MAKING INSPIRED LEADERS

New Approaches to Jewish Leadership Development

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Leadership courses so often fall short of their goal. Although critics blame this on a failure to communicate leadership skills adequately, I suggest it has more to do with a failure both to tap into a leader's source of inspiration and translate it into a powerful leadership tool.

Today, the issue of inspiration is being taken seriously in general leadership literature: We want to know what leaders deem purposeful work, who they are, and what makes their careers meaningful; what enhances their personal interactions; and how they inspire others. From interviews with the conductor of the Paris Opera to the co-founder of a civil rights organization, Harris Collingwood concluded in a recent *Harvard Business Review* article that "leadership is autobiographical. If I don't know your life story, I don't know a thing about you as a leader" (2001, p. 23).

During the Jewish Leadership Institute seminar sponsored by the Greater Washington federation, we give leaders a chance to tell their stories in a session on inspiration, vision, and mentoring. This class follows sessions on leadership models and board development focusing on board responsibilities, the ideal board composition, lay/professional relations, and fundraising. Later in the course, we work on conflict and change management, effective agenda setting for meetings, and succession planning. As in other courses, participants read cutting-edge leadership books and articles from the worlds of business and education. But unlike many courses on leadership, we do not stop there. Only after skill building does the art of leadership training really begin.

Once members of a class have gotten to know each other better and covered some practical leadership skills, it is time to take them further and deeper, into the psyche of the Jewish leader. It is time to examine texts from the Hebrew Bible and Talmud and explore the issue of inspiration: what inspired biblical leaders to take on a mission or act on a calling. Then we have to look inward, and every person in the room is invited to tap into his or her own sources of inspiration, to tell the moving stories of his or her personal journey to leadership.

The stories vary greatly. A veteran leader might say that he became a synagogue president because he heard his grandfather's voice moving quietly within him, asking him to take care of the Jewish community after he dies. A young, first-time board member might say that she felt moved by the power of Jewish camping from her own adolescent experiences and wanted to give her time and money to support a camp. A breast cancer victim might share the empowerment that running a marathon gave her, which inspired her to create a support group for Jewish women who have suffered cancer and survived. Day school parents often share moving movements in a child's education that created a sense of enhanced belonging to the school "family."

Every time I do this exercise with a class, I feel deeply touched by the stories that people share and am sometimes moved to tears. I understand the power of these personal narratives and the importance of saying them and hearing them. Each time, I feel that participants have given themselves a gift; they have reenergized their non-profit work by coming into touch with what brought them there in the first place. For a few moments, they transcend their organization's politics and conflicts and realize that they

need to do this more often — and need to help others do this.

These leaders then have to take some piece of this narrative and sculpt it into the story of their organization. Inspiration is important not only in recharging our own batteries but it is also critical in expanding the membership of our organizations, retaining those who are burning out, and keeping active members joined to an institution's core values. The leadership expert, John Kotter, claims that leaders who fail to inspire will have difficulty creating and sustaining a vision for their institutions: "Achieving a vision requires *motivating* and *inspiring* — keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles to change by appealing to basic but often untapped human needs, values and emotions" (1999, p. 54).

Although much attention has been focused on the development of Jewish leadership programs recently, very little research has been done on the importance of inspiration as part of leadership training. In a recent issue of this journal, Hal Lewis (2004) challenged the creators of leadership programs on several important grounds, but barely mentioned inspiration. He claimed that we use the term "leader" very loosely, often erroneously referring to someone who is either a volunteer or has deep philanthropic pockets but may have poor leadership skills. Leadership courses (often organized at significant expense) have sometimes been vehicles for the teaching of Jewish literacy and may not broach the subject of leadership at all. Lewis contends that despite the importance of being Jewishly knowledgeable, literacy alone is not "sufficient to guarantee effective leadership."

After examining a host of leadership programs and exploring their methods, Lewis came to some painful but all-too-evident conclusions: We need to be more selective, we should not confuse leadership with literacy or volunteers with leaders, and we need to make participants in such programs more reflective about their own leadership styles through protracted study, mentoring, and

evaluation. Lewis' insights and recommendations are well articulated and will, no doubt, stimulate important future discussions about what leadership training should be in the Jewish community. However, Lewis did not adequately discuss the issue of inspiration, and in discrediting Jewish literacy as part of the training, he may have cut off one of the few sources of inspiration that many leadership programs currently utilize.

