



The Future of Religious Leadership
World Religions Share their Wisdom
Study Unit 2: Judaism

Where Is Wisdom Found

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Text 3: M Buber *Tales of the Hasidim*

Rebbe Mordechai of Neshkhizh said to his son, the Rebbe of Kovel, “my son, my son. He who does not feel the pains of a woman giving birth within a circuit of 50 miles, who does not suffer with her and pray that her suffering may be assuaged, is not worthy to be called a Zaddik.” His younger son Yitzchak, who later succeeded him in his work, was 10 years old at the time. He was present when this was said. When he was old he told the story and added, “I listened well. But it was very long before I understood why he had said it in my presence.”

Text 4: M Buber *Tales of the Hasidim*

A rather officious man once insisted on presenting a request to Rebbe Hayyim after the Afternoon Prayer. When he refused to take no for an answer, the Zaddik spoke roughly to him.

A friend who was present asked him why he was so angry, and he answered that whoever uttered the Afternoon Prayer was face to face with the world of Emanation. Why should he not be angry, coming from that world, to be annoyed with the petty troubles of a petty man? His friend replied, “Following the passage in the Torah that tells of God’s first revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai, we read ‘and Moses went down from the mountain unto the people.’ Rashi’s comment on this is: “This informs us that when Moses left the mountain he did not return to his own affairs but to the people.” How are we to interpret that? What affairs in the desert did our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, renounce in order to go to the people?” We must interpret as follows. When Moses descended from the mountain he was still clinging to the upper worlds and in them was accomplishing his sublime work of suffusing the divine attribute of rigor with that of mercy. Those were the affairs Moses had to attend to. Yet he paused in his great work, disengaged himself from the upper worlds and turned to the people. He listened to all their petty troubles, stored the heaviness of heart of all Israel within himself and then bore it upward in prayer.”

When Rebbe Hayyim heard this, his anger melted away. He asked someone to call back the man he had shouted at and gave ear to his request. Almost all that night he

Questions for consideration: Do these sources suggest that qualities of modesty and humility in a leader need to be different from that of an ordinary person? Is that your experience of religious leaders?

listened to the troubles and wishes of the Hasidim gathered around him.

The Need for Leadership

Text 1: (1 Sam. 8:7)

When the elders of Israel petitioned the prophet Samuel to appoint a king over them, Samuel was displeased, but God responded, “Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them

Text 2: Maimonides in the *Guide of the Perplexed*,

The well-being of society demands that there should be a leader able to regulate the actions of man; he must complete every shortcoming, remove every excess, and prescribe for the conduct of all, so that the natural variety should be counterbalanced by the uniformity of legislation, and the order of society be well established... It being the will of God that our race should exist and be permanently established, He in His wisdom gave it such properties that men can acquire the capacity of ruling others. Some persons are therefore inspired with theories of legislation, such as prophets and lawgivers: others possess the power of enforcing the dictates of the former, and of compelling people to obey them, and to act accordingly.

Text 3: Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892-1953)

The ultimate goal of halakhic practice and the Torah life is spiritual self-reliance, to “become fit to judge ourselves.”

Types of Leadership

The Faithful Shepherd

Text 1 Midrash *Exodus Rabbah* 2:2

Who does God test? The *Tzaddik*, as it says “God tests the *Tzaddik* (Ps. 11).” And with what does He test him? With shepherding sheep. He tested David with sheep and found him a good shepherd, as it says “and He took him from the sheep folds (Ps. 78:70).” What sheep folds (lit.: sheep restraints)? As it says “the rain was restrained (Gen. 8:2).” He restrained the adult sheep for the sake of the lambs, and would bring

Question for consideration: According to the sources, on the Need for Leadership, why do we need leaders & what are the roles of leaders?

out the lambs to graze in order that they would graze on soft grass. Then he brought out the old sheep to graze on moderate grass. Then he brought out the young sheep to graze on the hard grass. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “he who knows how to shepherd sheep, each according to their ability, let him come and shepherd my nation, as it is written “from following the ewes that give suck, He brought him to be shepherd of Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance (Ps. 78:71).”

Questions for consideration: The idea of the leader as Shepherd is common to many religions. What are the qualities of the Shepherd highlighted in this source?
What is the key role of the Priest?

Similarly, Moses was tested specifically with flocks. Our rabbis say that when Moses shepherded the flock of Jethro in the desert, one of the goats fled from him. He ran after it until he reached a shady place. When he reached the shady place he happened upon a pool of water, where the goat was standing, drinking. When Moses reached it he said “I didn’t realize that you ran because of thirst. You are tired.” He placed the goat on his shoulders and walked. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, “You have mercy to guide flocks belonging to flesh and blood this way, by your life, you shall shepherd my flock Israel.” This [explains why it says]: “And Moses was shepherding... (Ex. 3:1).”

