Instructor’s Guide
for Torah Live’s
Leadership

The Ultimate Responsibility

Version 1.1

“It is rare to see talent of this order used to so high and holy a cause. Rabbi Roth’s inspirational videos are outstanding. Will unlock the doors of learning to many.”

— Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
LEADERSHIP:
The Ultimate Responsibility

Sponsored by
Michael & Bettina Bradfield

In memory of
SUSI & FRED BRADFIELD
Sara Gitel bat Mordechai Menachem z”l
and Yaakov ben Zvi z”l
Mankind’s task is to be fruitful and multiply and not remain alone in any way. A person should always produce, develop, and build up his surroundings to fill the world, and be a blessing.

— Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, Ramchal, Derech Eitz Chaim
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for generously sponsoring this presentation

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Michael & Bettina Bradfield

who made this presentation possible.
You hold in your hands the product of more than one person — as of course has been noted in the list of acknowledgments. But I feel it essential to single out two very special individuals who initiated the entire project: Michael and Bettina Bradfield.

Michael’s strong sense of responsibility for the Jewish nation, which was instilled in him by his late parents, Susi and Fred Bradfield, was the driving force behind the project. Thanks to Michael and Bettina’s leadership and generosity, this state-of-the-art presentation on leadership and social responsibility will afford you great pleasure when you see your students learning with both ease and joy. I look forward — as I am sure you do — to the production of many more such presentations for the benefit of our youth.

Before beginning the project, Michael suggested that we conduct market research to gauge the demand for a multimedia presentation on this topic. The results of the research were overwhelming: NCSY (Birthright), UJIA, TRIBE, Meor, National Jewish Outreach Program, Aish, SEED, JLE, Maimonides, and other major educational organizations all agreed on the great need for a multimedia presentation on leadership.

The most powerful impression does not come from that which students hear in lectures, but from that which they think about on their own. As such, your teachings will become internalized by your students only after they ponder, struggle, and grapple with the issues by themselves.

To this end, I have included a discussion section after each chapter, with good opening questions to lead an exciting discussion on the topic, as well as a suggested reading list, should you like to research any topic further.

I look forward to hearing from you personally and working with you to build future Jewish leaders.
This material was not organized into a PowerPoint presentation, where you must begin with the first slide and follow a linear path until you reach the end. It is, rather, presented as a flexible program, allowing you to pick and choose sections to teach, depending on the time available and your audience.

There is enough information provided in the presentation so that you can choose to teach it in a single class or spread it out over a number of weeks.

Below is a suggestion for a three-lesson plan:

**CLASS 1 – approx. 50 minutes:**
- Responsibility Part 1 — Judaism’s View on the World (12 minutes)
- Responsibility Part 2 — Sources (12 minutes)
- Responsibility Part 3 — Use It or Lose It (10 minutes)
- Discussion (16 minutes)

**CLASS 2 – approx. 50 minutes:**
- Responsibility Part 4 — The Modern World (12 minutes)
- Genuineness (12 minutes)
- Discussion (8 minutes)
- Resilience (12 minutes)
- Discussion (8 minutes)

**CLASS 3 – approx. 50 minutes:**
- Humility (10 minutes)
- Discussion (8 minutes)
- Commitment to Personal Growth (8 minutes)
- Discussion (8 minutes)
- Conclusion (6 minutes)
- Discussion (10 minutes)
There is a new phenomenon that has become very popular lately. From seminars to college classes to newly-established PhDs, the buzzword in today’s generation is “leadership.” Look at almost any resume today and there is one key word that stands out more than all the others — “leadership.” Bookstores are overflowing with titles on the subject. In fact, Amazon.com has over thirty thousand books available on the topic!

While leadership is becoming a more popular field of study in the Western world, we Jews have been pushing the importance of the topic for thousands of years. Our Torah is filled with a wealth of information on the subject, and contains real wisdom about what it takes to become a leader, the qualities one must have, and one’s personal responsibility as a leader.

The Torah discusses everything. When the leading Torah Sages stated their opinion on a government matter in Israel in 1951, David Ben-Gurion admonished them, “Don’t interfere with politics.”

His remark, which has often been echoed by others, is founded on the mistaken belief that the Torah only deals with so-called “ritualistic” matters, like the kashrut of a pot or the height of a sukkah, but has nothing to do with worldly affairs, such as the running of a country.

“Delve into Torah,” say the Sages, “de’kula ba — for everything is in it”: every facet of creation and every wisdom of the world. The Torah offers direction on the most diverse topics, from how to become a leader and speak in public to how to view world events and care for the environment.

As Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin put it, “There is no question in the world whose answer cannot be found in Torah….One only needs to open his eyes to find where it is written.”

Even in our generation there are those whose study and understanding of the Torah is so in-depth that they are able to gain clarity on scientific subjects and other areas of worldly knowledge. The Chazon Ish had a profound understanding of human anatomy and was able to guide doctors on how to best perform surgeries, even drawing detailed diagrams for them. Yet, he never attended medical school, nor any lectures on the subject. He learned everything from the Torah.

We see that the Torah is not just a dry set of laws, but a living entity, encompassing all areas of life. This is as true of the topic of leadership and social responsibility as it is in other areas of Torah.

In the coming series, we will be looking at what the Torah has to say about effective leadership. In particular, we are going to explore five traits that are crucial for a Jewish leader to have.
1. Responsibility
2. Genuineness
3. Resilience
4. Humility
5. Commitment to personal growth

But this is not just a presentation to show you where and how the Torah speaks about these five elements of modern day leadership. This is also a presentation to highlight the unique contribution of Judaism to leadership.

Leadership is not just something we choose to do. We can’t just sit back with the latest leadership book from the Harvard Business Review and decide maybe it’s for me, maybe not. For the Jew, the question is not do you want to be a leader. The question is where are you going to be a leader. You don’t have to be the president of the United States and you don’t have to be the president of a synagogue, but you do have to be a president of something. Maybe you’ll be the president of your family or of your friend’s health, but on some level you have to work on being a good example and good influence on others.

So put on your seat belts and join me as we take a tour down the well-traveled path of Jewish leadership.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Why do you think leadership has become such a popular subject?
- In what areas do you think Jewish communities need good leadership the most today?
- Do you have the capabilities of being a great leader?
- Do you aspire to being a great leader?
Responsibility Part 1

Judaism’s View on the World

Each major milestone in life is marked by an increase in responsibility: bar mitzva — responsibility for oneself, get a job — responsibility to manage money wisely, get married — responsibility towards one’s spouse, have children — responsibility towards one’s family, have grandchildren — responsibility for a new generation....

When you were a child, whether you learned something or not was the school’s responsibility. But as you grow older, it becomes yours. You can no longer say, “they didn’t teach me,” or, “I wasn’t there that day.” When you are an adult, that’s no longer a valid excuse.

As a child, your parents provided for you (hopefully!). You didn’t have to worry about paying any of the bills, such as for food or clothing. It wasn’t your responsibility. Your parents took care of it for you. They bore the yoke of earning a living. But as you mature, you must take responsibility.

Life is about rising to ever higher levels of responsibility.

Rights vs. Obligations

The rest of the world tries to convince us otherwise. The media constantly feeds us with messages about what we are entitled to. Everything is about “rights.” Consider the phrases: human rights, constitutional rights, political rights, labor rights, student rights, racial rights, the right of the public to be informed... rights everywhere you look. The whole motivation for our social behavior is galvanized by our clamor for rights which we are pressed to assert as our due.

This is in contrast to Judaism, which knows of no intrinsic rights. Indeed, there is no word for “rights” in the Hebrew Bible or in the classic sources of Jewish law.

In the moral vocabulary of the Jewish discipline of life we speak of human duties, not of human rights — of obligations, not of entitlements.

At Mount Sinai, God gave us the Ten Commandments — not a Bill of Human Rights.

In the charity legislation of the Bible, it is the rich man who is commanded to support the poor, not the poor man who has the right to demand support from the rich.⁹
Economic and social justice is to be achieved by impressing upon the privileged the duty to give, and not upon the underprivileged the right to demand.

