue took place on the organization’s list-serve over the next several weeks. Many of the contributors to the discussion were prominent (and charismatic) teachers in the Jewish Renewal community. Among the issues raised were the difficulty in proceeding against someone if the only evidence is persistent rumors; the

need to encourage those injured to be able to come forth with concrete accusations; the need to make the procedures for lodging complaints more widely known in the movement. Solutions, including the founding of a supportive *beit hesed* to receive the complaints in confidence, were proposed.

But the most difficult issues raised were less amenable to administrative solutions: “how to walk that thin line between spiritual ecstasy and ... domineering frenzy” were the words of one list-serve contributor. Another pointed out the dangers of the hierarchical rebbe-student relationship, especially one that disempowers the student: “Student-

How does one walk the thin line between spiritual ecstasy and domineering frenzy?

teacher relationships not grounded in active learning are ripe for abuse... [T]he spiritual challenge [is] to deconstruct the system of values which continues to make this behavior possible.” Directly articulating the problem, another correspondent wrote: “I realize that there is inherently something amiss with the whole guru idea... We give the guru all the more energy, power, and position. We feed the guru while we starve ourselves — of our own light, our own insight, and our own knowing...” In the same vein, someone called for “the help of the community in creating a culture that encourages each of us, all of us, to see ourselves as rebbes, able to be in touch with God.”

Such introspection is all to the good. Yet, despite the presence of many responsible, conscientious teachers in ALEPH — and the awareness of the pitfalls of charismatic leaders — this problem is unlikely to disappear. As one contributor to the list-serve remarked, “The energy around [this teacher] was guru- and cult-like, but it is that energy that attracts people. It is seductive and dangerous.” Those who seek powerful spiritual experiences are vulnerable to a teacher who offers frenzied ecstasy instead. Thus, if Jewish Renewal values the cultivation of a deep and intense awareness of the Divine presence, the danger of the abuse of the rebbe-disciple relationship is always present. A turn toward spirituality brings both the promise and the perils of charismatic leadership in its wake.

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Genug: Time for a Change

Jacob Ner-David

Ten years ago I reconnected with Mordechai Gafni in Jerusalem. I had first met him as a thirteen-year-old in Camp Lavi, and then a few years later we were both arrested at a Soviet Jewry protest. Over the years I heard vague stories about him, but never paid much attention to the rumors or hearsay. As an activist often in the public eye, I knew how little merit those rumors usually held.

Mordechai shared with me his dreams and visions for the future of the Jewish people, Jewish thought, and the world, which closely matched my thinking — just expressed a lot more eloquently and with more passion. I found in Mordechai, and then Avraham Leader, partners to transform Jewish life in Israel; together we created Bayit Chadash. Although sometimes Leader and I wonder whether we should have suspected Mordechai was hiding untold stories from us, we didn't. We had “checked him out” with, among others, Avraham Infeld, then president of Melitz. Bayit Chadash grew — much of it due to Mordechai's charismatic leadership. By the sixth year of working together, we had created a powerful brand, and we were connecting with thousands of Israelis. And then...

When Mordechai's marriage ended, he mentioned he was interested in “meeting people” — but quickly stated that he would never “date” a student or staff person at Bayit Chadash; unfortunately he did both. All of the women with whom he had relationships were sworn into silence. But this past spring, at Pesach, we celebrated JuBu, a festival in the Judean desert devoted to dialogue between Judaism and Buddhism. Before, during, and just after the few days in the desert, women came to Avraham and me to tell a story of how Mordechai had abused the teacher-student relationship. The stories were very different and all the same.

In consultation with the Bayit Chadash Board and the women involved, we removed Mordechai immediately from the staff of Bayit Chadash. We hoped that this series of transgressions and our response to the abuse would put an end to his ability to resurface somewhere else. Charismatic leadership had covered up a deep and tragic sickness for too long. We felt sullied by our trust in him, and in order to right a deep and tragic wrong, we

decided to inform the world that Mordechai suffers from what is perhaps an incurable disease, and he should never again be put in a position that could lead to replaying the past. We knew this decision would obliterate what we had spent seven years building, and today Bayit Chadash is no longer. But we have no regrets about our decision.

We are so thirsty for leadership in the Jewish world today that many of us are ready to overlook a lot. But the time has come for us to say *GENUG!* We cannot maintain leaders whose personal lives are anathema to the broad ethics of how we should live, work, and play. We cannot imbue power in a person of great charisma who has a murky past without investigating that past. Though we must avoid the “witch hunt,” which can seriously destroy the reputation of an innocent if questionable character, we must establish avenues so that victims of abuse can safely step forward with their experiences. And we must not cover up the bad behavior of our leaders because it is shameful. We must demand a lot more of ourselves and our community. Hopefully, our decision at Bayit Chadash will help other communities stand up and take painful but oh-so-necessary action. And may we be blessed with leaders who represent the best that we have to bring to the world. 

