

In Search of LEADERS

Reuven Spolter asserts that as the Modern Orthodox community grows in size and age, its pool of rabbis and educators becomes progressively smaller, younger and less experienced.

After moving his family from the East Coast to Detroit to take a position at a local hospital, Yossi Bloom,* a victim of the budget cuts that followed the recent economic slowdown, found himself out of a job. Yossi saw the layoff as a sign that he should focus on his lifelong dream of *aliyah*. Despite a frightening pilot trip during a spate of suicide bombings in early 2002, and a great deal of fighting with government bureaucrats in Israel, Yossi and his wife, Shoshana,* made the fateful decision. In June 2002, members of the Detroit Kollel Torah MiTzion organized a goodbye party for the family.

As I joined almost a hundred members of the Detroit community to bid farewell to the Blooms, I wondered why so many people had come to say goodbye to a family that had been in town for a relatively short period of time. Then I realized that this party embodied everything that was simultaneously wrong and right with the American Modern Orthodox community.

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Although the Blooms had moved to Detroit only a year earlier, they immediately assumed a leadership role in the local Modern Orthodox community. Because Shoshana covers her hair and Yossi immediately sought *chavrutot* and other learning opportunities (including learning at the local Lakewood *kollel* and joining a *mishnayot chaburah*), most people in the community assumed that the Blooms would choose to send their children to the local separate-sex, right-wing school instead of Yeshivat Akiva, a coeducational Modern Orthodox school. Yet, to the surprise of many (and despite the efforts of many others), the Blooms, drawn by the charisma of the school principal, Rabbi Yigal Tsaidi, and the Zionist bent of the school, enrolled their children at Yeshivat Akiva. Their dedication and seriousness towards *frumkeit*, their fun-loving attitude and openness to others, their desire to work on behalf of the community and their willingness to engage with people less religiously devoted than themselves without fear of “corrupting” their chil-

* Name has been changed.

dren (as the right-wing community maintains), catapulted them to the forefront of the Yeshivat Akiva community. (Shoshana’s cooking didn’t hurt either.) At its annual dinner, Yeshivat Akiva prominently featured the Bloom family in its video, and Yossi was slated to join the school’s board of directors had he not moved to Israel.

We in the American Modern Orthodox rabbinic and educational camps define Modern Orthodoxy as a worldview that demands strict adherence to *halachah* combined with an understanding that *halachah* encourages us to engage the modern world. In this worldview, our Orthodoxy encourages us to lead an altogether modern life, allowing us to remain within the four *amot* of the *beit midrash* while we navigate the modern world.

Yet, I get a sense that both the right-wing community and the rest of the Modern Orthodox world looks at us and says, “We know what you think Modern Orthodoxy means. But we



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don't think it means that." To them, the "modern" doesn't define the Orthodoxy, rather, the "Orthodox" defines the modernity. People looking at the Modern Orthodox world from the outside define it not so much as an ideology but as a series of practices that include the following:

1. Modern Orthodox Jews own and watch television, including cable and satellite television; they own VCRs and other devices that bring the secular world into their homes. They watch movies and plays that violate many accepted halachic standards.

2. They do not conform to accepted halachic standards of modesty. Many of the women do not cover their hair and dress in clothing not condoned by Jewish law. Modern Orthodox Jews encourage socializing and interaction between the sexes, especially during the formative years. Modern Orthodox individuals swim in the company of the opposite sex, visit the beach and maintain a laissez-faire attitude towards the entire issue.

3. Finally, many Modern Orthodox Jews use their modernity as an excuse for halachic laxity when they find a specific mitzvah too burdensome, onerous, curious or illogical. Whether it's concerning increasing Torah learning or maintaining higher standards of *kashrut*, "Modern Orthodoxy" is a catch-all phrase that some of its members use to imply, "I don't have to," when they really mean "I don't want to."

Modern Orthodoxy is a big umbrella representing a wide range of practices and ideologies. While the above descriptions don't apply to the entire Modern Orthodox community, they do apply to many individuals. As a rabbi of a Modern Orthodox community, one of my primary goals is to educate my community to adjust its understanding of what it means to be "Modern Orthodox" and to wear that label with pride. I want to teach my community that involvement in the modern world is not a justification for complacency in one's religious life.

