

Lessons in Leadership

"וישמע משה ויפל על פניו"

We all know that being a leader comes along with tremendous responsibility. Late hours, and constant complaints are no strangers to the position of leadership. In this week's Parsha, we are taught a lesson in leadership from the quintessential leader, Moshe Rabbeinu. The Parsha starts off with Korach, Dasan, Aviram, and 250 members of the Sanhedrin challenging Moshe's leadership, and questioning his appointment of Aharon Hakohen. Upon hearing their complaints the Pasuk states, "ויפל על פניו" – and Moshe fell on his face." Rashi explains the reasoning behind Moshe's reaction of despair. Moshe had already pleaded with Hashem three times to spare the Jewish people when they sinned, and perhaps his prayer to defend the Jewish people would no longer be accepted.

Based on this Rashi we can glean a tremendous insight into the proper conduct of a leader. Moshe's authority was just challenged by the very people he had invested all of his efforts to take care of. In addition, his position as the Navi Hashem was being questioned after Korach and his followers witnessed Hashem speaking to him.

"Moshe Rabbeinu's despair did not stem from being personally slighted"

The natural and normal human response would have been to feel attacked and underappreciated resulting in a feeling of despair. This response surely would have been understandable based on the Gemara in Sanhedrin (110) that says, that they not only attacked Moshe's leadership, but they also maligned his character by suspecting him of having affairs, and even warning their wives not to be alone with him. Yet we find that Moshe Rabbeinu's reaction of despair did not stem from any feelings of being personally slighted. It was rather caused by his deep love for the Jewish people. The realization that perhaps Hashem would possibly not accept his heartfelt plea to save them was the cause of his extreme anguish.

We see from here that a leader must be unwavering in his dedication and care even in the face of a total character assassination. Although reaching Moshe Rabbeinu's level is unimaginable, the image of his devotion, despite tremendous personal insult can help us access our own personal strength in similar situations. It can help us be better and stronger leaders.

While we stand in awe at the ability of Moshe Rabbeinu to withstand such a personal affront, we are perplexed by the behavior of the Jewish people. How could they challenge the authority of Moshe Rabbeinu after knowing he was appointed by Hashem, the ultimate authority? In addition, what caused them to accuse Moshe Rabbeinu of having an affair, immoral behavior that they would never attribute to any decent human being, let alone the greatest Navi that ever lived?

Our Sages tell us that this whole episode was caused by the middah of jealousy. It was this middah that caused them to distort what they themselves heard at Har Sinai, and attack Moshe's character with absurd accusations. We see from here the extent that jealousy can corrupt the intellect and cloud our judgement. If this middah so negatively impacted that generation, which were on such a lofty level and therefore the jealousy may have been so small, how much more so can our jealousy influence us. We must utilize the power of limud hamussar, with a strong emphasis on character refinement, in order to protect ourselves.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לרפואה שלמה רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה