

AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps  
Torah Portion: *Shemot*

*WHAT MAKES A GREAT LEADER?  
POWER AND GENTLENESS IN ONE PLACE:*

ואף משה לא בחנו הקב"ה אלא בצאן, אמרו רבותינו כשהיה מרע"ה רועה צאנו של יתרו במדבר ברח ממנו גדי ורץ אחריו עד שהגיע לחסית כיון שהגיע לחסית נזדמנה לו בריכה של מים ועמד הגדי לשתות, כיון שהגיע משה אצלו אמר אני לא הייתי יודע שרץ היית מפני צמא עיף אתה הרכיבו על כתיפו והיה מהלך, אמר הקב"ה יש לך רחמים לנהוג צאנו של בשר ודם כך חיך אתה תרעה צאני ישראל, הוי ומשה היה רועה.

*Now Moses was tending the flock* (Ex. 3:1) The Holy One tested Moses by checking out his skill as a shepherd, as our teachers explained: When Moses was tending Jethro's flock in the wilderness, a lamb wandered away from the flock. Moses followed it to a shelter under a rock. As the lamb reached the shelter, it came upon a pool of water and began to drink. When Moses caught up with it, he said, "I didn't know you ran away because you were thirsty. Now you must be tired." So he hoisted the lamb on his shoulder and started to walk back with it. It was at that moment that God said, "Because you showed such compassion in tending the flock of a human being, I swear that I shall make you shepherd of Israel, the flock that is mine." [Sh'mot Rabbah 2:2]

הִנֵּה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה בְּחֹזֶק יָבוֹא וְזָרְעוֹ מִשְׁלָה לוֹ הִנֵּה שֹׁכְרוֹ אֲתוֹ  
וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ לְפָנָיו: יֵא כְרָעָה עֲדָרוֹ יִרְעָה בְּזָרְעוֹ יִקְבֹּץ טְלָאִים  
וּבְחִיקוֹ יִשָּׂא עֲלוֹת יִנְהַל:

*Behold, God comes in power, and His arm wins control for Him... Like a shepherd he pastures his flock;  
He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom; Tenderly he drives the mother sheep.*  
[Isaiah 40:10-11]

**QUESTION:** The midrash shows that Moses was tested for communal leadership by his actions as a shepherd. The prophet Isaiah also portrays God as a shepherd. What qualities does a shepherd have that would be useful to a great leader? One more teaching to help you ponder:

Rabbi Yohanan said: Wherever you find an expression of the power of the Holy Blessed One, there, too, you find God's gentleness. [For example,] it is written in the Torah: *For Adonai your God is the supreme God and the supreme master, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who shows no favor and takes no bribes.* (Deut.10:17). And what is written just after that? *He performs justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger to provide him with food and clothing.*  
[Megillah 31a]