For precisely this reason, I found

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myself so excited about the Bloom's impact on the community. Detroit, by and large, is a relatively right-wing community. Oak Park, where the majority of Detroit's Orthodox community lives, boasts over twenty shuls, a *yeshiva gedolah*, a Bais Yaakov, a large, beautiful, newly constructed mikvah and numerous other religious organizations. Yet people who consider themselves Modern Orthodox primarily affiliate with two shuls. In Detroit, many of the young families, afraid of the religious compromises they observe in most Modern Orthodox Jews, choose to identify with the right-wing community. To their minds, it's easier to associate (and have their children associate) with more religiously dedicated people and teach their children modernity (and often secular studies) at home rather than have them learn about the modern world—with all its dangers, immorality and destructiveness—from their school and their peers, and then try and temper that modernity with a dedication to Torah at home.

So, as we welcomed this new family, I saw in them leaders who could serve as examples for others, a family that would set the tone for the larger community and show that one didn't have to run away from our community in order to remain dedicated to Torah learning and uncompromising halachic adherence.

And then they left. I felt happy for them, but sad for us.

While a rabbi must coax his congregation towards continuous religious growth, for him to be successful, he cannot be the sole communal model for that religious behavior.

When the rabbi sets aside time for Torah

study or attends the daily *minyan* faithfully, no one bats an eye. He's supposed to do these things. But when a young, prominent and respected member of the community models these behaviors, the effect that his actions have upon his friends and neighbors far outweighs the rabbinic modeling that the community expects and "pays for." When someone who has a "real job" and who doesn't "have to" learn sets aside precious time away from his family and other responsibilities for Torah study, those around him, perhaps even unconsciously, take notice. And, in some small way they begin to think to themselves, "Maybe I should spend some time learning as well. Maybe I should make more of an effort to go to *minyan*."

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hile I congratulated the Bloom family for making *aliyah*, and encouraged my members to seriously consider following their lead, I saw their move as an ominous sign for the American Modern Orthodox community.

Years ago, the American Zionist movement, including its Orthodox branch, focused primarily on supporting the State of Israel, economically and politically. *Aliyah* was never really part of the equation. But with the popularity of post-high school *yeshivot* in Israel, most notably the *hesder yeshivot*, a large number of American Orthodox Jews began seriously talking about *aliyah*. While the students of Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik usually followed his model of Religious Zionism, supporting the State of Israel spiritually, financially and politically, the students of his students seriously consider following the model of the Rav's son-in-law, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, who made *aliyah* in the 1960s, and actively encourages his students, and anyone else who will listen, to do the same.

This troubling lack of leadership not only manifests itself in the lay leadership of the Modern Orthodox community but also has begun to affect all areas of Jewish communal leadership, from shul rabbis to Orthodox day school principals to teachers (including instructors of

Jewish studies). There are simply not enough talented Modern Orthodox professional leaders to go around.

My grandfather spent his life in the professional rabbinate, starting out as an assistant rabbi in Atlanta, Georgia, and then moving to the small community of Winthrop, Massachusetts, where he spent the rest of his professional career. While he invested his life in this small community, his congregation could never truly repay him for that dedication. He was forced to supplement his income with several side jobs. While I don't think he ever regretted his career choice, he did have surprising words of advice for me as I embarked on my rabbinic career in West Hartford, Connecticut. "Get a degree on the side," he told me, "so that you can get a real job and not have to be a shul rabbi."

Little did he know how much the profession had changed over the years. With the demise of small-town Orthodoxy, the Orthodox Jewish community has centered itself around the major metropolitan communities in America. While many Orthodox shuls hire part-time rabbis who need to supplement their incomes, other communities, especially outside of the New York metropolitan area, recognize the need and value of a full-time rabbi. In fact, I chose the rabbinate over a career in *chinuch* primarily because I was looking for a career that would support my family, which, thank God, it does. What's changed between my grandfather's time and now? I suspect that in his youth, my grandfather was as active, creative and innovative in his rabbinate as I try to be today. He was certainly more learned. But he also had far more competition.

