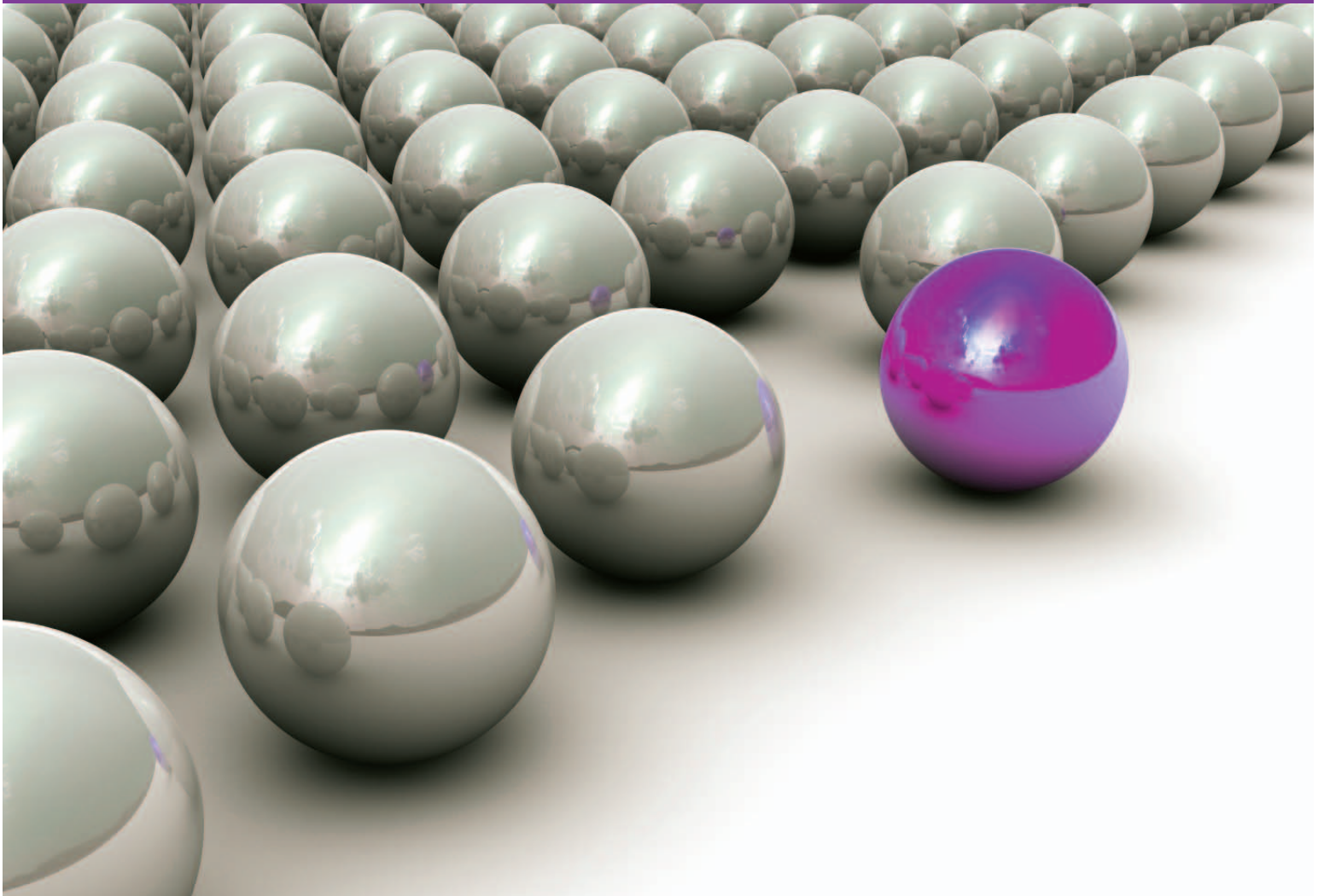


The Jewish definition of leadership is the ability to react to each person in a different way. Perhaps it is a Divine gift to be able to appear different to each person, according to his or her need.

—Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz



Leadership



Models of Leadership
Leadership and Humility
A Tale of Two Rabbis

The PJ Library: Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim



Models of Leadership

Models of Leadership

Jewish leadership comes in all shapes and sizes. When we ask, “What are the essential qualities of a leader?” the Jewish answer is: It depends... Social scientists have much to say on this subject and so does the Talmud. In this class, we will examine the opinion of a social scientist, look at the contemporary example of Carolyn McCarthy as a challenge to his understanding, and then look at a short Mishnah from Pirkei Avot, *Values of Our Fathers*.

