

Consider this....

■ Rabbi Gershon Schusterman
Los Angeles, CA

Leadership 101—

CHAZAK V'EMATZ!



Leadership is a very powerful quality. It is a lot more than just the sum of the leader's parts. A leader must have many talents and skills to be effective, but those are not what make him a leader. A leader does not need to do everything himself; part of his leadership is being able to identify and utilize the capabilities of his followers. The greater the leader, the higher the caliber of the followers he attracts.

Consider this....

What are the intrinsic factors that constitute leadership and distinguish a leader from otherwise extraordinarily capable people? How can we incorporate these qualities into our own leadership positions?

When the danger was over and he tried to emerge from his hiding place, he was stuck; no amount of twisting and squirming could get him out.

When Moshe Rabbeinu charged Yehoshua with the responsibility of carrying on as the leader after him, he exhorted him (*Devorim 31:7*) by saying, Chazak v'Ematz! — Be strong and courageous! After Moshe Rabbeinu's passing, Hashem Himself said to Yehosua, Chazak v'Ematz! (*Devorim 31:33*). When Yehoshua assumes leadership, Hashem instructs him Chazak v'Ematz *three more times* (*Yehoshua 1:6,7,9*). Finally, when Yehoshua addresses some of the Jewish leaders, they respond by saying to him Chazak v'Ematz! (*Yehoshua 1:18*). Chazak v'Ematz is found in Tanach two more times, both when Dovid haMelech exhorts his son Shlomo regarding Shlomo's future kingship. Obviously, this exhortation — Chazak v'Ematz! — is a fundamental element of leadership.

What is to be achieved by exhorting one to “be strong and courageous”? If one is not already strong, will telling him to be strong make him so? If one is fearful, will telling him to be courageous make him less fearful? What is the underlying message in these words that empowers the listener to become strong and overcome his fear?

Chassidus, the inner Torah, hones in on the fundamental meaning of

strength. It defines strength not in *relative* terms (that which distinguishes the 99-pound weakling from Shimshon haGibor), but in *absolute* terms. In the Maamar *V'chol Ho'am*, 5682, the Frierdiker Rebbe defines strength as the ability to call upon one's inner re-

sources. The underlying power is already within us; it is up to us to determine *if* we want to make the effort to evoke it. This conscious choice is the subtle but essential distinction between being weak and being strong.

We are aware of incidents where in a moment of danger people performed feats of great strength which would be impossible for them to repeat once the danger had passed:

The Frierdiker Rebbe tells of an incident in the times of the Tzemach Tzedek. Murderous robbers had attacked some people and one of them hid by squeezing himself through a very tight space. When the danger was over and he tried to emerge from his hiding place, he was stuck; no amount of twisting and squirming could get him out. Finally, they had to break the opening to free him (*Igros Kodesh M'horayatz*, 4:211).

And then there's an Associated Press report of Angela Cavallo of Lawrenceville, Georgia, who, on April 9, 1982, lifted her teenage son Tony's 1964 Chevy Impala, to free him. He was working under it and it had fallen on him and knocked him unconscious. When she heard the neighbor's son screaming, Angela, in her late 50s, 5-foot-8, ran outside, grabbed the side of

the car with both hands and pulled up with all her strength. That was enough to take the pressure off her son. Two neighbors reinserted the jack and dragged the boy out. (Tony recovered completely after this incident.)

Now certainly there are physiological explanations, such as a rush of adrenalin, which explain why under extreme circumstances we can do much more, physically, than we ever considered possible. But we can apply this concept to strength of character as well, and choose to respond to circumstances with our hidden strengths revealed. It is the choice to evoke one's inner resources that distinguishes the strong from the weak. One should not think that the courageous are not fearful; they are. What distinguishes the courageous is that they access their inner resources so that despite their fear, they act!