Today, I am the rabbi of the largest Orthodox congregation in Michigan. I consider myself relatively young (at thirty-one years old) to hold a position in such a respected community. And yet, I am not alone. I replaced another young rabbi in his mid-thirties, who went on to become the rabbi of the largest Modern Orthodox shul in California. Recently, when Rabbi Ephraim Kanarfogel stepped down as

rabbi of Congregation Beth Aaron in Teaneck, New Jersey, the shul, boasting several hundred families, hired a promising young rabbi who had yet to reach the age of thirty. Another young friend of mine was, until recently, the rabbi of the largest Orthodox synagogue in North America.

Every few months, the rabbinic placement committee at Yeshiva University distributes a list of available



Members of the Detroit Kollel Torah MiTzion.

positions to the membership of the Rabbinical Council of America. While many shuls seek only part-time or assistant rabbis, at any given time, a number of congregations from across the country are searching for talented, open-minded Modern Orthodox rabbis.

Why is there so little competition? For one, the community of Modern Orthodox Jews has grown faster than its leadership, and it tends to discourage its children from entering into Jewish education or the rabbinate. Who hasn't heard the quip that the rabbinate is a "terrible profession for a nice Jewish boy?" A recent article in YU's student newspaper, *The Commentator* (26 December 2002, vol. 67), reports that of the 147 students who received their ordination at the *chag hasemichah* in

2002, 116 are currently using their ordination in their careers. Forty-six teach in Jewish schools, eleven work for Jewish organizations, eight are chaplains or run community *kollelim*, and twenty-four are pulpit rabbis. (An additional twenty-seven are continuing to learn.) Over the last four years, YU has produced a total of six pulpit rabbis per year.

In addition, we cannot ignore the *aliyah* factor. Many of the most talented, creative and dedicated students at the *hesder yeshivot* that feed YU its best

students choose to settle in Israel. While some might argue that those making *aliyah* are not educators or rabbis anyway, I believe that many of those individuals might have chosen Jewish communal service had they remained in America. Since they moved to Israel, however, they never seriously considered it because of the hardships involved. How many computer programmers living in Beit Shemesh today would have made fantastic community rabbis in America?

It's a badly kept secret that almost every Modern Orthodox rabbi has a plan—a ticket that will ultimately land him and his family in Israel. Two years ago, the community rabbi in the largest city in Indiana gave up his position of over ten years to make

aliyah. Last year, Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, the creator of Nefesh B’Nefesh, made *aliyah*. Before Rabbi Fass created his wonderful organization, he served as the assistant rabbi at the Boca Raton Synagogue, one of the most popular, vibrant congregations in the country. I wonder: Which shul didn’t he move on to? Which major American Modern Orthodox community will not benefit from his wisdom, erudition and leadership? Recently, one of the pre-eminent Modern Orthodox rabbis in America today confided to me that while he was seriously considering *aliyah*, a major leader of the American community told him, “For you, *aliyah* is a *yetzer hara*.” What about for the rest of us?

Simply put, for a graduate of YU’s Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), there are more available jobs than there are candidates. As the Modern Orthodox community grows in size and age, its pool of rabbis becomes progressively smaller, younger and less experienced. And this problem has reached epidemic proportions in the world of Orthodox Jewish education.

Recently, I shared a Shabbat meal with a Detroit lay leader integrally involved with one of the right-wing schools in town. When a *rebbe* in his yeshivah moved away and a position became available, this lay leader immediately found himself buried under an avalanche of résumés, at least twenty of which he considered to be viable. By contrast, he told me, he knows of at least twenty Modern Orthodox schools in American cities that cannot find qualified Modern Orthodox directors to lead them.