1. Leaders from Birth

V. A. Howard, a leading social scientist, asks whether leadership can be taught and rejects the possibility. Leadership is a very abstract concept, and cannot be looked at as if it were some skill that if taught could easily be mastered. Howard prefers to look at leadership like an art form, a talent much like musicianship; either you have it or you don't. But while leadership is innate, knowledge about leadership can be taught. He also feels that a great deal of the strategies, tactics, and skills of leadership can be helpful.

V. A. Howard Navigator

- What good is knowledge about leadership if leaders are born and not made?
- What would V. A. Howard's definition of a leader be?

2. Circumstances Created Leaders

Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, 55, was first elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1996 and was re-elected for her second term, in 1998. A life-long resident of Mineola, New York, she is a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) with over 30 years experience in the health care field. Carolyn married Dennis McCarthy in 1967 and they raised one son, Kevin. She had led a mostly quiet life as a nurse, wife, and mother until she was thrust into the spotlight on December 7, 1993. On that day, her husband was killed and her son injured when a crazed gunman randomly shot into a rush-hour commuter train returning from New York City to Long Island. Rather than allow this tragedy to defeat her, Carolyn McCarthy turned the incident into a public campaign against gun violence. She began by speaking across the country on the roots and causes of gun violence, and she soon became a vocal advocate for common-sense laws to reduce gun violence in New York State and on a national level.

McCarthy believes gun violence is the end product of society's ills and that to stop the violence we must address its root causes. She advocates providing all children with a good education and an opportunity to attend college; creating safe and drug-free schools; and creating more job opportunities that pay a livable wage.

Models of Leadership

Values of Our Fathers

הוא היה אומר, אין בור ירא חטא, ולא עם הארץ חסיד. ולא הביישן למד, ולא הקפדן מלמד. ולא כל המרבה בסחורה, מחכים. ובמקום שאין אנשים, השתדל להיות איש.

Chapter 2 Mishnah 6

He [Rabban Gamliel] used to say: A boor will never be wary of wrongdoing. An ignoramus cannot be pious. The shy will not learn. The impatient cannot teach. And not everyone who increases their wealth becomes wise. And in a place where there is no one person [to do what is needed] endeavor to be that person.

Mishnah Navigator

- What does the last sentence in the Mishnah have to do with all the previous ones?
- In light of V. A. Howard's insights, how is the final statement of the Mishnah compatible with what he says about leadership?

Models of Leadership

Who is a spiritual leader in time of crisis?

Two Talmudic Visions on One Mishnah

Jerusalem Talmud Ta'anit 1:4

Who are considered the special ones? These are the ones who have been appointed trustees of the community. Just because he was appointed a trustee for the community are his prayers are answered? Because he was appointed and was trustworthy, it is fitting for his prayers to be answered.

Things to Think About

➤ Remember how V.A. Howard assumed that leaders are born, but not made? How does his theory apply to spiritual leadership? Where does Carolyn McCarthy fit, or is she different from both models?

Ta'anit Navigator

- According to the Jerusalem Talmud, what are the essential criteria for being considered a special one?
- According to the Babylonian Talmud, what further criteria are listed?
- Can the two Talmudic interpretations be viewed as compatible?
- Given all these criteria, what does a leader need to be in order to be effective in this context?

Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 10b from Rabbi Steinsaltz Commentary

The Rabbis taught: One should not say about himself that he is a Torah scholar, but not suited to be a special one. All Torah scholars are considered special ones for this purpose. Who is considered a special one

and who is considered a Torah scholar? A special one is anyone who is fit to be a trustee for the community. A Torah scholar is anyone who when asked a question on the tractate he is currently learning—even if that is the only one he knows—he can speak on it. The Rabbis brought the following teaching: Not everyone can or should make himself

into a special one for this purpose, and not everyone who wants to make himself into a Torah scholar for this purpose can or should, says Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yossi says, he can in both cases, and it is commendable. For in this instance, he is not doing it for praise, but it is causing him to suffer.

Mishnah Ta'anit 4:1

The 17th of Marcheshvan had come, but the rains hadn't—the special ones fast three fasts... The New Moon of Kislev arrived, but the rains hadn't—the court decreed three fasts upon the community.

Models of Leadership

Hebrew Sources

הגיע שבעה עשר במרחשון ולא ירדו גשמים – התחילו היחידים מתעניין שלש תעניות... הגיע ראש חדש כסליו ולא ירדו גשמים – בית דין גוזרין שלש תעניות על הצבור.