In Jewish medical ethics, the emphasis is on the doctor’s responsibility to heal and offer service, more than on the patient’s right to be treated.\(^{10}\)

In Judaism’s view, the correct way to look at the world is by asking, “What can I contribute to society? What issues can I fix in the world? What problems can I solve?”

**Reason for Creation**

In fact, according to Jewish thought, this is the reason for man’s existence.

God could have created a perfect world. A Creator capable of creating a universe of such magnitude and complexity, of such exquisite beauty and sophistication, could easily have worked things out so there wouldn’t be famine or hurricanes or tsunamis. The reason God created evil and seeming imperfections, such as poverty and natural disasters, is so that man should step up to the mark and perfect the world.

God created the possibility for cruelty and evil in the world not out of some cosmic oversight, God forbid, but for man’s sake, so that we should reach the highest level of existence, which is to be like God. By perfecting the world, man perfects himself.\(^{11}\)

Consider: God didn’t make bread grow on trees; He produced wheat that man must then take and bake into bread. God didn’t make clothes grow ready-made from the ground; He created flax that man must process into clothes.\(^{12}\) In the same vein, God created people who need help so that man can join Him in perfecting the world.\(^{13}\)

God could have done everything for us, providing man with all his needs. He didn’t, because He wanted to leave us room to become God-like. That’s what life is about: taking responsibility.

Our mission in the world — as Jews — is to see how we can contribute to society, how we can bring humanity to its fulfillment, fixing all the problems that exist in the world. This is our responsibility, our obligation, our privilege.

**Pleasure**

An amazing side benefit is that taking responsibility also makes us feel great!

Psychologists have discovered that people who feel their lives have a high level of meaning are better equipped to handle whatever challenges life throws their way. They also experience higher levels of work enjoyment, general satisfaction, and happiness. On the flip side, feeling that one’s life has less meaning leads to a greater need for therapy, feelings of depression and anxiety, substance abuse, as well as other forms of distress.\(^{14}\)

After conducting national surveys for over thirty years, Dr. Adam Grant of the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania reported that the vast majority of Americans chose meaningfulness as the **single most important feature** that they seek in a job.

Viktor Frankl’s experience as a concentration camp inmate taught him that our main drive or motivation in life is neither pleasure (as Freud had thought) nor power (as Adler had thought), but meaningfulness. He observed that the prisoners who survived longest in the
concentration camps were not those who were physically strong, but those who maintained a strong sense of meaning.\textsuperscript{15}

The list of studies goes on, but the point here is to show that not only did God create us to lead lives of responsibility, He also wired us in such a way that it brings us the greatest pleasure.
Having understood the existential importance of taking responsibility, let us look at some of the Biblical and Talmudical sources that spell this out.

The Torah commands us to emulate God’s ways — “ve’halacha be’drachav.” Just as He is merciful, so must we be merciful; just as He is compassionate, so must we be compassionate; just as He clothes the naked, so must we. In short, God takes responsibility for His creations. Emulating His ways requires us to do the same.

The Talmud says that every individual should feel, “bishvili nivra ha’olam — the world was created for me.” Without a proper understanding, this statement could sound very haughty, as if the entire existence is mine to do with it as I please. Obviously, this isn’t the point. I mean, how many hamburgers and fries can one person eat already!

The point, rather, is that we should view the world’s struggles as our own. “Bishvili nivra ha’olam — the world was created for me,” means that we should view the world’s problems as having been created for us to rise up and fix them.

God calls us “a light unto the nations” and a “kingdom of ministers.” He wants us to set an example for all the nations of the world about what it means to serve Him and bring the world to perfection.

Examples from Chumash

The need to actively get involved in fixing the world instead of just minding our own business and keeping to ourselves has also been the example set for us by our ancestors throughout history.

Before we look at particular examples, it is important to remember that the stories in the Chumash are not fairy tales from some ancient storybook, but a description of what a Jew should act like. The Chumash is there to explain to us what the DNA of a Jewish soul is comprised of and what behavior we should be aiming for. As the Talmud says, each one of us should ask ourselves, “Matai yagiu ma’asai l’maasei avotai — When will my actions reach that of my forefathers?”
The people in the Torah are people whose lives we should strive to emulate, modeling our lives on their behavior. With that in mind, let us look more closely at some of the characters from the Chumash:

**Avraham:** Our father Avraham was born into a world so far from our own that it is hard to imagine what it was like: twenty generations of murder and theft; widespread idol worship; acts of kindness were not practiced.

What did he do? He destroyed his father’s idols, making a mockery of them. He single-handedly challenged Nimrod, a cold blooded murderer who ruled over the entire world. Risking his life to stand up for truth, he was thrown into the fiery furnace. It would have been much easier for him to sit back and do nothing, to live a quiet life of peace and tranquillity. Instead, he went from town to town and country to country, teaching people the truth, until he gathered tens of thousands of followers.

He wasn’t doing this because he was commanded to by God. Remember: this was before the Torah was given! There were no commandments. He acted this way because he had an ingrained sense of responsibility; a deep drive to stand up for truth and do what was right. This drive burned so strongly inside him that he was prepared to stand up to God Himself — as he did when trying to save the people of Sodom and Amora, pleading with God for mercy.

**Yehuda:** Yehuda was chosen as the leader of the Jewish nation, the king from which all future royalty would descend: “Lo yosur shevet me’Yehuda — The royal scepter shall not pass from the House of Judah.”

Dovid HaMelech and all subsequent monarchs descended from Yehuda; Nachshon, the head of the other tribal leaders, was his offspring; Betzalel, the builder of the Mishkan, was his descendant; Otniel, the first of the Judges, also traced his ancestry to Yehuda. The two sanctuaries were both built by members of his tribe: the first by Shlomo HaMelech, and the second by Zerubavel; and in the future, the third and final sanctuary — may it be built speedily and in our day — will be built by Mashiach, who will be a descendant of Yehuda.

How did Yehuda merit this awesome honor? In what stead did he become the tribe of royalty?

Say the Sages: it was his willingness to take responsibility:

When the brothers were about to throw Yosef into a pit, it was Yehuda who took responsibility and saved his life.

When Tamar was being taken out to be killed for alleged harlotry — a crime that she had not committed — Yehuda took responsibility for his actions and admitted his guilt. He admitted the truth even though it cost him his dignity, his self-respect, and his reputation. Many a kingdom has been lost, many rivers of blood have been spilled for the sake of honor. But not so with Yehuda. He stood up before everyone — as embarrassing as it was — and took responsibility for his behavior.

When Yosef, in the guise of viceroy of Egypt, refused to give the brothers grain, essentially starving them to death unless Benjamin came to Egypt — a move Jacob did not agree to — it was Yehuda who stood up and took personal responsibility for Benjamin’s safety.

It was in the merit of his taking responsibility, say the Sages, that Yehuda inherited — for himself and all his descendants — the most prestigious role among the Jewish nation: kingship.
And of course, the trait of responsibility was very pronounced in the greatest leader we ever had: Moshe Rabbeinu.

Moshe: The Torah says that Moshe “grew up,” and left Pharaoh’s palace to share in his brothers’ suffering. Everyday he voluntarily went out to join in his fellow Jews’ work, carrying their heavy loads and weeping in their pain.

He devised a plan to improve their lot, sticking his neck out and risking his own safety to persuade Pharaoh to give them a day off work.

When he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite, he intervened.

When he saw two Israelites fighting, he intervened.

In Midian, when he saw shepherds abusing the daughters of Yitro, he intervened.

Time and time again he took action, standing up to fight for what was right. Not because anyone told him to, or coerced him, but simply because that’s what a Jew is all about: accepting social responsibility.

Remember: Moshe lived in the Egyptian palace, surrounded by gold and silver. He could have easily avoided every one of these confrontations, staying in his luxurious home and indulging in the splendor and beauty that surrounded him. But he did not. Instead, he displayed the character traits of a true leader: giving up one’s own security to better the welfare of others.