Detroit’s Yeshivat Akiva attracted a dynamic and vibrant educational director in Rabbi Tsaidi, a student of Rabbi Moti Alon, the *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshivat Hakotel in Jerusalem. One who personally models the Modern Orthodoxy that Yeshivat Akiva represents, Rabbi Tsaidi is a great spokesman for Modern Orthodoxy. Three years into his tenure, the elementary school has attracted families both

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from the more liberal Conservative community and from the more right-wing elements as well. Yet, the numbers in the high school still languish. Rabbi Tsaidi faces one overarching challenge in rebuilding his high school: He cannot find Modern Orthodox teachers.

Because the larger schools in the New York area snap up the best and brightest that RIETS, Azrieli, Revel and Stern College produce, far too few of these graduates willingly leave family, higher salaries and the abundance of restaurants in the New York City area. Schools from across the country cannot find Modern Orthodox role models for their students to learn from and emulate. Many supplement their ranks with *Chareidi*-leaning teachers who don’t believe in Modern Orthodoxy and convey their own *hashkafah* in subtle and often overt ways. Other schools, such as Yeshivat Akiva, have tried a different tact.

Of the eight teachers on Yeshivat Akiva’s high school Judaic faculty, five are members of the local Kollel Torah MiTzion. This *kollel*, which has branches throughout the world, consists of young couples, often just completing their education, who agree to spend two to three years on *shelichut* somewhere in the Diaspora. Their strength—their vibrancy, youth and vitality—is also their greatest weakness. For the most part, they have no practical professional experience. When they finally do become good teachers, it’s often only months before they return home to Israel. A culture and language gap often separates American high school students from their young Israeli instructors. Finally, the temporary nature of their stay frequently pre-

vents students from truly opening up to and developing meaningful relationships with the members of the *kollel*. While they fill a great need, the *kollel* members cannot be a long-term solution to our teacher shortage.

In an attempt to deal with this problem, the Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Institute in Boston recently created a teacher-training institute to raise the professional level of Orthodox Judaic studies teachers across North America by developing reflective, professional educators, and by teaching men and women “the skills and confidence needed to pursue successful and rewarding Judaic studies careers.” While this program represents an important step in the right direction, the six candidates per year that the institute accepts will in no way make up for the woeful shortfall of qualified Modern Orthodox educators.

As I watched the media coverage of the arrival of the 2002 Nefesh B’Nefesh flight on the Arutz Sheva web site, tears welled up in my eyes, as I felt a pang of jealousy for those with enough courage to take the plunge and make *aliyah*, especially in such difficult times. Watching Americans just like me disembark that El Al plane (only this time not as tourists), I felt the strong pull of the Land tug on my heart. But knowing that the Bloom family was also on that flight, I thought of the many Jewish communities from across America that had lost great leaders and role models to the dream of *aliyah*, and I felt a sense of loss for my dreams for Modern Orthodoxy in America.

The *gemara* in *Chagigah* (5b) teaches us: “The rabbis learned: God cries about three things each day. The first is one who could immerse himself in Torah and does not do so.”

What can we do? We first need to take a close look at the RIETS graduates who do not enter *avodat hakodesh*. Twenty percent of those receiving *semichah* pursue non-rabbinic careers. While *chinuch* or a career in the rabbinate might not be right for all of them, with the proper career counseling and guidance, it might be for some of

them. But that just isn’t enough. We need to do more to entice other good candidates to consider a rabbinic career.

When I finished college, I decided to enter the *semichah* program without any intention of going into the professional rabbinate. I thought then—and still do now—that a member of a lay community with *semichah* has a tremendous ability to influence people in a way that others do not. During my time at RIETS, I found my calling and decided to pursue the rabbinate as a career. I think that many talented young men enter other careers without seriously considering *chinuch*, the rabbinate or informal Jewish education.

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hen the New York City Department of Education found itself short of speech and occupational therapists, it offered students entering either of those fields full scholarships towards their master’s degrees on the condition that they commit to working in the New York City school system for the first two years after they graduate. We must do the same. Today, tuition, fees and expenses at YU, the feeder school for the vast majority of RIETS students, can reach an annual cost of over \$25,000. While some students can afford to pay full tuition, YU has historically been extremely generous with its scholarships and loans. Yet, the costs remain prohibitive. If YU were to offer scholarships towards college tuition on the condition that the student, male or female, enter either the rabbinate or formal Jewish education outside of the New York metropolitan area for a period of three years after he or she finished his or her education, we could attract far more potential educators and teachers to the professional ranks. And once these graduates try teaching or the rabbinate, many of them may find they like it.

