

Yisro, Rabbi David Mahler

Over the previous decade, social media has grown rapidly in importance. In early 2019, I recall reading an article which wrote that more than 3.5 billion people actively use social media – almost half of the world’s population. Inevitably, these people look up to influencers in social media to guide them with their personal decision making. Social media influencers, as they are called, are people who have built a reputation for their knowledge, expertise and/or creativity within a specific topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views.

After hearing of many of the great miracles performed by *Hashem* in Egypt and thus far in the desert, *Yisro*, Moshe’s father-in-law, joins *Am Yisrael* as they are preparing to march towards *Eretz Yisrael*. Upon arrival, he is shocked to discover that Moshe is serving as a one man educational and judicial system for a community of several million people. *Yisro* approaches Moshe and explains that this is not a tenable situation. It is neither beneficial for the nation nor for Moshe himself as they are not having their needs met efficiently and he is accepting upon himself too much of a burden and responsibility. *Yisro*’s concern for everyone involved, as well as his pragmatic solution must be applauded and is ultimately accepted by Moshe. *Yisro*’s plan was logical, practical and sensible.

As an aside, Moshe must have realized that it was necessary for him to adjust and delegate more. What was Moshe thinking? It must be that Moshe had something much deeper in mind. While he knew that he would ultimately have to delegate authority to other leaders in a hierarchical system, he recognized that such a system was not the ideal. Moshe wanted to guide the nation in an idealistic fashion for at least a short period. Moshe resisted the hierarchy because he did not want anyone with a question, no matter how seemingly insignificant, to think that he or she could not go directly to the leader of the nation, to the man of G-d. It pained Moshe to think that a fellow Jew could possibly ever believe that they don’t have unlimited access to *Hashem*, and by extension, him. Moshe resisted “middle-management” because he felt it created a barrier between himself and the people.

Moshe explained this to *Yisro* but *Yisro* would not be deterred. He kept with his plan. Was there another level to *Yisro*’s strategy? What was he really trying to accomplish?

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch (18:21) notes the profundity of this plan. The nation was running within a system of one chief, one general, one leader. Everyone else were subordinates. Moshe made all the judicial and educational decisions. But not everyone should be a soldier. Ideally, there are very few soldiers. People need to be generals.

Based on the *pesukim*, Rav Hirsch computes that under this new system there were 78,600 people serving in leadership roles in *Klal Yisrael*. Many had the capacity to lead and assume some sort of influential position. They were not simply tasked to serve as judges, but as guides, teachers and mentors. That was the real genius of his advice. It transformed soldiers into generals, players into captains.

There are many areas of our lives – religious and secular – that need people to play more active roles and accept upon themselves more leadership. There are segments of our populations we are not reaching. Let's go out and reach them.

Amazingly, I know of a small group of YICC women who are working diligently and relentlessly bringing some of the singles in our community together. They are working hard trying to make *shidduchium*. Others have noticed that some of our pre-teens are missing a *Shabbos* davening experience and have pitched in to create one for them. I know of a few people who have taken it upon themselves to make sure to find vaccinations for as many 65+ members of our community as possible.

Plug the open holes every community has.

On a podcast I listened to last week, Sivan Rachav-Meir threw out the idea of each Orthodox family inviting one non (not yet)-observant person or family over for a few *Shabbatot* or *Yom Tov* meals during the year. Be the religious captain for that family. Have them experience the beauty of your *Shabbos* table.

Though this might elicit some controversy and combative comments, I genuinely believe that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was the single most influential religious leader of the past 150 years. What was his greatness? Was he the most learned, the most saintly or the most kind? I'm not sure. But he was the most influential because he created influencers.

One of the Rebbe's central messages was that anyone could be a leader, because each person can choose to be an example to the people around them, leading others to their best path in life. The Rebbe passed this message down to his emissaries, making them understand that everyone needed to be a leader to do what it took to get the job done: bringing Jews closer to Judaism.

Because he knew he could never accomplish his passion of spreading his message to Jews all over the world on his own, the Rebbe was the ultimate entrepreneur.

Most leaders create followers. He created leaders. The Rebbe did just that: he created thousands of clones of himself, with just as much passion and dedication, to help take his “business” to the next level and assure it will live on forever.

Yisro was teaching Moshe this lesson. To be the greatest leader, create more leaders. Leaders who impact and influence.

Shabbat Shalom