The Priest

Text 1: *Pirkei Avot*,

Hillel said “Be among the students of Aaron: love peace and chase peace, love people and bring them close to Torah.”

Text 2: *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*

Aaron would extend greetings to the rebellious of Israel, such that if one of them would seek to commit a sin, he would say “Woe is me! Tomorrow Aaron might come and greet me, so how will I be able to return the greeting?” In this way he would be embarrassed and not sin. Similarly, if a person was angry with his friend, Aaron would go to him and say to him “my son, why are you angry with your friend? Just now he came to me crying and remorseful saying ‘woe is me that have angered my friend, who is greater than me. I’ll stand in the marketplace, and you go and plead with him for me.’” Then he would leave this one and go to the other one and say “my son, why are you angry with your friend? Just now he came to me, etc.” When they both went to the marketplace and met each other they would hug and kiss.

The Prophet

Text 1: Baba Metzia 59B

“Rabbi Avdimi of Haifa said, “since the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was lost to the prophets and given to the sages... Amemar added: indeed, a sage is superior to a prophet, as it is written ‘a prophet has a heart of wisdom (Ps. 90:12).’ Who is compared to whom? Surely, the lesser is compared to the greater.”

Text 2 Nahmanides ^{on} Bava Batra 12a

“The Talmud means that, although the prophecy of the prophets by means of image and vision was lost, the prophecy of the sages by means of the intellect was not lost. Rather, they know the truth from the Holy Spirit which dwells within them.”

Text 3 Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

“That which prophecy did not accomplish with its fiery weapons, to cauterize idolatry from Israel and to uproot the lowest degradations of oppression and violent robbery, of murder and illicit sexuality, of the pursuit of bribery and graft, the sages accomplished through the expansion of Torah, by raising up many students and the sharp analysis of the particular rules and their corollaries.”

The Tsaddik

Text 1 Rabbi Elimelekh of Lizhensk:

We have already indicated many times that the *Tzaddik* is called a man of God, as it is written, “Moses the man of God (Dt. 33:1).” For the *Tzaddik* is the master of the [divine] judgments. They are in his hands. He may direct them as he wishes, to subdue and to sweeten them. The *Tzaddik* is a judge, for judges are called *elohim*... He may therefore annul all judgments and all decrees against Israel. Therefore the *Tzaddik* is called a man of God, that is, master of divine judgment. Thus the Talmud says “The Holy One decrees and the *Tzaddik* annuls.” ... It must be understood how it is that the *Tzaddik* heals the sick by means of his prayer and brings him vitality so that a man shall live...This is because the *Tzaddik* adheres to God, and therefore his life force adheres to the eternal and essential life, thereby rendering the *Tzaddik’s* life eternal and essential too, for they have been united in one substance. Therefore the *Tzaddik* has the power in his hands to bring life to the sick.”

Question for consideration: In what way do sages replace the prophets?
What is their mechanism for understanding the Divine will?

The Scholar/ Legal (Rabbinic) Authority

Text 1 by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892-1953)

From his honor's words I see that he holds that all the great scholars of Israel, whose deeds are for the sake of Heaven, together with the intellectual geniuses and nobles of righteousness, who, without doubt, in all their judgments and legal decisions God stands in their divine assembly... that all of them could err completely, Heaven forbid... Whoever merited to stand before them at that time was certain that he beheld the divine Presence in their actions, and that the holy spirit hovered in their gatherings... The Sages have already instructed us to obey the words of the Sages, even if they say that the left is right, and not to say, Heaven forbid, that they have made a mistake because I, the tiny little one, clearly see their mistake. Rather, my perception is null and void like the dust of the earth before the clarity of their intellects and the divine assistance they receive... This is the mind of Torah defined by faith in the Sages (da'at Torah be-geder emunat hakhamim) ... The lack of recognition of our nullity in comparison to our Rabbis is the root of all sin and the beginning of all destruction, Heaven forbid. And no merit equals the root of all, which is faith in the Sages.

Challenges – Balancing Authority with Gentleness

Text 1

This ideal is expressed in the Torah itself, when Moses endorses the independent prophecy of Eldad and Medad, which appeared to threaten his authority. Joshua had complained and urged Moses to “shut them up.” Moses responds, with complete generosity of spirit and no defensiveness: “Are you jealous on my account? Would that all God's people were prophets, that God would bestow His spirit upon them (Num 11:29).”

Text 2

Rav Ashi says, any Torah scholar who is not as hard as iron is no Torah scholar, as it says ‘like a hammer that shatters a rock (Jer 23:29) . ..Ravina said, even so, a person must conduct himself with gentleness, as it says ‘remover anger from your heart’ (Eccles 11:10).