How do we pay for such an endeavor? By asking the communities to underwrite the scholarships, and providing these communities with candi-

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dates they cannot attract on their own. For example, while the Jewish community in San Diego cannot presently attract a talented Modern Orthodox teacher for its high school, if its leaders chose to underwrite a scholarship, that community would be entitled to the services of a talented and energetic young teacher or *rebbe* a few years down the road. And, as we all know, it’s far easier to retain an integrated member of the community than to attract one already entrenched somewhere else.

The *gemara* in *Gittin* (88a) states: *Rav Chisda said in the name of Mar Ukva, and some quote it as Rav Chisda in the name of Rav Yirmiyah: Mereimar expounded: What is the meaning of the verse, “And God hastened the calamity and He brought it upon us, for the Lord, our God, is righteous?” Because the Lord our God is righteous, God hastened the calamity and He brought it upon us? Rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, acted charitably towards Israel, for He sent out the exile of Tzidkiyahu while the exile of Yechoniah remained. For it is written about the exile of Yechoniah: “and the craftsmen (charash) and the gatekeepers (masger) numbered one thousand.” Charash means that once they begin [teaching Torah], everyone becomes like deaf mutes. Masger means that once it closed [halachic discussion], there were no others to open it. And how many [scholars were there]? One thousand.*

Rashi explains that the Babylonians exiled most of the Jewish elders together with Yechoniah during the initial wave of forced expulsions from the Land of Israel. While the remaining

Jewish community might have considered this a particularly difficult blow, the prophet Daniel teaches us that in hindsight, we see God’s hand continuing to guide us even through that terrible suffering. When the remaining majority of Jews were exiled eleven years later, they found knowledgeable and learned teachers already in place, ready to teach and guide them.

Mereimar’s message to us is clear: without proper rabbinic guidance, a community cannot survive the spiritual challenges that an exile presents to it. Moreover, the number of leaders plays an incredible significance. The population needs a substantial number of teachers, rabbis and leaders to fan out into the communities and transmit the richness and depth of Judaism to the masses.

How ironic it is that today, thank God, we face the same problem, only this time in the other direction. While the Sages of the First Temple era preceded the rest of the people on their way out of the Land, today our leaders (young and old) again lead the way. Only this time, they’re contributing to the rebuilding of the modern State of Israel, and with God’s help, they’re helping us reach the Ultimate Redemption. While the Gemara focuses on the constructive goal of the Sages’ arrival in Babylonia, once the Sages left the Land in that initial wave, the ultimate destruction of the established Jewish community in Judea became a foregone conclusion.

Modern Orthodoxy in America finds itself in grave danger. Members of the right-wing community will continue to gladly fill the rabbinic and teaching roles that we do not. And over time, because of their effectiveness as teachers and communicators, they will slowly move their congregants and students towards their *hashkafic* worldview. Without leaders and role models who espouse the Modern Orthodoxy that our schools, shuls and communities purportedly represent, Modern Orthodoxy in America will slowly wither away. Its fate rests in our hands. **IA**

Our generation has been called a *dor yatom*, an orphaned generation, because of the dearth of leaders of the stature of previous generations, as Reuven Spolter explains in the previous article. Here Tzvi Hersh Weinreb analyzes three vital components of leadership while paying tribute to an exemplary Jewish leader.

A Look at LEADERSHIP



Illustration: Barak Uranovsky (www.barakuranovsky.com)

This design, part of a stained-glass window for the Hillel House of Boston University, depicts the splitting of the Red Sea during the Exodus from Egypt. Above that are a rainbow and the dove of Noah.

Abraham Ibn Ezra, in a *piyyut* (poem) for the seventh day of Pesach, offers a formula for understanding the components of Jewish leadership.¹ Although the poem can be read as a schema for surveying the entire course of Jewish history, it can be used even more effectively to bring the distinguishing features of Jewish leadership into focus.