משנה, תענית א, ד

אילו הם היחידים? אילו שהן מתמנין פרנסין על הציבור. מכיון שהוא מתמנה פרנס על הציבור הוא מתפלל ונענה?! אלא מכיון שהוא מתמנה פרנס על הציבור ונמצא נאמן – כדי הוא מצלייא ומתענייא.

תלמוד ירושלמי, תענית א, ד

תנו רבנן [שנו חכמים]: אל יאמר אדם תלמיד בלבד אני, ולכך איני ראוי להיות יחיד ואין עלי לצום, אלא: כל תלמידי חכמים יחידים הם לענין זה. ומגדירים: אי זהו יחיד ואיזהו תלמיד? יחיד הוא אדם שגדול בתורה כל שראוי למנותו פרנס על הצבור ומורה לרבים, ותלמיד חכם הוא כל ששואלין אותו דבר הלכה בתלמודו ואומר, ואפילו שאינו יודע אלא במסכת דכלה, שהיא המסכת שלומדים באותה שנה בציבור הרי הוא כבר נחשב לתלמיד חכם. תנו רבנן [שנו חכמים] בברייתא: לא כל הרוצה לעשות עצמו יחיד ולנהוג כמנהג יחיד עושה, ולא כל הרוצה לעשות עצמו תלמיד עושה, אלו דברי ר' מאיר. ר' יוסי אומר: עושה, ואף זכור הוא לטוב, לפי שהמנהגים שנוהגים בהם תלמידי חכמים לא שבח הוא לו אלא צער הוא לו ויכול אדם לקבל על עצמו חובות אלה, ואין חוששים שהוא נוהג בדבר שאינו ראוי לו.

תלמוד בבלי, תענית י, ב מהדורת שטיינזלץ



Leadership and Humility

What Is Jewish Humility? And What Does It Have to Do with Leadership?

The Hebrew word for humility is עֲנוּוּהַ (ANaVa), and it is mentioned in the Torah only once. When Aaron and Miriam choose to use Moshe’s marriage to the Kushite woman as a pretext for challenging his authority, Moshe does not defend himself: the narrative describes him as the “humblest (anav m’od) of all men who dwell on the face of the earth.”

For context, look at the whole incident as it appears at the end of Parshat B’ha’alotcha:

Numbers 12:1-13

1. And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Kushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Kushite woman.
2. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Has he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.
3. And the man Moses was very humble, more than any other men who were upon the face of the earth.
4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron, and to Miriam, “Come out you three to the Tent of Meeting.” And the three came out.
5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth.
6. And He said, “Hear now my words; if there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream.
7. Not so with My servant Moses, for he is the trusted one in all My house.
8. With him I speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speech; and he beheld the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”
9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed.
10. And the cloud departed from off the Tent; and, behold, Miriam had become leprous, white as snow; and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.
11. And Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, I beg you, lay not the sin upon us, because we have done foolishly, and because we have sinned.
12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb.”
13. And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, “Heal her now, O God, I beseech you.”

Torah Navigator

- Why doesn’t Moshe defend himself, and why is this considered laudable behavior for a leader?
- Why is humility considered to be an indispensable quality for true leadership in Jewish tradition?

Leadership and Humility

It was common practice in the 19th-century Mussar movement—those who felt that ethical perfection required an annihilation of the ego—to indulge in what was called self-annihilation. Those practitioners spent hours breast beating and repeating over and over, “I am nothing.” Once, while they were engaging in this practice a child walked in off the street and noticed what the sages of the town were doing. He promptly sat down and joined them in their declarations of humility, “I am nothing.” One wizened sage turned to the other and said, “Look who thinks he’s a nothing!”

Understanding the Mishnah and Talmud

The fast this refers to fasts for rain after an extended drought.

Leader of the community presumably to demonstrate that even those of great stature are publicly humbled.

With those of least stature because we are cursed with a drought, why would we begin with the leaders? Shouldn’t we begin with the general community?

Your importance is signified because your prayers are considered more important, this is not considered to be humiliating.

Ta’anit 15 a-b

Mishnah: *How should the prayers that accompany the fast be performed? The Ark should be taken to the main square of the city, and burnt ashes should be placed on top of the Ark, and they should be placed on the head of the leader of the community, and the leader of the court. Then everyone should place the ashes, each on his own head.*

Talmud: *“On the head of the leader of the community” and then it teaches that afterwards, “everyone should place the ashes, each on his own head”! Is this so? Is it not taught, “Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi said: For great things, one begins with those of great stature, and for curses one begins with those of least stature!”*

In this case being first enhances their stature because it is as if we are saying, “Your importance is signified through your asking for mercy on behalf of all of us.”

Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 22b

Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: “Why is it that Shaul’s kingdom did not have its own successor? It was because there was no shame in its lineage. For Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yehotzadak: ‘Do not appoint a leader of the community, unless there is a basket of vermin hanging right behind him, so that if he becomes arrogant, they can say, “turn around!”’

Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Rav: “Why was Shaul punished? Because he would give up the honor due to him, as it is written: And some scoundrels said: ‘How will this one save us?!’ and they scorned him and brought him no gift. But he pretended not to mind.” (I Samuel 10:27)

Questions and Comments

1. Do you think that it is fitting to elect a leader who has some defect? Isn’t the fact that he has “a basket of vermin hanging right behind him” a pretext for getting rid of him?
2. Why was Shaul removed because he gave up the honor due to him? Isn’t that humility exactly the quality one should look for in a leader?
3. How do we reconcile the two Talmudic passages? Was Shaul too arrogant, or too humble?
4. Can you make these passages inform and modify each other? Once you have done this, can you define the nature of humility?

Leadership and Humility

Hebrew Sources

וּתְדַבֵּר מְרִים וְאֶהְרֶן בְּמִשָּׁה עַל אֲדוֹת הָאִשָּׁה הַכְּשִׁית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח, כִּי אִשָּׁה כְּשִׁית לָקַח. וַיֹּאמְרוּ: הֲרַק אַךְ בְּמִשָּׁה דָבָר ה' ? הֲלֹא גַם בְּנֵי דָבָר! וַיִּשְׁמַע ה'. וְהָאִישׁ מִשָּׁה עָנָו מֵאֵד מְכַל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' פְּתָאם אֶל מִשָּׁה וְאֶל אֶהְרֶן וְאֶל מְרִים: צְאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁתְּכֶם אֶל אֶהֱל מוֹעֵד. וַיִּצְאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁתָּם. וַיֵּרֶד ה' בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח הָאֶהֱל, וַיִּקְרָא: אֶהְרֶן וּמְרִים! וַיִּצְאוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם. וַיֹּאמֶר: שְׁמַעוּ נָא דְבָרִי. אִם יִהְיֶה נְבִיאְכֶם, ה' בְּמִרְאָה אֵלָיו אֲתוֹדַע בְּחִלּוֹם אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ. לֹא כֵן עֲבָדֵי מִשָּׁה, בְּכָל בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא. פֶּה אֶל פֶּה אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ, וּמִרְאָה וְלֹא בְּחִידָת וּתְמִנָּת ה' יִבִּיט, וּמְדוּעַ לֹא יֵרְאֶתֶם לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדֵי בְּמִשָּׁה?! וַיַּחַר אֶף ה' בָּם וַיִּלְךְ. וְהֶעֱנַן סָר מֵעַל הָאֶהֱל, וְהִנֵּה מְרִים מְצַרְעֵת כְּשֶׁלֶג, וַיִּפֹּן אֶהְרֶן אֶל מְרִים וְהִנֵּה מְצַרְעֵת. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶהְרֶן אֶל מִשָּׁה: בִּי אֲדֹנָי! אֵל נָא תִשֶׁת עֲלֵינוּ חֲטָאת אֲשֶׁר נִוְאלְנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר חֲטָאנוּ. אֵל נָא תְהִי כְפַת אֲשֶׁר בְּצִאתוֹ מִרְחֹם אִמּוֹ וַיֹּאכֵל חֲצִי בְּשָׂרוֹ. וַיִּצְעַק מִשָּׁה אֶל ה' לֵאמֹר: אֵל! נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ.

במדבר יב, א-יג

משנה סדר ההנהגה בתעניות כיצד? מוציאין את התיבה (ארון הקודש) שהיה בימיהם מיטלטל וכרגיל היו מעמידים אותו בחדר נעול סמוך לאולם בית הכנסת, ואילו בתענית מוציאים את התיבה לרחובה של עיר, ונותנין אפר מקלה (אפר של שריפה) על גבי התיבה כאות אבל, וכן נותנים אפר בראש הנשיא, ובראש אב בית דין, וכל אחד ואחד מן הציבור נותן בראשו...