About 25 years ago, a professor of Jewish history, Melvin Urofsky (cited by Lewis), did an evaluation of American Jewish leadership and also neglected the subject of inspiration. He profiled then-contemporary Jewish leaders and challenged them with this perennial question: Why do we not have people leading the Jewish community today who resemble the Jewish titans of the past? This is despite the fact that many Jewish leaders were serving on multiple boards and in national capacities at younger ages than ever before. Broad experience and extended time as leaders did not necessarily create better, more qualified leadership.

Given this conundrum, Urofsky concluded that problems with American Jewish leadership have more to do with Jewish organizational structures than with individual leaders. Our organizations that are hierarchical and heavily bureaucratic have often stymied individuals from making important and noticeable changes. In such a culture, leaders need to be more effective managers:

> The maturation of American Jewry has produced a situation which requires management and the talented men and women who head the agencies to perform their jobs well. Nevertheless, there remains a gnawing feeling that this is not enough. American Jewry, if it is to survive in a creative and dynamic fashion, must be more than a conglomerate of organizational structures, loosely tied together by the campaigns and a commitment to Israel. . .it needs to be led as well as managed to surmount the many problems besetting it (Urofsky, 1981, pp. 416-417).

Urofsky's conclusions, though written de-

cades ago, are still relevant, but neither Urofsky's statistical analysis nor Lewis' study of methods deals with the enduring questions of why anyone chooses to be a leader today and how to produce inspired leaders. Leaders who are effective managers have to motivate others. How do they do it? Good leadership relies on having solid answers to this question.

WHO ARE WE LEADING?

Today's Jewish community is experiencing a crisis of inspiration. While professionals and lay leaders are busy greasing the wheels of organizational structures, hundreds of thousands of Jews are further removed from institutional Judaism than ever before. Standing on the outside, such marginally affiliated Jews see Jewish organizations as largely interested in their wallets, not their hearts. They see Jewish leaders as the top of a hierarchy that is out of touch with their need for meaning. They find Jews locked in organizational "clubs" that require insider language, whose members often self-affirm an exclusive set of values. Jews on the margins feel uninspired by Jewish life, and their few glimpses inside do not convince them to join. Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen's (2000, p. 9) seminal study of marginally affiliated Jews in America concluded that knowingly or unknowingly, the subjects they studied "betrayed enduring ambivalence towards the organizations, institutions, commitments and norms which constitute Jewish life: families of origin, synagogues and federations, God." Any leader of the Jewish community has to understand the roots of this ambivalence and seek atypical ways to reach the marginally affiliated because — depending on local and national statistics — they represent nearly half of today's Jewish community.

Sociologists of the Jewish community have attributed the distance that many Jews feel toward institutionalized Judaism to several factors, including overlapping notions of membership (Cohen & Eisen, 2000),[1] intermarriage (Fishman, 2004), and a strong sense of personalism (Liebman, 1999), which diminishes institutional affiliations (Farber & Waxman, 1999). Current leadership training does not address these factors. Strategic planning, succession planning, and conflict management may make current Jewish institutions function better operationally, but better leadership skill sets or knowing the history of Jewish leadership will not alone fill our halls with new Jewish faces. No textbook on board development, fundraising, or agenda setting contains a magic formula for solving this generic malaise. It can only truly be solved by addressing issues of motivation and inspiration. In other words, why join?

Leaders do not only manage followers; they create followers. A crisis of inspiration requires a different kind of leadership thinking; we need leaders who are warm and embracing, who know how to extend an invitation, and who are in touch with the emotions of leadership. Although most leadership manuals do not account for nor can they teach the emotional aspects of leadership that contribute to inspired leaders, they regularly use such words as charisma, passion, compassion, dynamic, aggressive, and demanding to describe leaders. These words refer to emotional characteristics that determine leadership styles and personalities. Indeed, John Kotter begins one of his latest books on leadership with the following observation: "People change what they do less because they are given *analysis* that shifts their *thinking* than because they are *shown* a truth that influences their *feelings*" (italics in original; Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 1).

As a community, we sponsor numerous statistical analyses and demographic studies. We pore over the findings and write articles about them and make predictions and action plans based on their information. What we have not been able to do more successfully

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[1]For a fascinating study of texts on membership and changing notions of membership, see *The Jewish Political Tradition: Membership* (2003).

lies at the heart of change: using leaders to show our community a truth that influences our feelings about Jewishness. To do this, leaders must be keenly aware of the role that feelings and emotions play in leadership.

A recent book written in collaboration with the pioneer of emotional intelligence studies, Daniel Goleman, discusses this key aspect of leadership:

> Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions (Goleman et al., 2004, p. 3).