Discussion Guide

Bringing together myriad voices and experiences provides *Sh'ma* readers with an opportunity in a few very full pages to explore a topic of Jewish interest from a variety of perspectives. To facilitate a fuller discussion of the ideas, we offer the following questions:

1. What factors contribute to the making of a charismatic leader?
2. Can rabbis and other communal leaders continue to serve in leadership positions after they have admitted previous sexual misconduct?
3. How do we safeguard the close, and hierarchical, relationship of student and rabbi?
4. Can charisma be taught?

Jacob Ner-David is married to Haviva, and they live in Jerusalem with their children Michal, Adin, Meira, Hallel, and Nachum. Jacob's blog is www.vcinjerusalem.typepad.com.

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Whither the Presidency?

Asher Maoz

The birth of the institution of the presidency in Israel occurred in error — some might say even deceptively — and is connected with two prominent leaders of the 20th-century Zionist movement: Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion. Weizmann, who was president of the World Zionist Organization, lost the “birthright” to Ben Gurion because of Weizmann’s moderate political attitude. Two days after the establishment of the state, Weizmann — on a political mission in Washington — was surprised by a telegram from Ben Gurion: “we will see you as head of the state that will be established in peace.” This was viewed by some as a noble move; the prime minister expressing his esteem to the elder statesman. Others saw a Machiavellian exercise in which Ben Gurion tried to get rid of a political opponent who still enjoyed the respect of many. Weizmann was under no illusion that he was being offered the equivalent status of president of the United States, but he also did not think that Ben Gurion was offering a symbolic position, like president of France. He hoped for a status equivalent to the president of Italy, which would include presiding over the sessions of the government with the ministers having the right to consult with him. Ben Gurion quickly clarified that this was not his intention. Indeed, when Weizmann came to one of the government’s meetings and sat down at the head of the table, Ben Gurion did not stop him, but made it clear that this was a one-time event not to be repeated. As to the ministers’ right to consult with the president, Ben Gurion noted that everyone was entitled to consult with whomever he wished, “even with the president of the state.”

Following Weizmann’s death, Yitzhak Ben Zvi became the second president of Israel, symbolizing a change from an aristocratic image of the presidency to a popular one. Ben Zvi shaped the presidency as an institution that united all factions of the nation and was above political controversy. Further changes occurred during the terms of other presidents. For example, Zalman Shazar, a scholar and historian, opened the president’s residence to intellectuals from around the globe and established the President’s Forum to discuss the problems of contemporary Jewish people.

The current president, Moshe Katzav, came to the presidency through political activity and was, possibly, planning on returning to political life — perhaps seeing the position as a springboard for the race for head of the Likud party. He is the first president to be elected from within an immigrant group who came to Israel after the establishment of the state.

In Israel, while the president stands at the head of the state, he does not serve as head of the executive. His powers are mostly ceremonial and include: opening the Knesset plenary session, signing laws and treaties with foreign countries approved by the Knesset, officially appointing judges and other senior office holders, accrediting the diplomatic representatives of the state of Israel, and accepting the accreditation of foreign diplomats. The president has three tasks with real power. The first is the authority to assign the task of forming a government on a Knesset member. The second is to approve the prime minister’s initiative to disperse the Knesset if a majority of the Knesset opposes the government. The third power is to pardon criminals and commute their sentences. Even these powers are limited; his decision to pardon criminals, for example, is subject to the Minister of Justice’s approval.

Some claim that the president’s limited authority is the very source of his strength. “His elevated and separate position,” explained former Supreme Court President Moshe Landau, “makes him eligible to represent values of social ethics that are not entrenched in political controversy but are at times necessary to remind the public.” Indeed, although most presidents came from the world of politics, they usually maintained a neutral political position in their work (with a few exceptions). Moreover, the claim has been raised that the president serves as a uniting sovereign figure. Others claim that in a society as polarized as Israel there is no realistic room for such a task.

An essential shift in Israeli society, from a society of immigrants to a society with a native-born majority, might suggest the state no longer needs a uniting father figure. As well, Israel is no longer the collective society that placed the benefit of the public good over personal interest, having adopted privatiza-

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tion, and eliminating differences within society has been replaced by emphasizing diversity and multiculturalism. In this society, so the claim goes, there is no place for a uniting cohesive figure. These factors raised awareness that there is no point to the existence of the institution of the powerless presidency.