תלמוד שנינו במשנה שנותנים אפר בראש הנשיא ובראש אב בית דין, והדר תני [וחזר ושנה] כל אחד ואחד נוטל ונותן בראשו. ותוהים: איני [האם כן הוא] הסדר הראוי? והתניא [והרי שנינו בברייתא]: רבי אומר: בגדולה בכל מקום שיש בו ענין של גדולה או נתינת כבוד מתחילין את הדבר מן הגדול שבאותה חבורה, ובכל מקום שיש בו קללה וביזוי מתחילין מן הקטן... ומדוע בתעניות מתחילים בביטוי אבל וצער מגדולי העדה? ומשיבים: הא חשיבותא לדידהו [זו משום חשיבות היא להם] ויש בכך גם כבוד, דאמרי להו [שאומרים להם], כלומר, רומזים על ידי מעשה זה: אתון חשיבותו למיבעי עלן רחמי אכולי עלמא [אתם חשובים לבקש עלינו רחמים על כל העולם] ולכן ראוי להתחיל בהם.

תלמוד בבלי, תענית טו, א-ב מהדורת שטיינזלץ

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: מפני מה לא נמשכה מלכות בית שאול? מפני שלא היה בו שום דופי. דאמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יהוצדק: אין מעמידין פרנס על הציבור אלא אם כן קופה של שרצים תלויה לו מאחוריו, שאם תזוח דעתו עליו – אומרין לו: חזור לאחוריך אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: מפני מה נענש שאול? מפני שמחל על כבודו, שנאמר "ובני בליעל אמרו: מה יושיענו זה?! ויבזוהו ולא הביאו לו מנחה, ויהי כמחריש".

תלמוד בבלי, יומא כב, ב



A Tale of Two Rabbis

Can or Should a Leader Be Humble?

Ilfa and Rabbi Yochanan were studying Torah together, and both were pressed for income. They said: “Let us get up from study and go start a business, so that we can take care of ourselves, ‘There shall be no needy among (because of) you.’” (Deuteronomy 15:4).

They went off and stopped to sit underneath a rickety wall to break bread.

Two ministering angels came and Rabbi Yochanan heard one say to the other: “Let’s push over this wall and kill them because they are leaving an eternal world for a temporary one!”

The other one answered: “Leave them, for one of them will have his day.”

Rabbi Yochanan overheard them, but Ilfa didn’t.

Rabbi Yochanan asked: “Did you hear anything, sir?” Ilfa answered: “No.”

Yochanan thought to himself, since I heard and Ilfa didn’t, this must mean that I am the one that will have his day!

Rabbi Yochanan said: “I will go back, and I will be able to sustain myself: For the poor will never cease from the earth.” (Deuteronomy 15:11)

Rabbi Yochanan returned, but Ilfa didn’t for a long time. When Ilfa finally returned, Rabbi Yochanan had been appointed the leader of the community.

People said to Ilfa: “If you had stayed we would have appointed you instead!” Ilfa walked to a ship and climbed up the main mast and said: “If there is one of you that can ask me a question from the Mishnah of Rabbi Chiyya and Rabbi Oshiya that I can’t answer, then I will jump down from this mast!”

This old man stepped forward and said over the following Mishnah:

It is taught:

One who says in his will: Give a shekel to my children for Shabbat, and there was a need to give them significantly more (a sela), then one gives them a sela. But if he says, *Only* give them a shekel, then they only receive a shekel. If they died, and others inherited in his son’s place. Regardless whether he said “Give” or “*only* give”—in this case, one only gives a shekel.

Ilfa said to him: “Who is the author of this statement? Rabbi Meir is, because he said that it is a mitzvah to fulfill the words of the deceased.”

Navigating the Old Man’s Mishnah

- If there is time afterward, look at the case where one bequeaths in his will a shekel’s worth of Shabbat provisions for his children.
- Why does one allow for more to be given if the man did not qualify his words with “only”?
- Why does this not hold true if his sons died before getting the chance to inherit?
- Does this Mishnah have a deeper connection with the narrative that preceded it? If so, what could it be?