This proposition is initially frightening. All of us can conjure up leadership images in which the use of emotions has had negative, if not tragic, outcomes. Subsequently, Goleman asks that leaders become more reflective and deliberative in their use of emotion, handling their own emotions and understanding and improving the way they handle the emotions of their constituents.

Barbara Kellerman's (2004) recent work, *Bad Leadership*, is a character study of many living leaders today who use negative and often destructive emotions to lead others, including callousness, insularity, and intemperate behaviors. Kellerman challenges her readers to consider bad leadership and its emotional undercurrents because the influence of such leaders is pervasive in our society, and we make the mistake when we think that a leader automatically implies "good" rather than bad traits and behaviors. If it is true that emotionally toxic leadership creates followship, then the reverse must also be the case; good leadership harnesses emotions for positive outcomes (Lipman-Blumen, 2004).

Even were we to minimize the role that emotions play in leadership and followship, we cannot deny that followers are always reading the emotional actions and reactions of their leaders, as Goleman illustrates through research on group dynamics:

Leaders typically talked more than anyone else, and what they said was listened to more carefully. Leaders were also usually first to speak on a subject, and when others made comments, their remarks most often referred to what the leader had said than to anyone else's comments. Because the leader's way of seeing things has special weight, leaders "manage meaning" for a group, offering a way to interpret, and so react emotionally to, a given situation. But the impact on emotions goes beyond what a leader says. In these studies, even when leaders were not talking, they were watched more carefully than anyone else in the group. . . . Indeed, group members generally see the leader's emotional reaction as the most valid response, and some model their own on it – particularly in an ambiguous situation, where various members react differently. In a sense, the leader sets the emotional standard (Goleman et al., 2004, pp. 8-9).

Whether or not leaders are conscious of their emotional responses, their followers may be acutely aware of them. Goleman's observations force us to ask two critical questions: What kind of emotions does a Jewish leader need to exhibit to tackle a crisis of inspiration, and if we identify these emotions, can we teach them as a tool in leadership development?

THE LIMITS OF TEXT, RITUAL, AND ISRAEL

For centuries, the three sources of inspiration typically used by Jewish leaders have been text, ritual, and Israel. In our past, they have served as powerful historical and emotional glue, but they are not sufficient today, in and of themselves, to combat alienation. Instead, an emerging Jewish identity must be rooted in a more fluid sense of community and commitment. Text, ritual, and Israel as core ideas help form contemporary Jewish identity, but are not in and of themselves sufficient for Jewish leaders to use to inspire others. We need to look at each of these core emotional wellsprings separately.

Text

For millennia, Jewish text served as the ground for ideas and debate. From biblical exegesis to the mystical letters of Kabbalah flying heavenward from a page, Jews across the globe and across time have held on to the honorific, "the people of the book," with an almost ferocious pride. Interpreters of classic primary texts, such as the Bible, Talmud, and post-Talmudic legal writings, have determined meaning and identity for Jews through the centuries. Modern texts—the Hebrew poem, the Yiddish play, and the Jewish novel—have been sources of meaning and identity as well. We have been bound legally and conceptually to the written word for centuries.

However, times are changing. Even though a person can study every volume of the Talmud on a seven-year cycle completely in English today, the increased accessibility of Jewish texts has only marginally increased the scope of readers. The language and shared assumptions of these texts are not a given. As one modern scholar has noted, "Loyalty to a shared text no longer marks the boundaries of the modern-day Jewish community, for the assumption that the values and norms of the community should be justified in reference to a shared text has lost its validity" (Habertal, 1997, p. 130).

For every Jew who finds a source of authority in and connection to texts, there are hundreds who are completely disconnected and indifferent to their meaning. There have been several successful communal movements to strengthen adult education[2] and literacy worldwide (Cohen, 2000; Grant & Schuster, 2003; Sarna, 1998). These attempts are praiseworthy, but they not only assume that Jews will ultimately return to this bookish metaphor of peoplehood but also fail to acknowledge that we have changed and so too have our notions of text. In our post-

[2]This trend is well-captured in Isa Aron's book, *Becoming a Congregation of Learners* (2002) which describes the Synagogue 2000 project and its strong emphasis on adult education as foundational for the success of congregations.

modern universe, the Talmud can be downloaded on an iPod, and in a recent work of non-fiction, the Talmud is compared to the Internet as "a place where everything exists if only one knows how and where to look" (Rosen, 2000, p. 6). The problem with this intriguing comparison is that the majority of Jews today regard this statement as true for the Internet, the great icon of our time, but would not know what a Talmud is nor why it should be regarded as a source of knowledge and information. The Internet is a quick and convenient *service*, whereas studying the Talmud is an arduous and complicated *process*, one that demands precision and time. In a battle for attention, the instant gratification of the Internet is far more appealing than the elusive rewards of Talmudic mastery. Text study, although a source of deep inspiration for many, is not a source of inspiration for all.