Suggestions to put an end to the office of the president in its present form range from the adoption of a presidential regime headed by a president with substantial powers to totally revoking the institution. This inclination is strengthened by the scandals that have rocked and weakened the presidency: the financial entanglement of President Ezer Weizmann, which led to a police investigation and his resignation; and the sexual harassment accusations as well as accusations of fraud, breach of trust, and wiretapping

brought against President Katsav. While the president enjoys immunity as long as he serves in office, the Attorney General expressed the view, shared by many, that Katsav should step down from his office and not wait to be indicted. Recently, the intervention of the Supreme Court — however, problematic — led to a vow by Katsav to suspend himself once the Attorney General has reached a decision to indict him and resign from office once a bill of indictment is being formulated. Suggestions to impeach the president have been made, though it is most unlikely that the Knesset would obtain the required majority. All this said, it is highly doubtful that the end of the institution of the presidency in Israel has arrived. As this article goes to press, heated campaigns are taking place for Katsav's heir.

The Song at the Sea and the Well at Be'er: *Learning about Who We Are as Leaders*

Norman Cohen

Dr. Norman Cohen is Provost of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he is also Professor of Midrash. His books include Self, Struggle and Change: Family Conflict Stories in Genesis and their Healing Insights for our Lives, Voices from Genesis: Guiding us through the Stages of Life, The Way into Torah, Hineini in our Lives, and most recently Moses and the Journey to Leadership: Timeless Lessons of Effective Management from the Bible and Today's Leadership, all published by Jewish Lights.

Our own life journeys are reflected in the paradigmatic journey of the Jewish people from Egypt, Mitzrayim, the narrow places, to the mountain and God's place. The challenge of surviving the heat and aridity of the desert was finding life-giving waters that could both cleanse the people from Egyptian slavery and nourish them, then draw forth the water by singing God's song of redemption. Let us then immerse ourselves in two biblical passages that present us with the powerful models of charismatic leadership that the Israelites experienced on their journey.

Shirat ha-Yam

As the people pass through the waters of the Red Sea, they sing a song of redemption that begins, "Az Yashir Moshe u-Venai Yisrael et ha-shirah ha-zot." (Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song.) (Ex. 15:1) The word *yashir* is a future tense, masculine, singular verb that literally means "he will sing." Since it is the only verb used, it is not clear who actually sang and what Moses' role was vis-à-vis the people, especially since the verse goes on to describe the beginning of the song in the plural, "Vayomru leimor: Ashira l'Adonai." (They said: I will sing.) It is nevertheless generally assumed in the rabbinic tradition that Moses played a

dominant role at that moment, emphasized by the two singular verbs *yashir*, he sang/will sing, and *ashira*, I will sing. It is as if Moses led the singing in a very frontal manner, and Israel then followed his lead. The *midrash* suggests several options: Moses sang, and Israel either answered "amen" or repeated his words, or Moses sang the first part of each verse, and Israel repeated his words and then completed the verse by adding their own words, which is a wonderful leadership model in and of itself. The Israelites learned from Moses and went beyond him! In any event, Moses is seen as a powerfully singular leader who sings with confidence, "I will sing to the Lord." His voice dominates.

In contrast, at the end of the song the text presents us with an alternate model, one of empowerment and involvement. "Miriam... took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her — and Miriam sang for them, *ta'an lahem*: 'Sing, *shiru*, to the Lord.' (Ex 15:20-21) Miriam had a relationship with her sisters who followed her, and she seems to lead them in song in a very different manner. Instead of the verb *shir*, to sing, the Bible describes Miriam's singing with the word *ta'an*, from the verb *anah*, meaning to answer, respond. How different the leadership style!

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Miriam does not sing alone, but rather engages her sisters; she also empowers each of them to sing: “*Shiru l’Adonai*” (Sing to the Lord). Miriam demands that each individual raise his or her voice at the Sea; each one has the power and ability to sing the Song of Redemption.

The words that Miriam and Moses sing are identical, “Sing to the Lord, for [the Divine] has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider [God] has hurled into the sea.” (Ex:15:1, 21) Yet we are presented with two very different styles of leadership. From whom will the Israelites learn during their trek through the desert? From whom shall we learn?

Thirty-eight years later, toward the end of the desert journey, following Miriam’s death at Kadesh and Moses’ sin in striking the rock (Numbers 20), the Israelites are again confronted with the challenge of how to find life-sustaining waters. Miraculously, they find themselves at a place called *Be’er* (the Well), and the question is how to draw forth its waters and experience a taste of redemption as they did at the Red Sea.