A Tale of Two Rabbis

Hebrew Sources

אילפא ור' יוחנן הוו גרסי באורייתא [היו לומדים תורה] יחד, דחיקא להו מילתא טובא [נדחק להם הדבר מאוד] שהיו עניים גדולים ונזקקים מאוד בפרנסתם, אמרי: ניקום וניזיל וניעבד עיסקא [אמרו: הבה נעמוד, נלך ונעשה איזה שהוא עסק] ונקיים בנפשין [בעצמנו] מה שנאמר: "אפס כי לא יהיה בך אביון" (דברים טו, ד), ומוטב שלא ניעשה אנו אביונים גמורים. אזלו אותבי תותי גודא רעיעא [הלכו ישבו תחת כותל רעוע], הו קא כרכי ריפתא [והיו אוכלים פת]. אתו תרי [באו שני] מלאכי השרת, שמעיה [שמע] ר' יוחנן שאמר חד לחבריה [אחד לחבירו]: נישדי עליהו האי גודא ונקטלינהו [הבה נשליך עליהם כותל זה ונהרגם], לפי שמניחין חיי עולם הבא ועוסקין בחיי שעה! אמר ליה [לו] אידך [המלאך האחר]: שבקינהו [הנח להם], משום דאיכא בהו חד דקיימא ליה שעתא [שיש ביניהם אחד שהשעה עומדת לו] ויבוא להצלחה רבה. ר' יוחנן שמע כל זה, אילפא לא שמע. אמר ליה [לו] ר' יוחנן לאילפא: האם שמע מר מידי [אדוני דבר]? אמר ליה [לו]: לא. אמר ר' יוחנן בלבו: מדשמעי אנא [מכיון שאני שמעתי] ואילפא לא שמע, שמע מינה לדידי קיימא לי שעתא [מכאן שלי עומדת השעה]. אמר ליה [לו] ר' יוחנן לאילפא: איהדר [אחזור] אני הביתה, ואוקי בנפשאי [ואקיים בעצמי] מה שנאמר: "כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ" (דברים טו, יא). ר' יוחנן הדר [חזר] לבית המדרש, אילפא לא הדר [חזר] והלך למרחקים לעסקים. עד דאתא [שבא] אילפא ממסעותיו מליך [מלך], כלומר, נעשה ר' יוחנן התמנה לראש ישיבה, ומתוך כך גם השתנה מצבו הכלכלי לטובה. אמרו לו לאילפא: אי אתיב מר וגריס [אם היה אדוני יושב ולומד] ולא הולך לעסקים, לא הוה מליך מר [היה מולך אדוני, ר' יוחנן], שלא היה נעשה ראש ישיבה. אזל תלא נפשיה באסקריא דספינתא [הלך ותלה עצמו בתורן של ספינה] אמר בלשון זו: אי איכא דשאל לי במתניתא [אם יש אדם שישאל אותי בברייתא של] ר' חייא ור' אושעיא ולא פשטינא לה ממתניתין [אפתור לו את הבעיה מתוך משנתנו], נפילנא מאסקריא דספינתא וטבענא [נופל אני מתורן הספינה וטובע], שרצה להראות שגדול כוחו בתורה גם עכשיו, ולא בשל הפסקת לימודו לא עלה לגדולה. מסופר: אתא ההוא סבא [בא זקן אחד] תנא ליה [ושנה לו] ברייתא זו: אדם העומד למות האומר בצוואתו: תנו שקל לבני בשבת (בכל שבוע), והן ראויין לפי צורכיהם לתת להם סלע (ארבעה דינרים) – נותנים להם סלע, ששקל שאמר לא היה אלא הערכתו, ולא התכוון דווקא לסכום זה. ואם אמר: אל תתנו להם אלא שקל אין נותנין להם אלא שקל ולא יותר. אם אמר: אם מתו בניי ירשו אחרים תחתיהם, הרי אז בין שאמר "תנו" ובין שאמר "אל תתנו" שאפילו אמר שקל ולא אמר שקל בלבד אין נותנין להם אלא שקל ולא יותר, משום שאז ברור שהאב התכוון לתת לבניו רק קיצבה מסויימת בלבד ולא יותר מזה, שהרי רוצה להוריש יתרת הממון לאחרים, ושאל הזקן את אילפא מה המקור במשנה להלכה זו שבברייתא. אמר ליה [לו] אילפא: הא מני [זו כשיטת מי], כשיטת ר' מאיר היא, שאמר: מצוה לקיים דברי המת. ודבר זה מפורש במשנה. ולפי שיטה זו מתפרשת הברייתא היטב, שאנו הולכים בכל מקרה אחרי כוונתו של הנפטר.

תענית כא, מהדורת שטיינזלץ



Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim

Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim

By: Deborah Bodin Cohen

Age Appropriate:

5-7 year olds

Class Length:

1-1½ hours



Look Closely and Select a Book

WHY THIS BOOK WAS SELECTED

- The book highlights an unusual leader; someone who was willing to take a literal leap of faith. Nachshon led by being willing to do what others were not.
- Many children long to try new things but, at the same time, they are fearful. This book reassures that a “leap” can be a step of courage.
- Though the book speaks about God, it speaks of faith as trusting in God and trusting in oneself, which is language a primary age child can understand, especially with the concrete example given in the story.
- The book can be read before Passover, but is also one that can be used at any time of year a story of courage is appropriate



This book-based Program curriculum was developed by The PJ Library.