A person is measured according to his level of responsibility. Someone who takes no responsibility whatsoever for his actions, such as a baby who acts as he pleases without a care in the world, is not counted as an intelligent being. And on the other end of the spectrum, someone who takes full responsibility for his actions, including in his circle the lives of others, is worthy of royalty and leadership.28

If we’re looking to emulate the ways of our forefathers, the message we should absorb from them is: accept responsibility, and more responsibility, and more responsibility, and when you think you can’t handle any more — take more responsibility!
Each of us is born with unique gifts and talents: some people are artistic, some have been blessed with wealth, some are great organizers, others are musical, some have a way with people, others are very intelligent...

We are brought up to believe that these assets are ours to do with as we please. We can choose to use our talents to benefit others, or not.

Judaism, however, teaches us that the gifts we are blessed with are not ours to do with as we want, to use or to ignore at our discretion. They have been granted to us in order to play a role, to fulfill a unique task or mission.

When the Jews’ lives were threatened by Achashveirosh, Mordechai beseeched Esther to beg Achashveirosh for mercy. Sensing Esther’s hesitancy, Mordechai told her, “U’mi yodei’a im l’et kazot higat l’malchut — Who knows if it wasn’t specifically for this reason that you were chosen for royalty.”29

Mordechai was saying: Don’t think that your being chosen as queen was for your own personal benefit — that you lucked out and now get to live in a fancy palace. No! You were placed in this unique position for your people’s benefit, to save them. This is what is expected of you.30

This way of looking at our talents goes a step further, and that is, if you do not use what you were given for the purpose it was granted to you, you risk losing it. As Mordechai warns Esther, “Revach v’hatzala ya’amod l’Yehudim mimakom acher v’at u’beit avich tovedo — Relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish.”31

The Bible tells the story of Navot, who had a beautiful voice. Each year, he would go up to Jerusalem to sing in the Holy Temple, where hundreds of thousands of Jews from the whole country gathered to hear him. One time, he refused to come, and as a consequence he was killed.32

We are brought up to believe that if you are talented, you are lucky. Your life will be that much easier! Judaism teaches us that if you’re talented, you’re responsible. More is expected of you.

The great Sage, Rabban Gamliel, once offered two of his students positions of authority, but they declined.
“Do you imagine that I am offering you honors?” he told them. “Do you think I am granting you authority, that I am giving you the opportunity to rule over the community and become rich and powerful? If so, you are sadly mistaken! Avdut ani noten lachem — I am offering you servitude. I am calling upon you to toil long and hard for the common good. You have no right to shy away from an opportunity to serve and uplift our people.”

People sometimes take their talents for granted, assuming that because they had them last year and the year before, they will have them in the future. The truth, however, is that talents are a gift from God to be used for a certain purpose, and if a person doesn’t properly use what he was given, he could end up forfeiting them, God forbid.

We have to realize that our talents are there, not for our personal benefit, but for us to use for the world.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Why is it that taking responsibility feels so good?²⁴
- Why is it that we find it hard to take on responsibility?
- How has the internet allowed us to take on more responsibility? OR, is the Internet used as an excuse not to take responsibility?
- Do you think our society promotes people taking responsibility?
- Who is a role model for you in your life of someone who takes responsibility?
- Who are two people in your life that you are taking responsibility for?
It is clear that Jews, religious or not, always had a passion for changing the world. The number of Nobel Prizes they’ve won is one small indicator of Jews standing up to revolutionize the way people look at the world.

Consider: Over the last 100 years of Nobel Prizes, over 20 percent of the laureates were of the Jewish faith — 20 percent! What makes this especially impressive is the fact that less than one-fifth of 1 percent of the world’s population is Jewish!

Throughout Jewish history we see countless examples of individuals who stood up for a higher cause. People who said: I am going to be bigger than my little world around me.

**Example 1: Rabbi Noach Weinberg**

USE: http://www.kiruv.com/forYourInspiration/movies/fromtheashes.asp

10:15-12:57 Introduction to the problem that he saw
20:48-21:56 What he decided to do about it
22:15-23:06 What it was like when he started — five guys.

He had five guys in his yeshiva, and only one guy signed up for his mission!

And look what came of it...

FIND PICTURES OF HIS SUCCESS. ALL STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE YESHIVA

**Example 2: Hershel Weber**

One spring day in 1962, Hershel Weber was walking down the street in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Suddenly, he heard a man cry out that he had a sharp pain in his chest. The man collapsed right in front of Hershel.

Hershel screamed for help and within seconds people called the police and an ambulance. Hershel stood over the man, helplessly assuring him that aid was on the way. One minute
Responsibility Part 4

I passed. Two minutes passed. No sign of the ambulance. Three minutes passed. Four minutes passed. The man was now unconscious. Five minutes. Six minutes. Still no sign of the ambulance. Eight minutes passed. The man by now was turned blue. By the time the ambulance arrived, ten minutes later, the man was dead.

Hershel was shaken by the event. He realized the need for faster emergency aid and felt something had to be done. He had no credentials: no professional background, no previous medical training, no administrative or fundraising skills, no university education. But he saw a need and decided to act.

What did he do? He signed up for a first aid course. But then he did more than that. He went out and actually bought an oxygen tank and spread the word around town that if anyone needed medical aid, they should call him.

A few months later, a lady woke up early in the morning and found her husband dead next to her. She let out a blood curdling scream. The neighbors came running. Soon there was a whole commotion. People said, “Quick. Call Hershel. Maybe he can help.”

Hershel arrived with his oxygen tank. But of course there was nothing to be done. The man had passed away several hours earlier.

As Hershel was walking out the room, he overheard people muttering, “Hershel killed that man!”

Imagine that you were Hershel. Imagine the time and energy you invested trying to make things better, and then people throw it back in your face, accusing you of murdering a man. What would you do? Most people would give up. They’d say, “What do I need this for? I was just trying to help.”

But Hershel persevered, and thanks to him we now have Hatzolah — the largest volunteer Emergency Medical Service provider in the world. Hatzolah has a budget of over a million dollars and saves hundreds of lives each year. Yet it was all started by one man: Hershel Webber. A man that if you looked at him you would never believe he could start such an organization. I mean, he had none of the credentials you would associate with opening such a huge organization.

But there’s one thing he did have — one thing that if you have that, you have it all. He had a sense of responsibility.

Example 3: Sara Schenirer

Sara Schenirer lived at a time when there was not such thing as Jewish schools for girls. It just didn’t exist. Sure, Jewish boys had chadorim and yeshivas, and learned Chumash and Mishna, but the girls? They had nothing. Even Sara Schenirer herself had no formal Jewish education. She was a simple seamstress, but she got it into her head that girls also needed a Jewish education.

What did she do? She began with two students. Her first school just had a table and chairs. No teacher’s desk, no blackboard. As more students joined, they would sit on the floor. But she pushed on, undeterred. She went up to many leaders to try and open their eyes to the need for a school for girls, but they weren’t interested. Her friends tried to talk her out of it. Her own brother tried to dissuade her. Only when he saw that she was adamant did he finally
suggest that she visit the Belzer Rebbe, which she did and he said two words to her: “Beracha v’hatzlacha — Be successful.” But even then she had to put up with a lot of opposition. People wanted to ostracize her. When she came to certain towns to try and establish her school there, people threw stones at her. But rather than give up, she picked up those stones and said, “From these stones I will build more schools.”

Today, we see the fruits of her labor: She founded not one school, but a whole chain of schools throughout the world. Go to any vibrant Jewish community today and you will find a Beis Yaakov school.

Wonder of Wonder, Miracle of Miracles

A person who genuinely accepts responsibility upon himself is helped out in supernatural ways. Just look at the success Hershel Webber had in founding Hatzolah, or consider Rabbi Noach Weinberg.

By the time Rav Noach died in 2007, his Aish project had given birth to many projects: Discovery, Hasbara, Fellowships, Project Inspire, aish.com — reaching millions of people! Not to mention all the spin-off ba’al teshuva yeshivos and seminaries that were opened as a result. One man, five students, created a revolution.