The poem reads:

*Arba'ah amdu al hayam
Tzur vatzir vatzar vatzon.
Tzar haitzik latzon
Vetzon tzarach latzir
Vetzir tza'ak latzur
Vetzur tzivah latzir:
"Tzai vechaletz tzoni miyad tzar."*

*Four stood by the sea,
Envoy and rock, foe and flock.
Foe forced flock,
Flock screeched to envoy,
Envoy shrieked to rock,
Rock ordered envoy:
"Go and deliver flock from foe."*

The poem speaks of four "characters" in the drama engulfing the Jewish people as they faced the Red Sea. They are the *tzur*, the Almighty as the Rock of Israel; the *tzir*, Moshe Rabbeinu as intermediary or envoy; the *tzar*, the enemy or oppressor and the *tzon*, the Jewish people as the flock.

By using the word *tzir* to describe the human

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agent in the formula, Ibn Ezra does more than simply use a word beginning with the letter *tzadi* to fit his alliteration. Rather, *tzir* has a number of associations and meanings that help inform our conception of what makes a Jewish leader. Radak, in his *Sefer Hashorashim*, delineates these different meanings while insisting that they have a common origin or root.

It is instructive to compare leaders such as Moshe Rabbeinu to the descriptions of leadership that are available in secular literature, such as John Gardner's *On Leadership*, a forceful and practical treatise on leadership, especially in the American political arena. Gardner, a former secretary of health, education and welfare, and the advisor to several past presidents, writes, "Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader." This succinct and stark definition of leadership is not quite apt when applied to Moshe Rabbeinu, who was not very successful at "inducing" his people; indeed, the very word inducing does not ring true when applied to him. Nor was Moshe Rabbeinu very successful at motivating the Jewish people to pursue objectives held by him. Quite the contrary, he seems to have faced resistance, regression and even rebellion at almost every turn. And it is most

inaccurate to see his objectives as originating with him. They are rather the objectives of the *tzur*, the Divine source of Moshe Rabbeinu's mission.

Similarly, the myriad other definitions of leadership found in social science textbooks—as well as in the pop works that fill the bookshelves of today's super bookstores—are inadequate to capture the particular nature of Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership, which after all must be the model for all future Jewish leaders, or at least the ideal toward which they must strive.

A more accurate picture of Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership skills can be garnered from careful consideration of the word *tzir*—meaning an individual who is delegated by others to lead—which we find several times in Tanach. For example, in Mishlei 25:13, it says, "A trusty messenger (*tzir*) to those who send him" or in Ovadiah 1:1: "An envoy (*tzir*) has been sent out among the nations" These phrases emphatically convey the notion that a *tzir* is one who is sent, one who has an assigned mission. That a leader has a sense of mission seems to be a basic component of Jewish leadership. Certainly Moshe Rabbeinu was reluctant to accept his mission, as were others after him, such as Jeremiah. But in his function, Moshe Rabbeinu clearly felt that he was "sent" by a Being outside of himself, namely the Master of the Universe.

In his famous essay, "Kol Dodi Dofek," Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik

distinguishes between *goral* and *yiud*, fate and destiny. He states that the typical prophet felt that his prophecy was a burden with which he was laden; it was placed upon his shoulders, and he had to unburden himself of it. He felt himself to be set on fire by Another. This sense of having a clear and specific purpose coming from outside of oneself, from Above, is a critical component of the subjective inner experience of the Jewish leader. Post-Biblically and through the ages, Jewish leaders have felt the same sense of mission, and that is what has enabled them to overcome the difficulties presented to them by the *tzar* (enemy) or by the *tzon* (flock).

A first component, then, of Jewish leadership is this sense of *shelichut* or *yiud*, mission or destiny. In contrast, we find contemporary Jewish leaders who stress that they are "professionals." People with "professions" do not necessarily have missions. They have tasks to accomplish, contractual arrangements to be honored and a code of conduct that includes accountability and reliability. But the professional, qua professional, does not stand in relationship to an external force or vision that guides him and illuminates his way. *Shelichut*, however, a "calling" or a "vocation," emanates from a different source, which his professionalism may then secondarily serve.