God then says to Moses, “Assemble the people that I may give them water.” (Numbers 21: 16) Just when we expect Moses to sing to the well in order to produce water, the Bible

tells us, “Then Israel sang this song (*Az Yashir Yisrael et ha-shirah ha-zot*).” (21:17) This repetition of the opening verse in *Shirat ha-Yam* is different in only one way; it is not Moses singing, but Israel: *Az Yashir Yisrael*, not *Az Yashir Moshe*. The Israelites have been empowered to sing their own song to God; they have learned from Moses and also from Miriam. The actual words of their song are: “*Ali be’er* (Arise, O well)” “*enu lah* (sing to it).” (21:17) The verb used for “sing” by Miriam in the Song at the Sea, *ta’an*, she responded (to her sisters), is now used by the Israelites as they respond, *enu*, to the well, to nature, calling forth its redemptive waters.

By the end of the desert journey the people have internalized the songs of both Miriam and Moses; they have been touched by their visions and their respective models. At *Be’er*, the Israelites demonstrated that they had learned from both the power and insight of Moses and the empowering responsiveness of Miriam. And in so doing, they have given us a gift. We, too, have the capacity to experience life-giving waters amidst the heat of our desert journeys and to move closer to the promised land by nurturing leaders who sing God’s song in creative, powerful, and yet different ways.

On Rabbis and Rebbes

Aryeh Cohen

Today’s rabbinate is, unfortunately, one in which the rabbi owns the answers. The rabbi is the path. This model of the rabbinate is prone to abuse and, ultimately, disempowering to Jews who are not rabbis. There is a different model, the model of a *bet midrash*. I grew up Orthodox, attended *haredi* high schools in Brooklyn and Zionist *yeshivot* in Israel. I spent years in *batei midrash*/study halls. (Well, first in a *bes medrash* and only later in a *bet midrash*...) Yet it wasn’t until my late twenties — when I happened upon Havurat Shalom in Boston, a consensus-based, egalitarian community — that I had a vision of what the Jewish community might look like if it took the idea of the *bet midrash* seriously.

Twenty years later, the Jewish community still doesn’t understand what the *bet midrash* is and how it can serve as a communal, educational venue. We should.

For over a decade, I have been involved in training rabbis, witnessing up close the potential power of the *bet midrash* as a radically egalitarian place of teaching and learning. The person who is teaching is teaching because he or she knows more about the subject being taught; it is not because of any mystified connection to the One. The *bet midrash* does not abide gurus, and for a long time it did not abide women. While the *bet midrash* is not some magic salve, it can serve as a model, something to be reconstructed and re-fashioned — the way the Sages refashioned their *bet midrash* to serve their needs. We can, and perhaps this is our calling, push the *bet midrash* one step further. We should apply this horizontal model of a committed learning community to the Jewish community as a whole.

Taking this next step, we tread on sacred ground. We must breach the gate around the

Correction:

In Paul Buhle’s November essay, he inadvertently wrote that Harvey Pekar, rather than Harvey Kurtzman, had died.

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mountain and dare the wrath of the “gods of the status quo.” Most everything in Judaism has in one way or another been renewed, reclaimed, or reinvented, but the rabbi always remains “the rabbi.” How might we rethink the very notion of rabbi? How would the *bet midrash* model reorganize a community horizontally? And how would it change Jewish communities if the rabbi was not a rebbe, if he or she were not elevated above the *kahal*?

This challenge is as old as Torah. It is Korach’s demand that Moshe cede some authority because the whole people Israel is holy. While we traditionally read this story as Korach’s “rebellion,” is there not a more productive way of reading it generously as Korach’s

model of Sinai as a model for education, saying that if God could constrict Godself to the point that Israel could understand the Torah that God spoke, so could we all learn how to constrict ourselves to teach so that others can understand. I would add that just as God was able to admit to Moshe when Moshe was right and God changed God’s mind, so too could we constrict ourselves in order to allow those with whom we congregate to bring their Torah into the room.

If you have to be “the rabbi” in order to achieve a certain level of spiritual development, then one presumes that that path is closed to everyone else. We destroy real conversations with our congregants every time we say to ourselves, “oh, that’s too complicated for them to understand.”

What would happen if we let loose the power of our textual tradition on the Jewish community in general? It’s yours, the door is open, come learn. Come sit at the table, and learn and teach as equals. The thirst of Jews for Torah and the thirst of Torah for Jews require us to swing the doors wide open and declare with Rav Kook: *ha-yashan yitchadesh vehachadash yitkadash* (the old will become new and the new will be sanctified).