By the time Sara Schenirer died in 1935, more than 200 Beis Yaakov schools were teaching approximately 35,000 girls! One woman. No Jewish education. 35,000 students! One woman changed Jewish history. [SHOW THIS VISUALLY WITH CLOSE UP OF SOME STUDENTS AND THEN ZOOM OUT TO SHOW 35,000. USE 3d]

When you accept responsibility upon yourself, God bends nature to guarantee that you succeed. The Sages say that a chasan, a bridegroom, has all his sins forgiven on his wedding day. Even the gravest of sins that Yom Kippur cannot atone for are forgiven on the day of his wedding. Why? Because when a man get married, he is taking responsibility for a wife, and whenever a person takes on new responsibilities, God ensures he will succeed. He therefore wipes out all his old sins, so that his past won’t stand in the way of his succeeding.36

Conclusion

God is there, waiting to give to us. We just have to have enough trust in Him, and open our hands wide enough to receive His gift.

These three individuals saw a need, took responsibility for that need, and look at the results.

We live in a world where there are millions of different needs all around us. What needs are you taking responsibility for?
Joanne Jones tells the following story:

*During my second year of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one:*

“What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?”

Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times, but how would I know her name?

*I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade.*

“Absolutely,” said the professor. “In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello.”

I’ve never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

The Midrash says, “Ein Hashem noten gedula le’adam ad shemenasa oto b’davar katan — God does not bestow greatness on someone until He tests him with a small matter.”

Take Moshe Rabbeinu for example. Before he became the leader of the Jewish nation, he was a shepherd for Yitro’s flock. One day, a young lamb escaped from the rest and ran off into the fields. Moshe chased after it until he found it standing by a stream of running water near a grassy area, where it was drinking.

“I had no idea that you were running because you were thirsty. You must be tired.”

Moshe then gently lifted up the sheep onto his shoulders and carried it back to the flock.

Only after Moshe proved his level of dedication in private did God raise him up to be the greatest leader in Jewish history.

We think there are two worlds: what you do in public and how you act in private. But in Judaism it doesn’t work like that. The two worlds are dependant upon one another. There is no faking it. What you do when no one is around will have as much sway on your success as a leader as what you do in the public eye.

To be a real leader you have to be exactly that: real! You have to genuinely care. Your values have to be reflected in all that you do — even when no one is watching and no one will ever
find out! That’s the test of who you really are. When there is no one around, there are no ulterior motives, and so what you do then shows the essence of who you really are.

It’s the way you say good morning to the cleaning lady, the way you patiently help out a small child, the smile you give a passerby when you are late for a meeting — it is the small things that really count. Only after you can rule over yourself [BANG CHEST] — showing your ability to overcome annoyances with the utmost self-control — can you rule over others.

The Talmud says that a God-fearing person’s words are heeded. This can be understood on a practical level: unless you practice what you preach, people will not listen to you. You will never be able to influence others on the importance of refined speech, for example, if they hear you talking crudely.

But what we are discovering now is that this concept can also be understood on an abstract, supernatural level. The greater your fear of God, the more impact your words will have — not because of any physical or psychological explanation, but because God rewards those who fear Him with the power to influence others. Each time you break the urge to say or do something wrong, you are exercising your spiritual muscles, which increases your influence on others. You become a stronger, more authoritative individual.

When you are pleasing in God’s eyes, you will automatically become pleasing in the eyes of flesh and blood. There is a metaphysical reality at play that ensures this to be true.

We spend so much time and effort trying to impress people, when in truth, the real one to impress is our Creator. When He’s impressed, He will see to it that others are impressed as well, planting it in their hearts and minds.

Compare this approach to what is widely believed today. Books on public speaking teach that a powerful speech depends on things such as eye contact, body posture, timing, and the art of storytelling. The more polished the speech, the greater its effect. No mention, however, is made of the way the speaker acts in private. Why should it?

The Torah approach, however, is so insightful and original. The secret to great public speaking is not only how you speak in public, but what you do in private. The kind acts you do when no one is watching, the way you talk to your spouse when you are tired, the way you treat your children when you are low on patience — all affect your ability to persuade others as much as your spoken word does.

This has been shown throughout our history.

Moshe Rabbeinu had a speech defect, and yet it did not detract from the power of his words.

The Chofetz Chaim never studied the art of persuasion in his life. Nevertheless, when he spoke to the Polish Prime Minister, Mr. Bartel, to try to convince him to abolish an anti-religious decree that was about to be passed, his words pierced the gentile’s heart like a sword — despite the fact that the Prime Minister didn’t understand any Yiddish.

Rabbi Shalom Schwadron, the maggid of Jerusalem, once accepted an invitation to speak to a crowd of eight hundred people in Glasgow, and although he knew no English and the audience knew no Hebrew, they were so stirred by his words that many of them cried.

The explanation for all these stories is the same — behind a person’s words lies his soul. The purer the soul, the greater force it has to influence others.
<table>
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<th>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</th>
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<td>• How can one work on becoming genuine?</td>
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<td>• Does our educational system that we have today encourage us to be genuine? Explain.</td>
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<td>• How do you feel when a leader of yours is not genuine?</td>
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What makes a good leader? Why is that some people naturally inspire confidence, loyalty, and hard work, while others never seem to get their act together?

One of the most reliable indicators and predictors of true leadership is an individual’s ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from even the most trying circumstances. Extraordinary leaders emerge from adversity stronger, more confident in themselves and their purpose, and more committed to their work.

A look at Jewish leaders throughout the ages shows that they all had this ability to transcend adversity and emerge stronger than before.

Avraham: Avraham endured ten major life challenges, but instead of coming out broken, he emerged stronger and more committed than before.

Yaakov: Forced to run away from home by his brother Esav, who wanted to kill him, robbed of all his possessions by his nephew, cheated by his uncle, mourned the death of his son for twenty-two years, suffered his daughter’s kidnap, his wife died in childbirth.

Yosef: Hated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, sold as a slave, sentenced to an Egyptian jail for twelve years for a crime he didn’t commit.

Moshe: Pharaoh wanted him dead, thrown in a pit by Yitro, where he lived for ten years — only surviving because Tzipora fed him, attacked by Korach, and almost stoned by the very people he gave up his whole life for.

Dovid: Grew up as an outcast, rejected by his own father who thought that he was illegitimate, escaped his father-in-law who tried to kill him several times, spent years on the run, had to hide in caves, didn’t have food and had to ask Achinoam to get him bread, suffered his wives being captured in war — and most of this happened after he was ordained king!

Many people have a warped perspective of how things are supposed to work in this world from all the romance novels and other media that promote the lies of Western culture. But read history, read the Prophets!

Then there’s the leaders in the post-Bible period:

Rabbi Akiva: Started out so poor that his wife had to sell her hair to provide money. Not even having a blanket or pillow, they slept on straw that Rabbi Akiva had to pick out of his hair in the morning. He began with no Torah education. In fact, at forty he was still unable to read
Hebrew and had to learn the alef beis in a class with three-year-old boys.\(^{50}\)

**Abaye:** An orphan. His father died before he was born and his mother died in childbirth.

**Rabbi Yochanan:** Mourned the death of his ten sons.

**Maimonides:** Wandered ten years refugee-like from place to place in Spain, fleeing invasion and religious persecution, and in Egypt, various informers tried to kill him!\(^{51}\)

**Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz:** Author of forty books known as the Chazon Ish. Wrote things during the First World War while sitting in a shelter with bullets flying over his head and anarchy abounding, was dangerously ill since eighteen and constantly plagued with suffering.

**Rabbi Yechezkel Abramski:** Wrote part of his commentary on the Tosefta while enslaved in a Siberian work camp and living in the most unbearable conditions.

Yet not one of these leaders let their challenges crush them. On the contrary, they displayed the utmost resilience. They had such a strong sense of mission and purpose that they pushed forward come what may, not letting their difficulties stand in their way. “I’m going forward — difficulties or not. There’s no stopping me,” they most probably thought.