Sometimes even simple daily situations must be met with strength and courage. These have nothing to do with adrenalin and everything to do with strength of character:

When the alarm rang next to the kolel youngster's bedside, he decided that he hadn't slept enough, so he turned over to go back to sleep. His wife, who was the primary breadwinner now, during their first year of marriage, was getting dressed and noticed that her husband was not getting up. She asked him, “Are you okay?” He said, “Yes, I'm fine, I'm just tired and I decided to sleep in today.” She didn't say a word; she just stopped getting dressed and got back into bed. Her husband opened his eyes and looked at her and said, “Are you okay?” To which she said, “Yes, I'm fine, I'm just tired and I decided to sleep in today...” Without another word, he got out of bed and went to the kolel, soon followed by his wife getting up and going to work.

Consider this....

This is a fine example of *chachmos noshim bonsah beisah*, the wise of the women builds her home (*Mishlei 14:1*). Without a word, she took a tired and weak husband and made him strong!

Our Rebbeim at farbrengens have quoted a certain pithy Russian phrase numerous times. *Mozhesh da nye chotchesh* means, “You are able; you are just unwilling.” Its origin was a story about a wagon stuck in the mud:

The Shpoler Zaide was once traveling to the Mezritcher Maggid by foot. A Jewish wagon driver whose loaded wagon had gotten bogged down in mud saw him walking by and asked the Shpoler Zaide to help him pull it out. The Shpoler Zaide answered, “I can’t lift such a heavy weight.” The disappointed wagon driver responded,

“*Mozhesh da nye chotchesh*.” The Shpoler Zaide took his words to heart and went to help him. As soon as he put his hand on the wagon, the wagon emerged from the mud (*Igros Kodesh, M’horayatz, 9:98*).

Those who say, “I’m weak; I can’t do this,” can’t; those who say, “I can,” can! Those who are afraid to try something challenging remain fearful, unchallenged and unaccomplished. However, those who experience fear, but take on the challenge anyway, accomplish! As a bonus, they also overcome their fear.

This is what the Mishnah (*Avos 4:1*) means: *Eizehu gibor? Hakoveshes yitzro*. (Who is strong? One who subdues his evil inclination.) Hashem made the battle between good and evil very personal, with the two conflicting

sides in each person perfectly balanced. How does one overcome the very personal challenge of the seductive whispers of the yetzer hara? When two opponents are perfectly matched, the one who can access his or her inner resources will emerge victorious. The Mishnah says that one must be a gibor, one who draws on resources that are beneath one’s conscious surface, to triumph in the battle.

Now we

have a better insight into how the quintessential quality of leadership is expressed in the exhortation, “*Chazak v’Ematz!*” A leader is not a teacher, though he does that too; a leader inspires! A leader models to his followers that they can be more than they are and more than they imagine they can be. A leader leads by being a living example of digging deep within oneself to achieve one’s goals. A leader is not deterred by obstacles; his/her vision and determination enable him/her to navigate around the obstacle or to go *lichatchila ariber* (over the top).

That is why people are drawn to a true leader—because he or she enables them to perceive that they can be greater than they realized. A real leader helps the followers find the treasures buried within themselves. Through his or her inspired leadership, the followers become mini-leaders, too (*see Rashi Bereishis, 16:18*).

If one needed proof of this in our time, observe the Rebbe’s inspired leadership and his many thousands of Shluchim. Many of these individuals might very well have been just ordinary folk, but by following their leader, the Rebbe (sometimes to the far corners of earth), they became strong and effective leaders of their communities.

The Rebbe was a true leader (and continues his leadership from on high, as explained in Tanya, *Igeres Hakodesh, 27-28*). He looks into each of us and sees our true neshamah-potential. He continues to exhort us through his brachos, letters, sichos and maamorim: “*Chazak v’Ematz!*” It is up to us to be strong and courageous, to dig deeply within ourselves and to mine the inner resources which we possess in order to help ourselves and those we influence to reach ultimate fulfillment, with the coming of Moshiach! ■

B.H.

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