

Leadership Through a Mussar Lens

Rabbi David Jaffe

Desired Outcomes

- Understand how leadership can be a spiritual discipline.
- Understand the basic history and theory of Mussar and its place in Jewish tradition.
- Identify several key traits on your leadership soul curriculum.
- Gain familiarity with two key Mussar ideas: The Stance of Learning and The Choice Point
- Understand a Jewish perspective on Humility and be able to identify your own level of humility regarding their leadership
- Create a Mussar practice to take into your leadership.

Groundrules

- Step up/Step back
- Double confidentiality
- Others?

What is “Spiritual Practice?”



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Dyad Reflection

- How do you “practice” leadership?
- How is it “spiritual?”

The Divine Image on the Softball Field



The Middot -Traits



The Wheel



Leadership Values and The Middot

Alacrity/Zerizut

Benevolence/Chesed

Bravery/Gevurah

Choice/Behira

Courage/Ometz Lev

Faith/Emunah

Generosity/Nedivut

Honesty/Kenut

Honor/Kavod

Humility/Anavah

Organization/Seder

Patience/Savlanut

The Middot Continuum - Anger and Patience

Despair/Apathy

Patience

Cold Anger

Hot Anger/Rage



A Stance of Learning: Hitlamdut

“Ben Zoma says: Who is wise?
One who learns from every
person, as it says, ‘From all my
students I gained wisdom.’
(Mishna Avot 4:1)

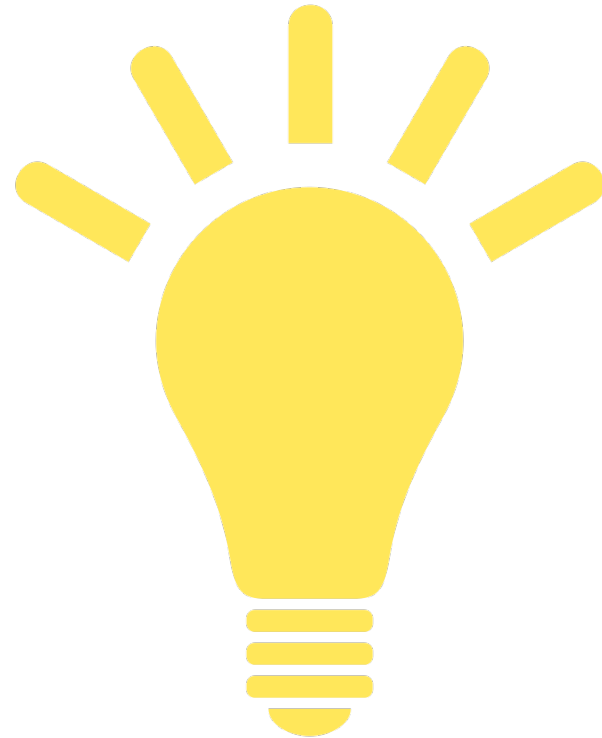


Commentary of R. Simcha Zissel of Kelm (d. 1883)

- Every person that has a special feeling for a certain endeavor will be extremely sensitive when she sees any little thing having to do with that endeavor. For example: When a tailor meets someone he will immediately look at his clothes, the shoemaker – at the shoes, the milliner – at the hat..., if one is not engaged in such activities will not notice them when performed by others. If this is the case, then one who “learns from every person,” behold, this is a great “merchant,” he trades in everything and thus he understands the necessity to learn from the other and thus is called “Wise.” (Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm, d. 1883)

Reflection Questions:

- What is a memory you have of learning something that really impacted you? A “lightbulb” moment?
- What were the conditions that made this learning possible?



Reflection Question:

- *With a partner* - Who is someone in your organization or community who leads differently from you? What can you learn from them?

The Choice Point



The Choice Point – Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (d. 1953)

- Everyone has free choice –at the point where truth meets falsehood. In other words choice takes place at that point where the truth as the person sees it confronts the illusion produced in him by the power of falsehood. But the majority of a person's actions are undertaken without any clash between truth and falsehood taking place. Many of a person's actions may happen to coincide with what is objectively right because he has been brought up that way and it does not occur to him to do otherwise, and many bad and false decisions may be taken simply because the person does not realize that they are bad. In such cases no valid Behira, or choice, has been made...

Choice Point (cont.)