But it goes further. Great leaders positively used their challenges to reach higher levels of achievement. In other words, the challenges themselves brought out new abilities they never knew they had, spurring them to even greater levels of achievement. Specifically, because they suffered, they became greater. Their difficulties actually contributed to their greatness, causing them to emerge better and stronger.\(^{52}\)

Firstly, it brought them to higher levels of sensitivity: Abaye, having growing up without parents, was more sensitive to other people’s feelings, and Rabbi Yochanan, as a result of the death of his ten sons, was able to comfort mourners in a way only someone who had endured such unimaginable pain could.\(^{53}\)

Secondly, it brought them to higher levels of humility: Once they appealed to God for assistance in overcoming their challenges, they had an advantage over people who didn’t include God in their lives. So, any disadvantage is actually an advantage, because it serves as a catalyst to bring people closer to God.

Thirdly, it brought them to higher levels of scholarship: When a person undergoes suffering and nevertheless manages to push himself to focus on his learning, the Torah that emanates from it comes from a deeper place inside his soul that is not usually accessible through a casual connection with the text, so it is of a much higher caliber. No wonder Maimonides and the Chazon Ish were such prolific writers. Having invested their pain into their study, they were able to reach higher levels of clarity.\(^{54}\)

Great people became great because of their difficulties.\(^{55}\) Indeed, the Hebrew word for a test or a challenge is nisayon, the root of which is the word nes, which actually means “to lift up.” This is because the nisayon, the test, is there to lift you up.\(^{56}\) This can also be seen in the Hebrew word for crisis — mashber, which means “a birthing stool.” In every crisis, new abilities can be born.\(^{57}\)

Jewish leaders throughout history have demonstrated time and again that what matters most is what you make of traumatic life events. It is that ability to stand up tall after being knocked down, to persevere and emerge stronger from devastating circumstances.
The difference between people who are successful in life and those who aren’t is not that the successful people don’t have difficulties while the non-successful do. No! Everyone has difficulties. That’s the purpose of this world: to overcome challenges and emerge stronger. The difference between those who attain greatness and those who don’t is that great people realize that every problem, difficulty, or setback contains a valuable lesson that can help them be even more successful in the future.

We imagine that leaders became great by sitting in an air-conditioned room with all their needs taken care of — that someone supported them financially, allowing them to get on with the job of being great. But it’s not true! Real leaders struggled with real issues. They endured years of suffering: wars, famine, serious illnesses, poverty… — worse than the kind of troubles most people have to deal with today.

Personal troubles do not hamper a person’s level of achievement; on the contrary, those who have coped with difficulties have grown and been able to realize more of their potential.

Take Lisa Honig Buksbaum for example, an Orthodox Jewish woman. Within a ten-month period, her only sibling died of a heart attack, her father had his second bout of cancer and was hospitalized for several months, and her oldest child Jonathan became catastrophically ill.

What did she do? She launched Soaringwords — a non-profit public charity devoted to helping millions of ill children.

Or take a cousin of mine in England who had a special needs child and couldn’t find an appropriate school. So what did she do? She opened a new school to meet her child’s needs!

[And what better example than this video you are watching now? When I started teaching in Ohr Samayach, the first class I taught was a total disaster. I mean, nightmare of nightmares. Guys were walking out the room, texting each other… it was enough to make anyone want to give up a career in teaching. And yet, it was that “horrible” experience that led to my using multimedia and led to the eventual birth of Torah Live!]

Conclusion

Life’s difficulties are the tools that are going to make you become greater. Many people use their difficulties as excuses to hold themselves back from excelling and living up to their potentials. “If only this was different. If only that was different.” Besides the stress of the actual difficulty itself, a lot of stress comes from the fact that we view the difficulty as interfering with the life path we had planned for ourselves. “There I was on the road to greatness when… BANG — this popped up and ruined it!”

But the truth is that this hurdle is not keeping you away from success. This hurdle is part of your success. It’s the difficulties that can ultimately strengthen you. When challenges come up, think, “How can I grow from this? How can I use this to become a better person? What
new, undeveloped, and as yet untapped areas of my personality is this challenge going to bring out?”

Don’t waste a crisis. Grow from it.

Having this mindset will unlock new abilities you never knew you had, and make living life the unending thrill it was created to be.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What do you think is the thing that makes some people resilient and others not? Why is it that some people grow and some people break?

- How do you find meaning in your life?

- How can a person identify what qualities to bring out?

- Give an example of someone that you know who did something powerful as a result of his own individual suffering.

**Useful Quotes**

- Richard Branson: “If I hadn’t badly damaged my knee as a teenager, I would likely have been a sportsman. If I hadn’t been dyslexic, I wouldn’t have left school at sixteen and created a magazine, which means I wouldn’t have ended up running Student, which means Virgin Records would never have been born, which means...” (*Business Stripped Bare*, p. 331).

- Thomas Edison: Thomas Edison, famed inventor of over 1,000 ingenious instruments and devices including the electric light, the phonograph, and the motion-picture camera, was partially deaf. He once wrote that he was “unable to hear a bird sing since he was twelve years old.” Yet, rather than become bitter over his loss of hearing and begrudge other people their ability to hear, Edison thought about how he could use his handicap to his advantage.

> “When in a telegraph office, I could hear only the instrument directly on the table at which I sat, and unlike the other operators I was not bothered by the other instruments.” Edison insisted that being deaf set him apart from the masses and gave him an excuse to turn away from tiresome social involvements, making him a far more productive thinker. In fact, when people pleaded with him to use his creative genius to invent an apparatus that would become the ultimate hearing aid, he declined, refusing to surrender what was essentially his passport to the inner world. (Carol Cramer, ed., *Thomas Edison* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001), 32, 38.)
One of the most crucial traits in a leader is humility.

This is clear from the greatest leader the Jewish people ever had, Moshe Rabbeinu, who was also the humblest man who ever lived. That these two qualities are found together — great leadership and great humility — is not coincidental; they go hand in hand. In order to lead properly, you have to set the good of the people as your highest priority. But to the extent that your ego stands in the way, to the extent that you think of yourself and how each decision affects you personally instead of the people under your care, you will be incapable of being a great leader.

Only someone who is humble can put aside his own needs and weigh how each situation will affect people.

Little wonder, then, that in delineating the requirements of a king, the Torah lays down the need for him to be humble. “Leviti rom levavo me’achiv — his heart must not become haughty over his brothers.” The Jewish king had to feel in his heart as ordinary as everyone else. Consider: The king. The highest position of leadership found in the Torah. And yet — in his eyes — he had to be no more important than any other member of society. Amazing!

Notice the word “levavo — in his heart.” The requirement was to really feel it inside. It was not sufficient to appear humble. He had to genuinely feel it through and through.

Imagine the king sitting on his throne, wearing his crown and royal garments; imagine the myriad of servants running around at his beck and call; picture his magnificent castle, his riches... and yet, inside, he was required to feel like the guy next door.

An Oft Misunderstood Trait

Humility is often misunderstood as a feeling of inadequacy or worthlessness. According to this logic, the more a person feels himself to be nothing, the humbler he is. The Chovos HaLevavos, however, says that such “humility” is found among fools who do not recognize their self-worth, and is not true humility at all. On the contrary, only after one appreciates his true value can he become truly humble.

This is clear, once again, from looking at Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe was the only person to ever speak to God face-to-face, take the Jews out of Egypt, split the Red Sea, or receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. To say he was not aware of his greatness is unlikely and borders on the absurd.
Furthermore, if acting humble is misinterpreted to mean walking with a bowed head all the time and going through life feeling insignificant, how can we comprehend Moshe Rabbeinu killing the Egyptian taskmaster? [CRINGE EYES IN A “THAT MAKES NO SENSE” FACE] Such behavior would hardly be expected from a self-effacing, “worthless” individual. And what about Moshe’s entering the palace and demanding that Pharaoh let the Jews out of Egypt? Even the Jewish elders were frightened to accompany him and left one by one, so that Moshe and Aharon had to accomplish this daunting task alone. Such behavior shatters that image of humility.