The **L-I-S-T-E-N** rubric was initially developed by Ina S.G. Regosin, Director, Hebrew College, Early Childhood Institute, with input from Rachel Raz and Sherry Grossman.

Program submitted by Iris Koller, Syracuse: iriskoller@gmail.com

Identify Big Ideas

VALUES TO HIGHLIGHT

1. **Ometz lev:** Courageous leadership

GOALS OF PROGRAM

1. Highlight and connect the major themes of this book to daily life
2. Involve families in a project to continue to engage in Jewish living at home:
 - a. to note times when their child displays faith and tries something new
 - b. to share stories of struggles and leaps of faith

Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim

Set the Scene (10–15 minutes)

{ Intro Activity }

Sharing Stories of Strength and Courage

Materials Needed

- Sheet of drawing paper, pencil, and crayons for each child and parent
- A large sheet with the phrase *Be strong and of good courage* (in Deuteronomy 31:7, God told Moses to tell Joshua as he was charged to be the next leader of the Jewish people, the leader that would help them to settle in the land of Israel after years of wandering)
 1. Have this large sheet hanging on a wall that has lots of space for additional papers to be added around it
 2. Have additional 8½x11 copies on the table with the additional questions and directions:
 - *When have you been strong and of good courage?*
 - *When have you tried something that you were a bit scared to do?*
 - *When have you led others?*
 - *Draw a picture and write a sentence or two to tell your story. Parents can share their stories, too!*
 - Have some PJ books available for families to read together if they finish the project sooner
- Poster putty or painter's tape (to hang participants' art work around the text).

Adaptations for Group Size and Age**Larger Groups**

Before hanging their pictures have families share their stories at the tables.

Younger Children

May need more prompting from parents and will need parents to write for them.



Directions

1. Be sure to welcome each family as they arrive. Direct them to where they can put their hats, coats, gloves, etc., and to where they can sign in and make name tags.
2. Direct them to a table and if others are there, invite them to introduce themselves and share what the newcomers are to do.
 - a. Point out the text on the wall and share that the words “be strong and of good courage” are from the Torah, sharing context noted above.
 - b. Point out the quote and directions on the table. Ask parents to help children think, and children to help parents think, of a time they were strong and had courage, and then to draw and write a bit about it.
3. As you have time, wander and chat with people about what they have done; prompt with questions if people are struggling, such as:
 - a. Did they learn to swim even if they were a bit scared?
 - b. Did they teach someone how to do something?
 - c. Did they give a presentation (again, teaching people) or take part in a play even though it made them nervous to be in front of people like that?
4. If folks come in too late to finish this, encourage them to think about the question and be ready to share; suggest they can complete the picture later or at home.
5. As families finish they can hang their stories around the text on the wall.

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Tell the Story (20–30 minutes)

READER'S INTRODUCTION**{ Transition }**

Invite all to come and join you. Ideally you can have space under or near the *Be strong and of good courage* text for all to sit. Ask them to bring their pictures to share.

NOTE: *If group is very large, ask them to introduce themselves to each other and share what they drew and wrote about at their tables before they come and join you.*

As everyone settles in, welcome all. Have families briefly introduce themselves and share, in a sentence or two, each of their pictures. One family member can stand and point out their picture on the wall. Briefly explain that the stories the families just shared help to make words that were said a long time ago, words from the Torah, relevant to today. Also share that even though those words were written thousands of years ago, the stories are one way of showing that the lessons of Torah still have meaning for our lives today.

Go on to explain that Rabbis and Jewish teachers connect stories to the Torah, too. Many times when they are writing a *d'var Torah* or sermon they start with the words in the Torah and then connect them to a story in their own life or the lives of others today.

- Rabbis did that a long time ago, too. They tried to understand the Torah by thinking about their lives.
- Also, when they weren't quite sure how something in the Torah happened, they created stories to help explain what might have happened. Those stories are called *midrash*. Today's story is a *midrash*, telling the story of a boy who just might have helped the Red Sea to part when the Jewish people, who had been slaves in the land of Egypt, were trying to get beyond the sea to be free people.

SETTLING IN TO READ

As you read encourage active movement as the book describes if you see that the children are restless.

- They can, with great effort, pound straw and mud into bricks, for instance.
- They can make the sounds of horses by slapping hands on their thighs.
- They can cheer for freedom.

FINISHING THE STORY

You might want to ask the children and parents:

- What did they like best about the story?
- How was Nachshon a leader?
- Was he *strong and of good courage* and if yes, how?