- It must be realized that this choice-point does not remain static in any given individual. With each good choice successfully carried out, the person rises higher in spiritual level: that is, things that were previously in the line of battle are now in the area controlled by the yetzer tov (good, clear thinking)...giving in to the yetzer ha'rah (impulse for immediate gratification) pushes back the frontier of the good, and an act which previously cost one a struggle with one's conscience will now be done without choice at all.

Choice Point Reflection Questions:

- Think of one choice point you had as a leader recently
- What were the different factors pulling to each side of the choice?
Was one side more habitual or motivated by scarcity of some kind?
- What would NOT acting out of habit or scarcity look like for you in that choice point and what difference might it make in your leadership?

Choice Point –Community Reflection:

- What is a choice point your community or organization recently faced?
- Apply a Hitlamdut/Learning perspective to this choice. What is something you, the community or organization might learn by taking a “balcony view” of this choice?
- What were the different factors pulling to each side of the choice? Was one side more habitual or motivated by scarcity of some kind?
- What would it take to choose away from habit? What agency do you have to make a change?

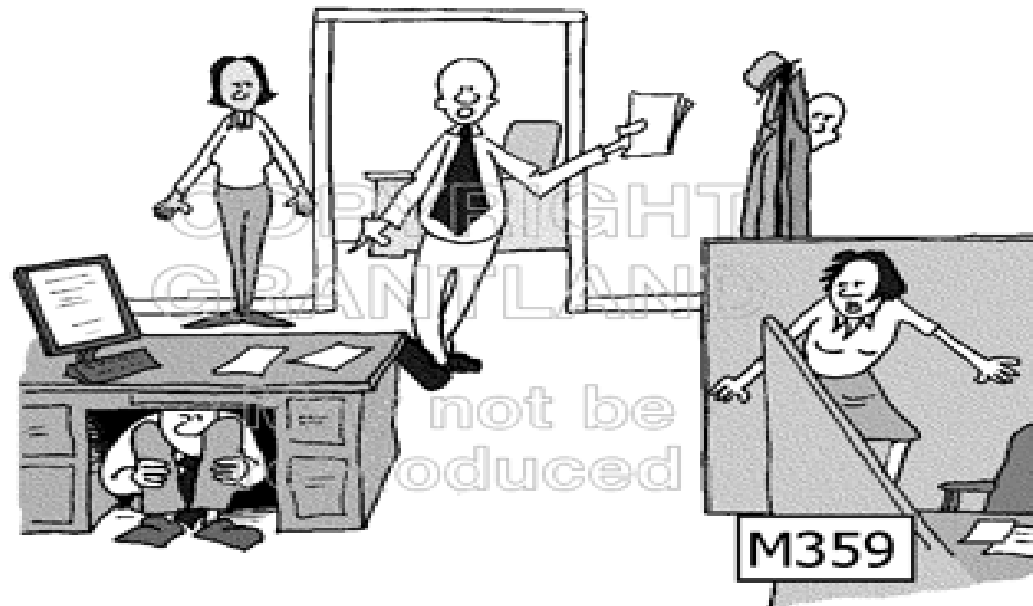
The Wheel



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

What is on your Mussar Curriculum?

*"Okay, here are the rush projects
I told you about --- Hey,
where is everybody?"*



The Middot Continuum

Chaos

Flexible Order/Seder

Rigid Order/Seder



The Web of Middot



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Humility/Anavah

Low Self-Esteem/
False Humility

Humility/Anavah

Arrogance

Humility/Anavah in Jewish Wisdom



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

The Modalities

- The Group (Va'ad)
- The Partner relationship (Chevruta)
- Personal Practice

Elements of Personal Practice

Jewish Learning +

Three Daily Practices:

- Awareness (Focus Phrase)
- Action (Kabbalah)
- Reflection (Cheshbon HaNefesh)

Summary

- Leadership is a deeply spiritual endeavor – we are organizing people to align with a purpose that is greater than any single person.
- For those efforts to be truly pro-social and soulful, we, as leaders, need to align our behavior with our souls/best selves.
- Jewish spirituality, and Mussar in particular, offers us ideas and tools for how to align with our holy purpose.
- These tools are practical and relevant to everyday life and can be brought to your communities, organizations and families

A Final Thought

If I am not for myself, who am I?

If I am only for myself, what am I?

If not now, when?

-Hillel the Elder