True Humility

Humility, rather, is the recognition that all of one’s capabilities are Divine gifts and should be used appropriately. An artistic genius is not being humble when he denies his creative flair, saying that his work is inferior or that he lacks talent. He is being dishonest. He should recognize his abilities, but rather than become vain, he should contemplate God’s purpose in endowing him with these skills and ask himself about the implications that accompany such a gift.62

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, a leading Torah Sage of the previous generation, had hundreds of people that came to his door to ask advice and intricate halachic questions. He realized that he had a superior level of knowledge and insight, and that he had a deep responsibility to help the Jewish people. But even though he understood his greatness, he remained truly humble, realizing that all of his gifts were from the Almighty.

Although he was an undisputed leader of world Jewry — or “Rashkebehag” in Hebrew — when he received a letter with this honorific appended to his name, he became so incensed that he refused to even open the envelope! He deplored the numerous titles with which people addressed him and did not hesitate to express his low opinion of the popular practice. When a local religious newspaper referred to him as the posek ha-dor, the leading halachic scholar of the generation, he dashed off a furious letter to the publisher, threatening to cancel his subscription if the offense was ever repeated!63

Rav Shlomo Zalman’s behavior encapsulated the way a humble person looks at the world. On the one hand, he recognizes his abilities. But, at the same time, he doesn’t want recognition or publicity about how great he actually is — just the opportunity to serve his people and bring more light into the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does a person work on his humility?
- Who is the most humble leader you know?
- Why is humility such a hard trait to work on?
- How do you explain the existence of great leaders who were not humble? Consider, Winston Churchill, for example, who was not known for humility.
- I challenge you to find examples of Yosef being humble.65
Useful Quotes

“Moses wrote the Torah ... didn't he?” he asked rhetorically.

Josh nodded.

“Moses ... he is called ‘Safra Rabba — the Great Scribe.’ He wrote only one work — the Torah — and there is nothing original in it — not a word of his own — all dictated by G-d from beginning to end ... and still he is called the Great Scribe. Do you know why? — because nobody else could have written it that way. There is nothing of Moses in the writing — no style or idiom of his own. It’s as if G-d took hold of Moses’ hand with the quill in it and wrote the words Himself. That’s not true of the other prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah — they each have their own style. The prophet left his individual mark on his work. The Torah reflects God’s style — nobody else’s ... Yeh ... Moses — the Great Scribe. ...”

(B. D. Da’Ehu, With All My Heart, With All My Soul, p. 189) Israel Trade Co (June 1, 1992)
The great enemy of human achievement is the comfort zone.

Psychologists have found that each of us has a tendency to get into a zone of performance and behavior where we are comfortable, where it is easy and unchallenging, and then to stay there. We stop striving. We relax and day-by-day we develop the habits that lead to underachievement and eventual failure.66

In a five-year study of leaders, Warren Bennis discovered that each of them consciously avoided the comfort zone by continually setting higher goals. They never allowed themselves to become complacent. They lived their lives fully extended, always striving to be more.67

Secular books present breaking the comfort zone as an optional move: You can choose to stay where you are, and there is nothing bad about that, or you can choose to be one of the select few, the elite, who reaches great heights of achievement by breaking your comfort zone. But again, nothing lost if you don’t.

Jewish wisdom, however, makes it very clear that there is no middle ground: You either go up or down, but there is no such thing as standing still. Cruising along in one place is impossible. If you don’t choose to break your comfort zone, if you don’t keep striving to improve who you are, you automatically slip back. As the Sages put it, “U’dloi moisif yosef,” which means, “A person who doesn’t add, will deteriorate.”68

The reason for this phenomenon is that God is infinite and He created us to enjoy the highest level of spiritual good, which is to be connected to Him. He therefore wired our souls in such a way that they are always yearning to reach higher levels of closeness to Him. A person who is not growing and improving on some level every day is not fulfilling his potential and will feel dissatisfied.

Breaking out of one’s comfort zone is not optional — it is essential. You need to stretch yourself toward the outermost boundaries of your potential. You need to set goals that bring out the very best within you and help you to reach peak performance. Otherwise, what began as comfortable leads to complacency, which eventually leads to boredom and frustration.

The way to do this is by setting aside time every day to ponder and prod, to examine yourself and ask pointed questions, such as what areas can you improve in and how you can become better. Some people refer to this time as hitbonenut, others call it mussar, but the idea is the same: to contemplate how you can become a better human being and analyze which barriers are preventing you from reaching that next level of achievement.
Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement, recommended setting aside half an hour a day for introspection and self-actualization. The time should be used either to read uplifting texts that will inspire you to reach greater levels of achievement, or for reflection and self-analysis, which will give you a clearer understanding of your personal motives and goals.

Rabbi Mattisyahu Salomon, the spiritual dean at Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey, was a close friend with his neighbors, the Epsteins. The Salomons and Epsteins had children the same age and a joy in one family was a joy in the other. When one of the Salomon daughters became engaged, there was great excitement and the Epstein girls looked forward to dancing at their close friend’s wedding.

Sadly, however, Rabbi Shimon Epstein suddenly passed away. Rabbi Epstein was a very warm and beloved man, known for his great acts of charity that he often performed in a secretive way.

The Epstein family was plunged into mourning, and as mourners the children would not be permitted to attend the wedding. During the following weeks the Salomons were careful not to talk about the wedding plans in front of the Epsteins, but the wedding day moved inexorably closer. It would be a day of great celebration in Lakewood befitting a wedding of the spiritual dean of the community.

On the day of the wedding, the Epstein daughters went to work and came home as they usually did, at around 6 o’clock. When they arrived there was a note on the table, “To our dear friends the Epsteins: Please do not prepare any dinner this evening. Your dinner will be served to all of you shortly. We will miss you at the wedding but we wanted you to share in our simcha and so the caterers will be at your home with the wedding dinner. May we share future simchas. The Salomons.”

Within an hour a truck came from the wedding hall with the full course meal, including dessert, for every member of the Epstein family.

And if that was not enough, as the Epsteins were enjoying this unexpected meal someone came and brought them pictures that had just been taken at the wedding. Rav Mattisyahu had arranged that someone take pictures of the wedding ceremony, run with the finished film to a local photography store that developed pictures within an hour and then deliver the pictures to the Epsteins. So as they were enjoying the wedding meal they could enjoy the wedding photos!69

You hear a story like that and wonder: where does a person get such sensitivity from? People making a wedding are usually so busy with their own plans and needs that they don’t have any room in their heads to think of others, let alone to go to such lengths to consider their feelings. How did Rabbi Salomon have the insight to think of other people and their needs at a time like that?

But then you learn that Rabbi Salomon has been studying mussar for at least half an hour a day for over forty years. You learn that he has devoted his life to character development and self-analysis, and that thinking how he can he break out of his comfort zone to realize more of his potential is a discipline he devotes time to daily, and you begin to understand how a person can reach such levels of caring. Isn’t that, after all, what real leadership requires — genuinely caring for others?

Deep down every one of us wants to be good. Who doesn’t want to be more giving, more
caring, more selfless? But we're human and struggle with laziness, jealousy, the desire for honor, the desire for money, and a myriad of other bad character traits, all of which stop us from really taking off.

Taking thirty minutes for yourself to do some introspection — especially in our day and age when everything is so hectic — is crucial. It’s a life-saver! It allows you to connect to yourself and free yourself from the negative forces holding you back from being everything you can become.

Best of all, it makes you feel great! As one great Jewish thinker put it, “There is no greater joy in life than building one’s character.” Man’s main source of vitality stems from self-control. It is the sweetest of pleasures, the greatest of joys. It means constant happiness, and it restores one’s soul.”

Pick a text that speaks to you, something that relates to the particular area you are want to work on, and take thirty minutes to internalize it. It’s not how far down you reach on the page, it’s how far down you reach in you heart.

