

Parahsat Vaeira, Rabbi James Proops

Forbes published an article back in November titled “Leading In 2021 Is About Patience And Grace”. The author, Nate Bennett, building off the events of 2020 including the outbreak of the pandemic, the social and racial tensions and the divisive political climates claimed that “Everyone has a role to play in the effort to make 2021 the year that we will remember as the one during which we all figured it out, got on board, and began to create a better future. Here, the focus is on the role leaders need to play. What will be different about being an effective leader in 2021? Next year’s great leaders will need to look like Patience and Grace”. In a world going through so much change and facing great uncertainty we need leaders, whether at work, at school or in politics we need leaders who, not only will act and make decisions guided by patience, but also role-model the important trait for those around them to emulate.

Bennett is of course not the first to highlight the importance of a leader having patience. We find in this week’s *parasha* that Hashem in fact educated Moshe and Aharon in this important fact, as they took on the mantle of leaders of *Bnei Yisrael*. Rashi explains on the *pasuk*, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּצִיגֵם אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and *commanded* them” (6:13), that Hashem was instructing them to lead the People in a gentle manner and with patience. The *Medrash* goes further that Hashem told them, “My Children are stubborn and frustrating, and you are accepting a position with the knowledge that they might curse you and throw stones at you” (*Shemot Rabbah* 7:3). When in a position of leadership, it is inevitable that one will come up against difficulties, opposition and detractors, yet all can be managed with an appropriate demeanor of calm and patience.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe in his monumental *Alei Shur* discusses the important *middah* of patience at great length and notes that this is of course a trait that we all need to incorporate into our daily lives, even those who do not occupy positions of leadership. He expresses that patience is essential for all of us as ultimately we all have contact with each other! It is crucial to

note that no two people are the same in personality, characteristics and upbringing and therefore in order to get along we all have to be tolerant of each other's actions and words.

The hebrew word for patience is *Savlanut*, the root of which is *Sovel* meaning 'to bear (a load)'. One who is patient is similar to a person who assists another in carrying a load, yet perseveres despite the burden. Everyday we see and hear things that we do not agree with or that bother us, yet we must resist the temptation to be wounded or engage. We are encouraged to act as a *Savlan*, 'bearing the burden of people's offensive actions or words' and continue operating in a wholly rational and calm way. Rav Wolbe importantly clarifies that *Savlanut* does not mean indifference and ignoring, but rather it is the ability to respond in a calm and composed manner instead of erupting in anger.

I have the great privilege of being part of a small group, together with members of our shul, who get together twice monthly to learn about and work on improving our *middot*, through learning *Mussar* texts. The most recent trait which we have been working on is that of patience and we saw that Rabbi Pliskin highlights the importance of this *middah* when coping with uncertainty, something which we are all facing now more than ever. He writes that "uncertainty is an integral part of everyone's life, the ability to cope well with it is crucial for living a life of joy and inner peace. Patience is serenity. When one masters patience, one has a higher level of tolerance for uncertainty". We are all caught in a constant state of uncertainty as we watch the realities of life continue to change. We don't know when we will next see our loved ones. We might be unsure of our job security. Even our children are now accustomed to asking before bed, "Will there be school tomorrow?". If we are able to increase our ability to imbue a temperament of patience, we will be able to cope with all the challenges that come our way in a more productive, serene and resilient way. May we all learn to emulate our greatest leaders, Moshe and Aharon, in this most important endeavor.

Shabbat Shalom