Most everything in Judaism has in one way or another been renewed, reclaimed, or reinvented, but the rabbi always remains “the rabbi.”

demand to fulfill Israel’s destiny? Is it too late to embrace Korach’s challenge to Moshe for a more horizontal and less hierarchical communal organization — “*ki kol ha’am kedoshim uve-tocham Adonai* (for all the nations are Holy and in their midst is God) — in light of God’s promise in Exodus 19: “*veatem tihyu li mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh* (and you shall be for Me a nation of priests and a Holy nation).” The rabbinic movement successfully deflected the seduction of the last verses of the Torah and did not deify Moshe. Rather, they made Moshe into one of their own — Moshe Rabbenu, Moshe our teacher. Can we follow this path and invite everybody into the *bet midrash*?

If we dream of the Jewish community in this way, the job of the rabbi is to point the way to the books, explain the rules of engagement, and return to the table as an equal participant. Rabbis must practice *tzimtzum*/constriction and humility. Therefore, we who educate rabbis have to abdicate our roles as rebbes and gurus and join in a more horizontal *bet midrash*. The Piaszne Rebbbe uses the

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Rav and Rebbe

Jack Bieler

How a congregant, student, disciple, or client views his or her rabbi is commonly dichotomized into the categories “rebbe” and “rav.” The title “rav” (literally, teacher, great one) usually connotes a more distant, professional, scholarly relationship, whereby the truths that the individual propounds are objectively correct and perhaps even brilliant, but not necessarily informed by particular empathy for the individual. On the other hand, when a rabbi is considered one’s “rebbe” (literally my teacher), the implication is that this “teacher” is the source not only of one’s primary Jewish knowledge (in the sense of “Rebbe Muvhak” [my most profound teacher]), but also of the disciple’s outlook on virtually every aspect of life: *hashkafa* (*weltanschauung*), *middot* (character traits), personal relationships, and potentially life-altering decisions. A “rav” is a consultant whose opinions we take seriously and whose person we regard as a shining example of Torah knowledge, halakhic profundity and integrity; a “rebbe,” in addition to being supremely knowledgeable, serves also as a mentor, confidante, role model, substitute parent, and source of significant religious inspiration. As one of my peers in yeshiva said to me years ago, “You take a chicken to your rav; to your rebbe you take your life.”

Not every rav has the capacity or the desire to serve also as a rebbe, nor is every congregant or student interested in becoming a follower. In *Pirkei Avot* 1:6, Yehoshua ben Perachya states, “*Aseh lecha rav*” (“make” for yourself a rav), which is later amplified by R. Gamliel in 1:16: “*Vehistalek min hasafek*” (and thereby remove yourself from doubt). While it is necessary to consult with knowledgeable authorities in order to clarify complexities that one encounters in Jewish law and thought, is it similarly required to have a “rebbe” to whom you pose every issue that presents itself? Furthermore, there are at least

two ways how an existential matter that transcends simple, straightforward halakhah can be discussed with one’s rav or rebbe: Do we merely solicit the rabbi’s opinion but ultimately make our own decisions, or do we view the rabbi’s pronouncement as a *pesak*, an objective and therefore indisputable decision that we are now bound to implement regardless of our own personal considerations?

The degree of autonomy from the influence of the rav or rebbe underlies the nature of the rebbe-talmid (teacher-disciple) relationship. Is the ideal situation one in which individuals with lesser knowledge about Jewish learning cede all authority over their lives to their rabbi, in the interests of perfecting their observance of the commandments and the applications of Jewish tradition’s underlying principles? Or is the goal to develop people who, once instructed and inspired by their role models, can proceed to assume responsibility for the manner in which they strive to be servants of God?

Perhaps this question must be answered, ultimately, as much by the erstwhile rebbe as the talmid. Should the rebbe nurture his students toward independence, in a way similar to how parents are instructed (see *Kiddushin* 29a) to raise their children to be independent? The difficulty, though, in encouraging people to be religiously autonomous is their inability to be objective when it comes to living a virtuous, spiritual, and ethical life; they are often over-confident that they can reach appropriate conclusions when, in fact, an expert opinion is necessary to unravel subtle complexities. The ideal, as in so many areas of life, may lie somewhere in between: Each of us needs that deeply personal and supportive relationship with a rebbe, but one that also offers the opportunity to develop our own understanding and practice as upstanding members of the Jewish people.

Jack Bieler is the rabbi of Kemp Mill Synagogue in Silver Spring, MD and has taught in day schools in New York and Silver Spring for the past 30 years.

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In Defense of Magic Dust

Tsvi Blanchard

Jews find a seemingly irresolvable contradiction in thinking about charismatic leadership: We need the inspiring leadership that motivates us, individually and communally, to live as Jews; we also need the educated, reasonable religious guidance that conveys the sense that Judaism is both reliable and authentic. If we turn to Jewish tradition — biblical, talmudic, and medieval — we find both. We find compelling prophets, life-changing preachers, and wonder-working rabbis; we also find carefully reasoned rabbinic opinions,

conditionally endorse a turn toward charismatic leadership. We still favor *facilitative* and *consultative* leadership styles. We want leaders who identify, evoke, and guide the positive motivating forces that are already present within us and our institutions; we also want leaders who are good consultants, who create a dialogue that helps us become responsible for our own religious lives.

We are, I believe, stuck with this opposition. We want leadership that honors personal autonomy, *and* we want leadership that expands us, takes us out of ourselves. On the one hand, we recognize the risk that we might become an audience to be entertained, even manipulated, by an “incredible” celebrity leader, and, on the other hand, we perceive a serious risk that consulting and facilitating Jewish life may inhibit spiritual growth by playing to the lowest common denominator. Can charisma play a role that complements or supports our respect for individual religious responsibility?

I once watched an extremely charismatic Jewish speaker repeatedly resist the demand that he “sprinkle magic dust” by keynoting a day-long community visioning process that I was facilitating. He pointed out to the planning committee that the point of the day was to empower community members, and although they came from limited Jewish backgrounds, each one of them had on their own created powerful and meaningful family life-cycle events. The participants needed to be empowered to take ownership of the visioning process.

Many Jews who “drop in” at key lifecycle events essentially experience Judaism as outsiders. Lacking a ticket of admission, they are looking for someone to “open the door.” And charismatic Jewish leaders can open the door. We need both facilitative-consultative and charismatic leadership. While we need leaders who use their charisma to expand the individual Jewish experience, those leaders need to remember that their goal is to enable other Jews to take responsibility for their own religious and spiritual lives. Such charismatic leaders might just be able to convene the kind of conversations and educational experiences that will reanimate the Jewish lives of their people.

They are far more concerned about Judaism dying from boredom than unraveling from anarchy.

philosophically sophisticated theologies, and respectful appreciation for a diversity of sensible approaches to being Jewish. What are we to do?

A well-known talmudic passage found in *Bava Metsia* 59b tells of an extraordinarily charismatic wonder-working rabbi, Eliezer, who moved trees, reversed the normal order of river currents, and even exerted miraculous control over the walls of the *bet midrash*. Rabbi Eliezar could even — when all else failed to convince — elicit the Divine voice in support of his position. But, in the end, Eliezer lost to the reasoned hermeneutics of the sages. From this passage, we learn that rabbis should lead by reason, education, and the majority rule, not by individual religious charisma.

I was recently studying this passage with two serious Jewish students who were less than inspired by it. In fact, they found it very troubling. When they analyzed the text they did not see education, reason, and democracy; they saw the tragic story of a gifted religious figure unfairly dominated by the power of a clearly less spiritually talented rabbinic majority.

These students *want* charismatic religious leadership; they are looking to individuals who can animate and inspire them. They are not looking for religious authority, but rather seeking something “amazing,” something that deeply moves them. They are far more concerned about Judaism dying from boredom than unraveling from anarchy.

While many of us sympathize with this search for “amazement,” we find it hard to un-

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In addition to political *savoir faire*, a leader's ability to inspire the masses often relies on an unquantifiable dose of undefinable charisma. With charisma, leaders speak to our hearts, not just our minds. With charisma, leaders evoke our loyalty and devotion, not just our votes.

Charisma creates a strong personal bond between leader and follower. It defines essential and transformative aspects of the bonds between hasidim and their rebbes, yeshiva students and their teachers, congregants and their spiritual leaders, and children and their teachers and youth leaders.

But charisma can be dangerous. Allowed to overflow the boundaries of propriety, it can be a manipulative tool enabling leaders to control and even abuse their minions — politically, socially, economically, and sexually. There are too many examples of leaders — presidents, congressmen, rabbis, and teachers — who have abused the trappings of their offices to mistreat those who respect them and are devoted to them. If charisma is indeed from the Greek “charis,” or Divine gift, then a good leader, a responsible leader, will do “as God commanded Moses,” and lead with humility, self-restraint, and respect.

MARK DRATCH

Is Joshua a model for contemporary leadership? What do we learn from Joshua, or Moses, about how to be a true leader of a people? Some qualities may seem obvious — great vision, skill, wisdom, the ability to charismatically motivate and inspire a group toward great purpose. But what about the power inherent in leadership roles, or how to utilize that power to do good and not harm?

A good leader knows how to use power for a positive purpose. Power is a tool for creating change. But power over another person, group, or nation is another story — it can become the root of oppression and harm to others. When people are revered publicly for their leadership but have done so by mistreating people in private, is that truly an accomplishment to celebrate?

As leaders, every action is potentially a teachable moment. To ignore, deny, or minimize a leader's abusive behaviors in their private life is to sanction that behavior in the public eye.