There are many values we know to be true intellectually, but the distance between our heads and our hearts is light years apart. We all know, for example, that it’s wrong to get angry, but does that stop us from flying off the handle? What we know here and how we live here are worlds apart.

Mussar brings these two realities in sync. Internalizing what you know to be right here until it really penetrates down here.

Doing this every day — no matter how busy you may be — will make the difference between mediocrity and becoming truly great. I guarantee it!

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How much time each day do you spend alone thinking about your direction in life?
- What prevents you from spending time alone?
- Do you think that your direction in life would change if you spent time alone everyday?
We have covered five fundamentals of a Jewish leader: responsibility, genuineness, resilience, humility, and introspection.

We all want amazing lives. Living our lives for the Jewish people is this amazing reality.

Rabbi Noach Weinberg related a conversation he had with an Israeli who was an ex-member of one of the underground defense forces. Before the state of Israel was established, there were various self-defense groups that were doing everything they could to defend the Jewish people. The British made a law that anyone caught with a gun was to be killed. But to belong to this group, there was a rule: you had to carry a weapon at all times. You also weren't allowed to permit yourself to be taken prisoner. So if there was a body search, or there was a risk your weapon would be found, you had to kill or be killed. You had to shoot your way out.

One day, when this fellow was in the shuk in Tel Aviv, the British spotted him and arrested him. They used torture on him to the extent that he lost a leg. In 1948, when the British left, he came out of prison, and without a leg he didn’t have to serve in the army. So he started a business. Everyone else was in the army and there weren't a lot of people around. His business, which was near Haifa, flourished and made a lot of money. He was very, very successful. He later married a wonderful woman and had wonderful children.

R’ Noach met this man when he was middle-aged. Before R’ Noach left, he asked him, “Tell me, what was the best time of your life? What gave you the most pleasure?”

What do you think this man answered? When he married? Had children? Became successful? When he was young?

OPEN UP TO THE AUDIENCE TO GUESS

“Those five years!” he answered. “Rabbi, how can I compare anything to those five years when I was living for the Jewish people. I was living for a cause. I was transcending my life. I was willing to die. I put my life on the line every morning. I didn’t know if I was going to live or die. Those five years, ah-h-h! There was nothing like it. Oh, I enjoy life. I’m successful. I have a wife and children. But that thrill! There is nothing that can compare to it. The thrill of being alive.”

My friends, get up in the morning. Enjoy everything there is to enjoy! Life is thrilling. Enjoy the coffee. Enjoy the beautiful day. Enjoy the hot shower. Enjoy your family. Enjoy everything there is. But be aware that there is a thrill in life that you are longing for, and until you find what it is that will make everything worthwhile, you haven’t begun living.”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What are three areas in your life where you could become a leader?
• What are the downsides to taking on leadership positions?
During the presentation, students may ask some difficult questions. Below are some potential attacks along with possible answers.

**Question 1:**

“I don’t know how to solve problems. What do I know about famine or education or any of the other issues facing the world?”

**Response:**

Tell me: Did you know how to drive when you took your first driving lesson? When you tackled your first case as a lawyer, did you know what to do? No, but you learned. You tried and tried again and eventually you learned. It’s the same with leadership. Once you decide you want to get involved, you will learn. You learned to drive a car? You’ll work this out too!

How many leaders do you think went to “leadership school?” How many took courses or studied the subject in university? None. They learned it on the job. When you really want something, you work it out.

**Question 2:**

“But I don’t have the talent or funds to do anything about it!”

**Response:**

If God Almighty, creator of the entire universe, would give you the intelligence, the money, the wherewithal, and the means, could you straighten out this world?

Does God want the world’s problems to go on, or does He want us to straighten them out? What does God want? He wants the brotherhood of man; He wants us to live in peace; He wants us to love each other; He wants us to learn Torah, to be happy. Would He help us if we really undertook to do it? The Almighty will give us the ability. We just have to have the boldness to undertake it.

The only way we are able to take on responsibility is with a feeling of *Hashem Elokeichem*
Malkechem — God is King. He is in charge. That’s the backbone of responsibility. We can only say we are going to tackle something because we know that God is with us. Responsibility is recognizing that God is in charge. We all know God is in charge, but are we prepared to stick our necks out and live accordingly? Are we willing to make decisions and put ourselves out based on that knowledge? That’s the core of responsibility.

Question 3:

“You talk about changing the world and taking on responsibility. But I am busy. I have a job. How can I when I have other commitments? I can’t just clear my schedule and do this full time.”

Response:

All it takes is half an hour a day to find that thing that excites you. Think about what it is you would like to do, what it is that bothers you about the world, what you would like to improve. Then try and find an outlet, some organization that you can volunteer for, some way you can get involved.

If that organization doesn’t exist, spend the half an hour a day planning how you will establish it. If you don’t devote a minimum amount of time to it now, it will never happen. Make it tangible now by getting into the mind-set. At least start.
Suggested Reading

UNFINISHED

Responsibility:
- Victor Frankel
- *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*

Resilience:
- *HBR’s 10 Must Reads on Leadership* by Harvard Business Review pp. 97-115
- *Awake My Glory* by Rabbi Avigdor Miller, pages 137-138
- *Life Is a Test: How to Meet Life’s Challenges Successfully* by Esther Jungreis
Notes

1. See Rabbeinu Yona, Sha'arei Teshuva 2:326.

2. Pe'er HaDor 5:27.


4. In a letter, the Chazon Ish writes that one who subscribes to the Torah’s authority in regards to halachic rulings, but not in other areas of life, distorts the Torah and has no place in the World to Come (Pe'er HaDor 5:52–53). Part of the letter has been reprinted in Igros Chazon Ish 3:92.

5. Rabbeinu Yona (Shas Vilna ed.), Rabbeinu Ephraim (quoted in the last line of Midrash Shmuel), Peirushei Rabbeinu Yitzchak ben HaRav Shlomo MiToledo, Pirkei Moshe, Sefer Musar, Mirkeves HaMishneh, Roshei Avos, Milei D'Avos. See also Ramban (Introduction to Genesis Rabbeinu Bachya (Introduction to Genesis), Me'oz HaDa'as (chap. 6), and Vilna Gaon (Commentary to Sifra DiTzniusa, chap. 5). Cf. Meiri and Midrash Dovid, who offer a different explanation of the Mishna.

6. Chofetz Chaim in the name of Rabbi Itzele, quoted in Kovetz Ma'amirim V'Elgros 1:229.

7. Pe'er HaDor 4:106–146. When Professor Yerachmiel Ashkenazi, head of Beilinson Hospital’s Department of Neurology, was provided with a diagram of the brain, showing how to carry out a surgical procedure, he quizzed the family as to which expert had given them the drawing, solving the patient’s complicated problem (ibid., 138).

8. Ibid., 127–128.

9. Or, to use its phraseology, it states, “You shall open your hand to the poor and needy brother.” It does not state that the poor man shall open his hand to demand his share, but that the rich man should open his hand to give.


11. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, Da'at Tevunot, par. 96.

12. See Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria, par. 5. (NOTE TO TEACHER: By presenting this theme, you are potentially setting yourself up for the question, “Are you trying to tell me that all the people in Africa are suffering just so that I can reach my potential of being a more giving person?” A suggested answer could be: Obviously nothing is haphazard and the people who are lacking or needy aren’t merely stage props for the sake of those who need to work at reaching their perfection. There are other factors at play, such as gilgulim, that have something to do with why some people are chosen as “the haves” and others as “the have-nots.” (Why people suffer in this world is a much bigger topic that requires a whole presentation unto itself.)
13. In describing Creation, the verse says, “asher barah Elokim la’asot — that God created [the world] to make (Genesis 2:3).” God intentionally left elements of creation unfinished so that man can become a partner with God in bringing the world to perfection. The stress is on the word, “la’asot — to make” — Rabbi Yoel Shwarz, Ohr LaAmim, p. 78.