Ritual

Ritual is another avenue for emotional Jewish identity, wrapping symbols and behaviors in a common language of action and meaning shared by a community of observers. Rituals and public celebrations serve as a "rope bridge of knotted symbols strung across an abyss" (Grimes, 1982, p. 29). Lighting Shabbat candles, reciting Kiddush on Friday nights, or sharing a Passover Seder are our rope bridge across an abyss. Although basic observance still joins together large segments of the Jewish community, there are many for whom ritual acts are leftovers from previous generations, continued out of a false hope that they will invigorate a sense of spirit that fails to emerge—like a mezuzah with no parchment inside, rituals can be empty of meaning.

Rituals often develop at liminal times, at moments of insecurity and ambiguity that call for familiar objects or the comfort and presence of others. Rites of passage and transitions of seasons or months are liminal periods marked by rituals in Jewish life (Myerhoff, 1982). Yet, what happens when Jewish life itself seems liminal, amorphous,

and permeable? How can we cross the abyss together when the rope bridge has unraveled?

Sylvia Barack Fishman (2000, p. 64) has argued that adults lacking the ability to "do Jewish" in their homes retreat from ritual behaviors, "thus, unwittingly, creating an environment subversive to Jewish education."

Israel

For many Jews today, Israel has become the center of their Jewish identity. Zionism has eclipsed religion for those who find greater meaning in political autonomy than inner spiritual growth. Yet, politics can complicate emotional identity, and as Israel struggles with its own deep political and religious schisms, it has become a less stable force for Jewish identity in the Diaspora. For American Jews—many of whom have never been to Israel—this instability is compounded by the geographic abyss; for those not profoundly committed to a Jewish state, the sheer physical distance can obstruct a meaningful dialogue on identity from taking place.

Although text, ritual, and Israel are powerful pieces of today's emotional Jewish narrative, they are not exhaustive. All three speak to convention and tradition, but struggle when speaking to informal ways of affiliating. Text, ritual, and Israel are anchors of the familial and the familiar, but cannot work effectively when stability is less valued than change. In a recent study of religion in the "Y" generation, a sociologist concluded, "This generation could be – and has been – described as directionless, lacking in community ties and meaningful participation in communal life. . . . Generation Y does seek community and meaningful involvements, though often in informal and non-traditional ways" (Greenberg, 2005, p. 5). This informal and non-traditional search for meaning has stymied leaders of the Jewish establishment for whom the creation of boards, Jewish buildings, and hierarchical management structures has been an understood mode of operation. Multiple generations are searching for meaning and community, but have found it in different and often contradictory or competing ways (Cohen & Eisen, 2000).

A VISUAL SYMBOL OF INCLUSION

Looking for modern sources of inspiration does not mean only finding a method of inspiration like text study or an object of inspiration like love of Israel. It can be identifying an emotion that transcends any objectification and linking it with a physical image that can help leaders visualize their task. For example, the visual image of a biblical tent has been used to capture the narrative imagination of disparate Jewish journeys. On the one hand, the image of a biblical tent seems most appropriate. It feels authentically Jewish, and for a nomadic generation, the idea of Judaism as an open tent feeds into the need for a home base that has enough permeability for those who just want to drop in. On the other hand, the image of a tent is not stable enough to appeal to the builders of Jewish institutions, who find rootedness in the bricks and mortar of synagogues, day schools, federations, and social service agencies. Not everyone is on an eclectic journey of identity, and tents are also not designed to be enduring structures. Why create a temporary home if we are planning on a permanent stay? A Jewish visual image that can capture a contemporary Jewish narrative has to appeal broadly, especially to those who have invested the most in their Jewish identities. We cannot lose our committed members in an attempt to draw in nomads.