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ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Use movement and active dramatic reading to engage the listeners.

Adaptations for Group Size and Age**Larger Groups**

Stand if needed to show all the pictures in the story.

Younger Children

Be sure to plan to engage them in appropriate movements to enhance their experience and keep them engaged (see above).

Enhance and Extend the Experience

{ Follow-up Activity #1 }**Be a Leader Without Saying a Word**

25–35 minutes

This is a 2-part activity—first the craft of making a drum, and then using the drum to lead others. If you do not have time for both parts.

LEADER INTRODUCTION

Before families head back to their tables, let them know that just like Nachshon sometimes we need to take a risk and try something new, something we might not have thought we could do. We are going to do that very soon, but first we need to make something to help us: we will make drums! (see sidebar at right)

{ Follow Up Activity #1 }**Drum Making****Materials Needed:**

- Assorted coffee cans, quart-sized yogurt containers, cocoa tins, etc.
- Construction paper of a size that can wrap around the cans
- Masking or packing tape
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers
- Paper glue

Advance Preparation for Drum Making

- Collect various metal and plastic containers of quart size or larger
- If families will be working at tables, it will be helpful to have previously packed containers of materials for each table (see below)
- Also useful to have a sample made

Directions

1. Each participant (parents and children alike) should choose a container.
2. Using the tape provided, they should cover the opening at the top with overlapping strips of tape, being sure that they have no spaces in between the strips.
3. Then, measure and cut a piece of construction paper to wrap around the body of the can with enough overlap to be able to glue it in place once it is decorated.
4. Decorate the paper, and then glue it around the can.

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{ Follow-up Activity #2 }

Being a Drum Leader

Note to Leaders:

For many of you, this might be a day where you are taking a risk as a leader. Many of us are very used to leading with our words. This activity will stretch us as well as our participants, and it is something worth sharing with them as part of the wrap-up of the program. As you start leading without a sound, you will likely be a courageous leader!



{ Follow-up Activity #2 }

Directions

1. With the beating of your drum, call everyone to attention and then with a marching beat and signal of your hand, draw everyone to march and sit in a circle.
2. Hold your hand up for silence.
3. Beat a simple rhythm, and then just with hand motions, invite all to join you so that everyone is beating in unison.
4. Get fancy. Stop everyone, and then, with hand signals, divide the group in half. Model and then have everyone join you in a basic rhythm. Then, while they continue, model and have the other half do a variation that complements the initial rhythm.
5. Silence all and then motion a parent to come up and (ideally continuing without speaking) invite him/her to play a brief pattern of beats. Then invite all to follow his/her model a few times to make music.
6. Send that person back to sit down and then bring up one of the older, more eager-looking children to do the same.
7. Continue in this fashion until many (or all, if it is a small group) have had a turn.
8. End with a “drumroll of beats” by all and then take a minute or so to give praises to this group of great leaders and terrific drummers!
9. Talk about how leadership is about doing, not just about using words to tell others what to do.

Nurture the Family

TAKE THE LEADERSHIP HOME

As a closing activity, provide each participant with an award for “Courageous Leadership” (see one idea attached) citing their being willing to step up and lead all in drumming.

- You can immediately encourage them to add a sentence or drawing to the picture they shared at the beginning of the program.
- Encourage them (parents and children alike) to recognize future moments of leadership by adding more stars and notations to the award.
- Make sure families take down their pictures from the beginning of the program.
- If you'd like to end with a song, consider Sheldon Low's *You Can Do It* from his CD *It's All Challah to Me!*
- Let parents know you will be sending home an e-mail filled with information about Jewish life and raising children to be leaders.

{ Try This at Home }

Web links to learn from and share

On Children, Judaism, and Leadership

www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring_For_Others/Ethical_Behavior/Concepts_and_Ideas/Derekh_Eretz/Teaching_Your_Children.shtml

www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring_For_Others/Ethical_Behavior/Concepts_and_Ideas/Being_a_Mentsch/Raising_a_Mentsch.shtml

www.associatedcontent.com/article/3262/help_your_children_become_good_leaders.html?cat=25

www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Relationships/Parents_and_Children/Raising_a_Jewish_Feminist.shtml

www.ehow.com/how_5021792_develop-leadership-skills-children.html

Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim

חִזַּק וְאַמֵּץ

Hazak v'ematz

Be strong and of good courage

Devarim 31:7

*When have you been strong and of good courage?
When have you done something that you were scared to do?
When have you led others?*

*Draw a picture and write a sentence or two to tell your story.
Parents can share their stories, too!*