15. See his work, Man’s Search for Meaning.


17. Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 133b.


19. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, Da’at Tevunot, par. 96.

20. Isaiah 42:6. This verse could also refer to the idea that when the Jewish people emulate the Almighty, that brings more of God’s presence into the world, and as a result, there is more “light” in the world — pushing away the “darkness” (which is the world without people knowing and relating to God).


22. See Eliyahu Rabba (Ish Shalom) parsha 23: ויעקב ייצחק אברהם לMuon ערכי מועש מתי יטוק.

23. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Avoda Zara 1:3.

24. Another example is Yaakov, when he arrived at the well in Charan and found the shepherds just standing around. He said to them, “Achai, my brothers, from where are you?” After befriending them and making conversation, he asked, “Why are you idly standing around by the well? If you work for someone, it is your duty to continue grazing the sheep until dark. And if you are working for yourselves, it is not yet time to gather them for the night.” He didn’t live in his own world, ignoring the sins of others. On the contrary, when he saw iniquity, he stood up and tried to correct it. Seferon brings out this point on the above verse: משמאריהדיביך ישנא את ח니까 בך ואחרים:ויתקע דריך שלה יושב על יפה, מי והן דריך אולא על יפים כי —The righteous person cannot stand injustice even in other people.” This teaches us that if there is someone that you can correct and influence for the better, you are obligated to do so.


26. The tribe of Yehuda even traveled at the head of all the others in the wilderness.

27. See Tosefta Berachos 4:16 and Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, Sichos Musar, Vayeshev 5731, ma’amar 20, in detail.

28. Sichos Musar, ibid.


30. See Malbim, ibid.

31. Esther ibid.

32. כבד ה’ מהונך, הפר אריה פקלות, איך זה קול אתה אהת עביד בת הנפת עוזר עבב זה פקלות. איך אני מתאחת על אשר ולאעינו שכר היה, הולך זה קול אתה אהת עביד בת הנפת עוזר עבב זה פקלות. אם אתה איוודין על קול אתה אהת עביד בת הנפת עוזר עבב זה פקלות. איך אני מתאחת על אשר ולאעינו שכר היה, הולך זה קול אתה אהת עביד בת הנפת עוזר עבב זה פקרות. }(אבד) משותי[א shale על שולך,のではないか על השולך משבוח על ידינו על שולך, Leben לא על שולך על שולך על שולך, Leben לא על שולך על שולך.}(אבד) משותי[א shale על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben לא על שולך, Leben не является шестеркой.VEHIVAT 🛡️פיור נועם
33. *Horiot* 10a.

34. God created us “be’tzelem Elokim — in His form” (Genesis 1:27). The more giving and responsible we become, the more in line we are with what we were created for and the happier we become.


37. *Shemos Rabba* 2:3.

38. Consider also David HaMelech, who before he became king was also a shepherd. He gave special attention to the care and welfare of every sheep, letting the younger ones, whose teeth were still tender, graze first, so there would still be soft grass for them (Midrash, ibid.).


40. The Meiri and Eitz Yosef (third approach) explain the *gemara* in *Berachos* this way.

41. This is how Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhav (in the *Menoras HaMaor, Mossad HaRav Kook* edition, p. 556) understands the *gemara* in *Berachos*. The Sifsei Chachamim explains the same *gemara* in *Berachos* using the Mishnah in *Avos* 2:4 that says, “Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your will.” This suggests that he too understands the *gemara* as referring to a spiritual reward and not a natural consequence.

42. See II Shmuel 23:3, where the Malbim writes: *Moshel b’adam* means that Mashiach will rule over other people; *tzaddik moshel yiras Elokim* refers to his ruling over himself. The second phrase gives the cause of the first phrase, i.e., the reason he will rule over other people is because he first rules over himself.

43. See *Sparks of Mussar*, Feldheim, p. 250

44. *Around the Maggid’s Table*, Artscroll, p. 25-28.


46. See Midrash Tanchuma, Mikeitz, sec. 10.

47. See *Yalkut Me’am Loez*, Exodus 2:20

48. On one occasion, he escaped by a hairsbreadth when he “happened” to turn right as Shaul was launching a spear into him!

49. See *Shmuel* I chapters 18 - 31

50. He also suffered the loss of twenty four thousand students.
51. In one of Rambam’s letters, he wrote, “various informers plotted against my life,” and that he met with “great and severe misfortunes. Illness and material losses came upon me.” For nearly a year after his brother David drowned at sea, he lay ill in bed “struggling with fever and despair,” so great was his pain.

52. See Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Seitze 2: ‘צריך אדם להחזיק אדם לה кудיה’

53. See Tosefos, Berachos 5b, s.v. ‘ve’hamar Rav Yochanan.’

54. See Yalkut Shimoni, Ecclesiastes, sec. 968:

55. Consider Dovid HaMelech, for example, who used his suffering to pour his heart out to God with such heartfelt cries that for thousands of years Jews throughout the world have found solace in his psalms and use his words as their own call to God.

56. Maharal, Derech Chaim, chap. 5, mishnah 3; Netziv, HaEmek Davar to Genesis 22:1.


58. See Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, Joshua 3:7 writes that God told Yehoshua that he would be made great in the eyes of the people when He saw that he was humble.

Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez on Joshua 3:7 writes that God told Yehoshua that he would be made great in the eyes of the people when He saw that he was humble.


60. See Ramban on the above verse: ויהיה ליהודי וליהודי smith אתי הקוניטס מטמן.

61. Chovos HaLevavos, Sha'ar HaKenia, chap. 2.

62. In a sense, the more a person truly appreciates his talents, the more humble he can become, because his feelings of responsibility increase proportionately. As Rabbi Yisrael Salanter once said, “I know that I have the mental capacity of a thousand men, but because of that, my obligation to serve God is also that of a thousand men.” (Da’at Chochma U’Mussar 1:347). This is the authentic Torah approach to understanding and appreciating the Divine gifts of great talent and personal ability.

63. Hanoch Teller, And From Jerusalem, His Word (Jerusalem: Feldheim).

64. One way to become more humble is to spend time contemplating how all one’s abilities, all one’s talents and means, aren’t one’s own, but are lent to him. It is like a poor man who borrows fancy clothes for a special celebration. The poor man doesn’t become haughty over the clothes, because as he knows they’re not his and that he will have to return them the next day! Praying for Divine assistance is also essential. (See Chayei Olam, chap. 27.)

65. When Pharaoh summoned Yosef to interpret his dream and said, “I heard that you know how to interpret dreams,” Yosef retorted, “The wisdom to interpret dreams is not my own. God will place the answer in my mouth” Genesis 41:15-16.


Notes

68. Pirkei Avot 1:13 according to the interpretation of Rabbi Chaim MiVolozhin in Ruach Chaim: “Man is dynamic; he never stays the same. The only way to prevent a fall is by continuously climbing up the ladder of life. One who does not add will lose, because there is no such thing as remaining static: either you go up or down.” (English translation from Chanoch Levi’s Targum/Feldheim edition, page 65.) He makes the same point in 4:9, where he writes: “והנה כל אדם צריך לעלות ולהוסיף שלימות וכל מי שרוצה לעמוד במדרגתו ולא לעלות יותר סופו ליפול וכו.” (The Vilna Gaon, who was Rabbi Chaim MiVolozhin’s teacher, writes that this is the intent of the verse in Mishlei 15:24: “The way of life leads the wise upward that they not fall into the pit below:” Only by directing oneself upward can one avoid the pit below. As he puts it in Even Shleima 4:9: “אם אין האדם участник לעלה תומד.”)


70. Chazon Ish, Emuna U’Bitachon, chap. 4, sec.15.

71. Rabbi Noach Weinberg in a lecture entitled, “Being a Hero,” which is available from aishaudio.com (WN902B). It is worth downloading and hearing R’ Noach tell the story himself!

72. Try and get students to realize that the only real way to learn is to do! One can’t learn about leadership by just listening to a lecture. The only real learning for leadership is leadership, taking on a leadership role. It’s all about doing.