As a community, it is time we demand accountability of our leaders. Courageous victims are breaking their long-held silence on sexual abuse from rabbis and other public figures. We can no longer pretend that our “beloved leaders” are immune from misusing their power to harm others.

NAOMI TUCKER

Devarim 34:9 "And Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel hearkened to him and did as God commanded Moses."

Israelite recognition of Joshua's authority was not quite as automatic as the verse from *Devarim* might have us believe. Immediately upon his assumption of command, we hear a seemingly *conditional* assent to Joshua's call to arms: “We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses; only let the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses.” (Joshua 1:17) God was quick to address the worrisome question mark that hung over Joshua's status. He promptly had Joshua direct the Israelites to cross the Jordan, which miraculously dried up for the occasion: “On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, so that they revered him all his days as they had revered Moses.” (4:14)

Joshua was no head-in-the-clouds mystic. The “spirit of wisdom” that filled him was the practical knowledge of governance and warfare needed for the conquest of Canaan, just as Bezalel's “Divine spirit of wisdom” (Shemot 31:3) was the practical knowledge of metalwork, stone-cutting, and wood-carving needed for the construction of the Tabernacle. We must never underestimate the importance of practical wisdom; it is a most precious and Divine gift.

Wise Joshua must have also known that genuine leadership — especially spiritual and charismatic leadership — can never simply be transferred from one person to the next like ownership of property. Although “Moses had laid his hands upon him,” true acceptance of Joshua's authority would only come after Moses' death, when Joshua would stand on his own feet and offer proof that God was indeed with him.

BEREL DOV LERNER

The Israelites hearkened to Joshua in part because God “exalted him,” but also because Joshua translated and amplified events for his followers. Joshua understood, as Moses sometimes overlooked, that effective leaders need followers. Engaging the hearts and minds of followers through symbolic interactions and dialogue enables a leader to mobilize and sustain the challenging work of transformation required to create a future that better satisfies the unmet deeper yearnings of the group.

MICHAEL SHINER

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Berel Dov Lerner, a member of Kibbutz Sheluhot, teaches philosophy at the Western Galilee College in Akko. He is the author of Rules, Magic and Instrumental Reason (Routledge, 2001).

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Visionary Leadership

Nathan Laufer, *The Genesis of Leadership:*

What the Bible Teaches Us about Vision, Values and Leading Change

Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006, 288 pp, 24.99

In a moment of personal reflection and disclosure in the second section of *The Genesis of Leadership*, Rabbi Nathan Laufer speaks to the Janus-like vision of good leaders. Visionary leaders develop a double gaze; one looking back seeking to understand the significance of the past, the other looking forward toward the future: "The past becomes a refracting mirror" through which we establish benchmarks and insights that enable us to better interpret the significance of the present and to construct a vision for the future. (pp.103-4) Laufer notes that this double vision, central to his own role as past Director and CEO of the Wexner Heritage Program, underlies the very conception of their programs. In his book, Laufer offers us a different form of this dual vision, one that turns to contemporary leadership theory as a refracting mirror through which to explore the richly textured narratives of the Bible, and through this to establish benchmarks and insights to interpret our own lives and construct our own understanding of good leadership. In doing this, Laufer embodies a core quality of the visionary leadership that he espouses.

Divided into four sections, *The Genesis of Leadership* traces the slow unfolding of leadership as God and humanity mature through the biblical narrative. Laufer is quick to point out that we can learn as much from the pitfalls and failures of leadership illuminated in these early stories as we can by their successes. To that end, Laufer connects narrative threads across different episodes in the lives of the central characters to illustrate the many ways biblical figures grow into their identity as responsible leaders.

The first section focuses on leadership qualities displayed (and absent) within the personal and familial relationships of Genesis. This section revolves around "three concentric circles" of responsibility: for myself and my own actions; for those with whom I have established relationships; and for others falling within the orbit of my influence. The flip side of this responsibility is trust; leaders need to communicate to those under their command that they are valued and won't be exploited and that they are being led somewhere worthwhile.

The second section of Laufer's book explores Exodus through the lens of ten guiding principles of leadership drawn from contemporary leadership theory (including Michael Hammer's *Reengineering the Corporation* and Jim Collin's *Good to Great*). This section offers a rich and sustained analysis of Moses and the people who shaped his destiny from birth through the rebellion at Mt. Sinai. Based on the work of philosopher Peter Koestenbaum, Laufer characterizes courageous action as a principle of leadership: "the preparedness to autonomously choose to tolerate maximum amounts of anxiety and uncertainty in the freely chosen pursuit of one's convictions." (98) Anyone who has launched a school or led a process of change knows exactly what Laufer is talking about!