If the most prominent emotions Jewish leaders have to understand today are indifference and alienation, then they are obligated to find an image that communicates inclusivity, warmth, caring, and encouragement. Chaim Nachman Bialik, one of our greatest Jewish poets, offers a hint in an observation he made as a lonely child, longing to reconnect to family and community:

> The misery at home, the bitter orphanhood, weighed heavily on me. I was invited by rel-

atives to a wedding party. The light and music filled my heart, which thirsted so badly to feel joy again. Like a madman I danced barefoot to feel joy to the music. I forgot myself, but my heart longed to join the circle, to cleave to something, to belong (quoted in Auerbach, 1998).

Even those of us who did not suffer an impoverished youth all long, as he did, to join a circle, to cleave to something, to belong. The image of the dance circle as a metaphor for community is very powerful. A circle is a space defined by an uninterrupted line; every point that radiates from its center is equal and equidistant. The circle as a dance allows entry to each person and expands the circle while retaining this inherent sense of equality. Everyone in a circle dance can see one another, no matter how far apart. Indeed, sometimes the person at the greatest distance in a circle is the one most visible.

Where our "Jewish circles" used to revolve around institutions and commonly held values, today's Jewish circle dance is not the same. Some people refuse to hold hands, and others stand far away, looking with suspicion at the circle. And then there are those, perhaps the majority, whose backs are turned and do not even know that a circle exists that welcomes their participation. Unpacking the metaphor, we look at today's Jewish community and struggle to find the connective embrace of that circle for which Bialik pined. The circle seems broken in too many places.

Rabbi Judah Lowe of Prague, the Maharal of 16th-century fame, wrote a brief discourse on the circle dance and its ability to expand to accommodate more people without losing its essential shape. The circle, like the Jewish people, is unbroken, no matter how large or small it gets. It is expansive, and, at the same time, promotes and sustains equality.

As a Jewish community, we tend to view people within a pyramid structure or within concentric circles. As a pyramid, we place the most committed, wealthy, or powerful at the top and expect their decisions and choices to trickle down to affect the majority. If we use the image of concentric circles, we tend to regard membership as "radiating outward from a hard core of committed Jews toward areas of vague Jewishness on the fringes" (Elazer, 1995, p. 91). A contemporary Jewish thinker has encouraged us, instead, to rethink this organizing image in favor of networking structures, which are loosely connected overlapping clusters of activity and identity (Herring, 2001). However, this image, although most completely capturing the way our community currently functions, is also lacking in a unifying vision. Creating and sustaining clusters does not promote the overarching embrace of belonging.

Moving from pyramids to clusters back to the circle, we find that this visual image bends the view of Judaism as a time-line of events, persecutions, and historical markers back on itself. It also provokes the most committed to make room for others by creating an equal space that ensures visibility. In a pyramid, the person at the top cannot see the person at the base and may not realize his or her value. In a network, two Jewish people may never cross paths. The circle is an image that can stimulate a different way of regarding peoplehood and a contemporary Jewish narrative that embodies the core values of the past while making room for the nascent journeys of a new generation. The circle as a dance is a place of joy and belonging, not a place of hierarchy, with its sharp corners and supporting scaffolding. The circle as a dance is a place of equality, intense activity, and membership, regardless of stature and means.

We cannot create, in a few pages, a compelling new narrative to bridge the many schisms of our Jewish community. What we can do is hold up and promote a new visual image that can inform the way leaders connect with others and make room for membership. The circle -- a Jewish circle -- maintains a consistent center as it invites expansiveness.

If we use the circle as a physical image of

inclusiveness that creates emotional bonds that are engaging and also connect fellow Jews to each other, then what emotions does the leader need to engender to bring others into the circle? Primarily, the leader has to create the circle and inspire people to join it while allowing the impact of that "membership" to do its own work. Leaders have to identify institutions, places, and vehicles through which such circles can be created and sustained, and then they must invite others to form the initial bonds that generate the shape. Those individuals are responsible for expanding the circle through outreach. Leaders have to understand the powerful emotion of alienation and get in touch with their own wellsprings of compassion. They need to be comfortable with more fluid ideas of membership and understand the power of the personal invitation. This calls for emotions of friendliness and warmth and an ability to be persuasive without being overbearing.

Leaders have to welcome people into the circle, make room, spread the circle out wider, be more inclusive, and maintain the stability of the shape. They must be friendly, open-minded, inviting, welcoming, nurturing, and warm. These are all emotions that inspire others to join the circle of community, but are rarely emphasized in leadership development programs. Looking up from textbook pages, we do not always find Jewish institutions being run by lay and professional leaders of warmth. These impressions bring us to our second question: Can we teach leaders to inspire others and harness their emotions positively to bring more people into the community and nurture those who are already there?