There is another meaning to the word *tzir*, which appears several times

Rabbi Steven M. Dworken, *z"l*, was known for his extraordinary work as executive vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), a position he held for nearly a decade until his untimely passing in January 2003. Rabbi Dworken served his *chaverim* (members) with wisdom and humor and was always ready to offer advice and a helping hand. His long and esteemed service as a pulpit rabbi enabled him to recognize and respond to the needs of his colleagues in the synagogue world. He served in pulpits in Portland, Maine, and Stamford, Connecticut, before leading Congregation Anshe Chesed in Linden, New Jersey, for twenty-three years. Rabbi Dworken worked tirelessly to strengthen the relationship between the lay leadership of the Orthodox synagogue world (represented by the Orthodox Union) and Orthodox rabbis (represented by the RCA). A constant visitor to OU headquarters, Rabbi Dworken involved himself in many of the OU's programs and endeared himself to the OU staff and officers.

Rabbi Dworken, a graduate of Yeshiva College, received *semichah* from RIETS and served as director of rabbinic services at Yeshiva University's Max Stern Division of Communal Services. His funeral, held at YU, drew more than 1,000 mourners.

The central motivating force in his life was his family. Rabbi Dworken's legacy will live on with his wife, Susan, his children and his grandchildren, as well as through the thousands of individuals whom he influenced throughout his life.



in Tanach, but is most famously used in the passage from the *kinah* that ends the Tishah B'Av service, "*Eli Tzion ve'arehah kemo eeshah vetzirehab.*" "Wail, Zion and her cities, like a woman in labor." In this context, *tzir* means pain, travail. The *tzir*, or leader, must be distinguished by his empathy for those he leads. Here, too, Moshe Rabbeinu serves well as a model. He did not need to open himself up to the pain of his people; he could have remained in his protected position as a prince of Egypt. We are told that not only did he "go out to his brothers," but he "saw their suffering." And Rashi comments that he "focused his eyes and heart" upon them in order to absorb the pain he observed. The willingness to really "see" his *tzon*, the ability to feel the suffering of those he leads with compassion, is a second *sine qua non* for the Jewish leader.

There is a third meaning of *tzir* that fits well into this framework as a component of leadership. A *tzir* is also a hinge, as in the verse in Mishlei 26:14, "The door revolves around its hinge." The function of a hinge is to connect the door to the doorpost. The *tzir* is an intermediary—something that fastens one object to another. This describes the third characteristic of the Jewish leader, the ability to bind together *tzon* and *tzur*, the people he leads with the One above.

These three components of Jewish leadership: sense of mission, sense of empathy and the ability to connect those who are led to the ultimate Leader, make Jewish leadership distinct and different from leadership in other arenas. Jewish leaders strive to integrate all three components of our definition into their person, albeit with varying success.

I offer these reflections on the leadership qualities of the *tzir* as part of my remembrance of Rabbi Steven Dworken, of blessed memory. Steve was a good friend and a leader in every respect. He was certainly a consummate professional. But he was more than that, as reflected in these three meanings of *tzir*. Steve felt a sense of *shelichut*, of true vocation, in

all the positions in which he served, but especially as executive vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). He felt he had been placed into this position with a specific goal, to service and to support the many hundreds of Orthodox rabbis in America who look to the RCA for encouragement and guidance. He did so in an exemplary fashion.

Steve also conveyed a special sense of compassion and *mitleid* (empathy) for rabbis in the field. He responded to their needs, whether those needs were personal, material or spiritual.

And those of us who have now spent a full year missing him know what an important "hinge" he was in bringing about cohesion between various organizations, in being *marbeh shalom* (one who makes peace) between individuals and in connecting all those with whom he came into contact with their Father in Heaven. May his memory be a blessing. **JA**

Note

1. I was made aware of the poem by Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein, who uses a phrase from it as the title of his work *Tzir Vatzon*, which is a study of Moshe Rabbeinu as a political leader.