The third section shows how Moses adapts and responds to the challenges of transforming a people into a nation. Leadership requires that we not only have a vision for a better future, but that we make and act upon critical judgments. Here Laufer poses eight recurring challenges addressing some of the harder moral and political dimensions of leadership, including issues of dissent, the misuse of power, and challenges of institutional organization. The final section, "The Legacy of Leadership," asks what a leader needs to attend to in order to ensure smooth succession. Here Laufer focuses on the tasks of leaders as their period of leadership ends — evaluating success, transferring leadership, and recording one's legacy. This book provides us with a rare opportunity to bridge the worlds of leadership theory and the Bible, taking the reader in new directions and planting seeds for further thought.

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mands the humility to recognize, acknowledge, and articulate one's personal and professional limitations. It challenges "trustworthy" professionals to discover the nexus of trustworthiness and trustfulness as they become patients/clients of another. It requires the courage to pick up the phone and say, "I need help" from hotel maintenance, a therapist, a friend, a colleague — sometimes all four.

Dr. Jen Glaser, a member of the faculty at the Mandel Leadership Institute, Jerusalem and the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University, focuses her research on personal identity and group membership, pluralism, critical thinking, children's philosophical thinking, and the connection between philosophical inquiry and the teaching of the Bible.

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Sigi Ziering Ethics

This year our Sigi Ziering column will focus on the ethics of leadership. Each month an esteemed guest columnist will wrestle with questions concerning communal leadership and its abuses. The column is cosponsored by Bruce Whizin and Marilyn Ziering in honor of Marilyn's husband Sigi Ziering, of blessed memory. Visit www.shma.com to view the series of columns, with responses.

Anne Underwood, an attorney, works with faith communities and denominational judicatories on issues of professional ethics. She writes a monthly column, EthicsWalk, for PlainViews, an newsletter for chaplains and other spiritual care providers.

Rainbow Ethics

Anne Underwood

The gritty bathtub flowed over — wasted hot water poured onto fake tiles and polyester carpet. Sixteen hours of delayed flights, a van driver slurping Gatorade with one knee on the wheel while screaming into a cell phone, and now a hideous budget hotel. The tub flood enchanted me. A chaos I could control! Sloshing over, I pulled the plug, yanked the faucets, and skidded into the mirror. It shattered. I bled a little and picked up the phone. No illusions of control remained.

What do we, who are relatively privileged personally and powerful professionally, do when we feel helpless? When we are confronted by situations that force us to recognize we cannot control everything or everyone? What happens when our ascribed power, our achieved status, seem irrelevant or, worse, *ineffective*, in the circumstances?

I write and lecture about characteristics of “trustworthy” professionals: people who understand power differentials, respect boundaries, and do not misuse the imbalance of “role power” between rabbi and congregant, doctor and patient, teacher and student. Part of this work involves my sitting with adjudicatory panels of professional associations assessing complaints against members.

Most complaints arise from actual or perceived misuse of power. A fiduciary boundary — financial, physical, sexual, emotional — has been crossed. The usual motivational culprits are variations on the themes of greed, lust, arrogance, and entitlement. Occasionally, a different insidious impetus arises: a sense of helplessness to make an appropriate response in a chaotic situation. Good boundaries disintegrate into destructive defenses; the ability to exercise power responsibly collapses.

We are people of free will, called to make

ethical choices. The extent to which we approach chaos-experiencing agency, rather than claiming victimhood, helps shape our response. The parent of an enraged two-year-old flailing on the supermarket floor and the medical supervisor of a ranting intern each bear responsibility for navigating an outcome respectful and non-abusive of the storming other. What if that feels as impossible as willing a delayed plane to arrive?

Rev. Wayne Van Kampen offers a modern *midrash* describing the flood as the Eternal's great temper tantrum. Frustrated and feeling helpless to alter humanity's abominable behavior, God created chaos. One family survived as God's hope that creation could endure the Divine destructive rage. Anger spent and earth in disarray, God looked down and regretted. The rainbow sealing the covenant with Noah was set not as a reminder to humanity, but as a reminder to God to “self-regulate” future disappointment and rage.

Richard Farson, in *Management of the Absurd*, warns, “Responsibility plus helplessness leads to abuse.” How to use power non-abusively when experiencing helplessness? Perhaps by remembering times we were “out of control” or relationally in a less powerful position; perhaps by remembering that when a person with role power behaves abusively, the actions are measured not by “intent” but by “impact” on the person with lesser power. Perhaps by occasionally reviewing and renewing our own covenants to live and work ethically — resetting our own symbolic rainbows.

Hillel advised, “What you would hate, don't do to someone else: that is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary, go and learn it.” (B. Talmud, Shabbat 31a) “Go and learn” de-

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