TEACHING EMOTIONS

Goleman and his colleagues (2004) use the term "resonant leader" to describe a leader with emotional intelligence. Such leaders are distinguished by their knowledge of

> when to be collaborative and when to be visionary, when to listen and when to command.

Such leaders have a knack for attuning to their sense of what matters and articulating a mission that resonates with the values of those they lead. These leaders naturally nurture relationships, surface simmering issues and create the human synergies of a group in harmony. They build a fierce loyalty by caring about the careers of those who work for them, and inspire people to give their best for a mission that speaks to shared values (Goleman et al. 2004, p. 248).

Using this "emotional map," what kind of leadership is required to reach out and inspire marginalized Jews? Teaching emotions may not be possible, but creating an awareness of emotions is very possible. Three steps must be taken to help leaders harness emotions positively:

1. **Leadership classes need to incorporate demographic and evaluative information about their communities or institutions.** Leaders who are not aware of how many people are currently affiliated, where they live, and from where they get their Jewish information will not have the same motivation to inspire others to join. They will also lack basic knowledge that can help in forming strategic outreach plans. Helping leaders learn more about evaluation techniques and how to analyze hard data and statistics may inspire leaders to confront problems more honestly and transparently. Leaders armed with more information may also be more comfortable facing their own leadership weaknesses

2. **Leaders need to create avenues for self-awareness.** Leadership development courses must place an educational premium on self-awareness through case studies, reflective questions, and exercises. People need to know their leadership styles and to be able to look within at how they manage or handle difficult leadership moments. This may also involve reflecting on the emotional ways that leaders have been led – both good

and bad – to understand how they should lead. There are many standard tests to measure and evaluate leadership styles today. However, too many re-packaged leadership curricula fail to help leaders hold up mirrors to themselves so that they can ask if their emotional barometers are adjusted properly.

3. **Leaders need feedback.** Goleman and colleagues (2004, p. 92) point out that "leaders have more trouble than anybody else when it comes to receiving candid feedback, particularly about how they're doing as leaders." This is particularly true the more that leaders rise in their organizations. We are afraid to tell our leaders that they are out of touch with their constituents or lack the courage to confront someone with power and authority over us. We may feel intimidated by our lack of knowledge and regard the leader as an expert. Goleman et al. (2004, p. 94) contend that top executives get the least reliable information about how they are doing:

An analysis of 177 separate studies that assessed more than 28,000 managers found that feedback on performance became less consistent the higher the manager's position or the more complex the manager's role. . . . While most people tend to overestimate their own abilities to some extent, it's the very poor performers who exaggerate their abilities the most.

Goleman and his colleagues believe that leaders do not ask for this feedback — not because they are infallible or vain — but because they believe that they are unable to change. People who work with those leaders often hold the same belief and will not give leaders feedback if they are not encouraged to do so and if they do not believe that their feedback will make a difference. Problems like this seem intractable, but Goleman and colleagues (2004, p. 96) ask that we suspend judgment: "Old leaders can learn new tricks. Leaders can and do make significant, in

some cases life-altering, changes in their styles that ripple into their teams and trigger important chances throughout the entire organization."

Jewish organizations do not always have mechanisms in place through which their most senior professional gets regular and constructive feedback in a disciplined way. Senior lay leaders often get less such feedback because of a fear that negative feedback about their leadership will translate into lost philanthropic support, a loss of pride, or loss of interest in the institution. We need, however, to reconsider the price we pay for not helping leaders become more emotionally self-aware, more encouraging, and more open to feedback. Today, with more coaching and mentoring options available, we no longer have the same excuses for keeping our leaders in the dark about their effectiveness. If leaders can be better at what they do, then we are morally remiss if we do not provide the support they need to become more inspiring and more emotionally mindful of their constituents.

The American Jewish community has to look around — both locally and nationally — and ask whether its leaders are inspiring. Before we become critical of them, we have to ask ourselves if we expect our leaders to inspire others. If we have only asked them to manage teams, handle funds, or come up with strategic plans, then we have not asked enough of them. Leadership development programs today need to think of creative ways to help people get in touch with their sources of inspiration and think of ways to inspire those on the margins to join.

The conversation about the emotional intelligence of Jewish leaders, however difficult to articulate, must begin in earnest. We need resonant leaders who have a deep sense of mission and vision and enough insight to share it expansively. We need leaders who can create circles of participation around core ideas and values. We need leaders who can extend a personal invitation for others to join the circle and expand it exponentially.

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