

Jewish leadership in a time of crisis



3332 YEARS AGO, MOSES LED A SLAVE NATION INTO FREEDOM. They experienced plagues, persecution, and internal division both within ancient Egypt and beyond. A significant number of Israelites died that year.

We mark the Exodus every year at Pesach.

On Pesach 2020, in the midst of COVID-19, as the tension point between liberty and safety is painful, what lessons can Jewish leaders take from the year 2448 (1312 BCE)?

You may be the leader but it's alright not to be able to foresee the future

What should have been a journey of days or weeks to the Promised Land went on for longer than Moses or the people could have imagined.

וַיִּחַרְאֲף ה' בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנְעַם בְּמִדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בַּמִּדְבָּר לְגִיּוֹ.

The anger which the Eternal kindled against Israel caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years [Bemidbar 32:13](#).

To lead in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world, Henna Inam

You will fear that you can't do the task perfectly and feel like an imposter, out of your depth

Moses, called by God at the burning bush, argues back three times that he is not up to the task. In reality, he was an imperfect leader. But he was nevertheless Judaism's consummate leader.

וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח־נָא בְיַד־תְּשַׁלַּח שְׁמוֹת דְּיָגִי.

But [Moses] said, "Please, O Eternal, make someone else Your agent [Shemot 4:13](#).

Everybody experiences imposter syndrome – strong leaders use it to their advantage, Mike McDerment

Also like Moses, you will find the strength you need

Strength comes from the people who support you, as well as your personal sources of spiritual strength.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶסְפְּה־לִי שִׁבְעִים שָׂבָעִים אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... וַיִּרְדְּתִי וְדַבַּרְתִּי עִמָּךְ שָׁם וְאַצְלֵתִי מִן־הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ וְשָׁמַתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם וְנָשְׂאוּ אִתְּךָ בְּמִשָּׁא הָעָם וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא אֶתְּךָ לְבַדְּךָ בַּמִּדְבָּר יא:טז-יז.

Then the Eternal said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy of Israel’s elders... I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear it alone” Bemidbar 11:16-17.

Leadership resiliency: handling stress, uncertainty, and setbacks, Centre for creative leadership

8 tips for doing shared Leadership the right way, Roffey Park

The weakest in society will suffer but as a community we can pull together to buffer this effect

The enemy Amalek attacked the elderly and weak at the back of the caravan. Judaism teaches the opposite, encouraging us to take care of the most vulnerable in society.

אֲשֶׁר קָרַךְ בְּדַרְךָ וַיִּזְנַב בְּךָ כָּל־הַנֶּחֱשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶתְּךָ עֵיף וַיִּגַּע דְּבָרִים כֵּה־יָח.

[Amalek] surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear Devarim 25:18.

Caring at a time of crisis, Daniel Carmel Brown

These extreme times will bring out the best and worst in people’s decision-making

Groupthink produces the Golden Calf (and poor crisis decision-making), but effective collaboration produces the Mishkan (and neighbourhood care rotas)

וַיִּתְּפְּרוּקוּ כָל־הָעָם אֶת־נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאַזְנוֹתָם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן: ...וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֲגֹל מִסִּכָּה שְׁמוֹת לִבְגָד.

And all the people took off the gold rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.... And he made it into a molten calf Shemot 32:3-4.

Are you leading through crisis or managing the response, Eric J. McNulty and Leonard Marcus

You will need to pull together across the community to get through this time

We are greater than the sum of our parts and as a united community can have a significant positive impact, even during a testing time.

כָּל־אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָדַב לְבָם אֹתָם לְהָבִיא לְכָל־הַמְּלָאכָה... הָבִיאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל נְדָבָה לָהּ שְׁמוֹת לֵה:כט.

The Israelites, all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything... brought it as a freewill offering to the Eternal [Shemot 35:29](#).

We may be isolated but we are not alone, Michelle Janes

On a lighter note, our communities’ previous complaints become the “good old days”

The Jewish people yearned to be back in enslavement in Egypt, fantasising about the varied food they ate there.

זָכַרְנוּ אֶת־הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֵזֶם אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבֹטְחָיִם וְאֶת־הַחֶצִיר וְאֶת־הַבָּצְלִים וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִיִּם בַּמִּדְבָּר יֵאָה.

We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic [Bemidbar 11:5](#).

38 memory biases that change the story, Nicholas McGill

“Never lose your sense of humour”: Natan Sharansky’s five tips for isolation



‘God I miss Brexit!’

Lead is here to support your leadership needs through these challenging times. Wishing you a meaningful Pesach.