PART II

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Meir Sender

The Telos of Leadership

The notion of leader as servant lies at the heart of Judaism and is subversive by design. Upending the way political leadership often is framed in terms of power and prerogative, Judaism offers an alternative vision of religious leadership as responsibility actualized through service. Issuing from the core national experience of oppressive enslavement to Egypt transfigured into liberating enslavement to God, Judaism conceives of the ideal spiritual posture as service – service of God and service of man as a way of serving God. Service orients us towards care for the other in suspension or effacement of self interest.

A Jewish leader is distinctive in that s/he feels called to articulate the core narrative of the group and make its tradition real, vivid, and vital for its members, through rhetorical skill and by embodying and personifying its ideals. What characterizes the Jewish leader as uniquely Jewish is that, while the role of the Jewish leader is to inspire or move people, this is accomplished without becoming oneself the focus of that movement. The leader uses his or her own self-example delicately, with restraint, as a tool to point others towards transcendence, to the reality of God and the impact of that reality. The Jewish People understand themselves to be led by God Himself, infinitely and eternally present but hidden, making His Will known through the Torah. Throughout the biblical period, He guided His people directly through His prophets. The history of Jewish leadership tracks a process of routinization of charismatic prophetic leadership into more tangible and predictable human political institutions.

The traditional Jew lives his and her life with a sense of being immersed in the intimate presence of God. Jewish devotional life cultivates a continual mindfulness of God through three daily prayer services and through innumerable occasions for praising and thanking God. The cognitive dimension of Jewish spirituality is pursued through the disciplined study of Bible and Talmud as an intellectual, devotional, and spiritual practice. In the realm of practical action, the Will of God is understood to be conveyed in *Mitzvot*, divine commandments that instantiate the service of God and man through actions expressing, “what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and love kindness, and walk modestly with your God (Micah 6:8).” The focus of a Jewish leader’s life is to guide fellow Jews in these devotional, intellectual, and ethical practices, through overseeing communal prayer, extensive and intensive teaching of Torah, and inspiring and directing the congregation to proper ethical behavior and spiritual growth.

Leaders, though attuned to the group, also stand apart. Their function is to guide the community to its higher purpose, to promote communal self-awareness, to provide constructive criticism and to correct course when necessary. The archetypal Jewish leader is Moses. The Torah emphasizes his outsider status: born an Israelite, but growing up outside the community and maturing in exile, he returned to lead the

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nation as an outsider and was able to direct the people beyond their immediate conditions, towards God and towards their transformational Jewish destiny. As both insider and outsider, the leader is in a position to maintain a benevolent impartiality, and further communal well-being by promoting forgiveness and reconciliation among members.

Types of Leadership

The Rabbi

Judaism is not a religious faith but a national cultural and religious identity, and the heart of a nation is its legal system. The divine revelation at the very heart of Judaism is that it is the discipline of Law (*Torah/Halakhah*) that guides, heals and saves the world. The attunement of man to man and man to God is facilitated by the justice and compassion revealed in the Law of Torah. The spirituality of the Law applies not only to its more overtly religious aspects, but also to its civil, criminal and public dimensions, all of which are not only legal rules but moral principles and divine commands that are intended to cultivate spiritual sensibility and a thoughtful and disciplined way of life and to fulfill God's Will.

During the Second Temple period, the *Halakhah* functioned as a complete positive legal system, representing all rubrics of law, civil, criminal and public, with the added category of religious ritual law. Until the modern era, Jews ran their own legal and social affairs within Jewish legal and social institutions in all the host cultures of the Diaspora. The *Halakhah* served as the unifying legal system of the Jewish people in exile and it was the core curriculum of the Jewish educational system world-wide. The Rabbis served as the jurists and teachers of the law. As the custodians of the *Halakhah*, the jurists and the teachers of the Jewish legal tradition, the rabbinic scholarly elite provided leadership that proved resilient enough to help shape and maintain the integrity of Jewish identity and nationhood for two millennia, through the challenges of Diaspora.

The credentials and communal authority of the Orthodox Rabbi are based on his detailed mastery of the vast, complex knowledge base of the *Halakhah* and its methodology. In the Reform and Conservative denominations, other principles, such as social action and social justice, also understood as divinely ordained or affirmed and deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, serve as the organizing ideals of the community. Rabbis of all denominations frequently enrich their teaching with more explicitly theological and spiritual literature from the extensive corpus of Jewish philosophical and mystical and ethical traditions.

The Faithful Shepherd

Though the socio-economic culture of the talmudic period was agrarian and urban, the rabbinic ideal of leadership, expressed in the Talmud and Midrash, is often drawn from the romanticized image of the biblical shepherd, alluding to the nomadic roots of the Jewish people. King David models the leader as a shepherd who cares for the needs of his community, his flock, in a manner responsive and sensitive to the specialized needs of the distinct social groups of the community. Moses is highlighted second in the Midrash, as advancing further the ideal of leadership as responsible and responsive to specialized needs. Moses as nomadic shepherd exerted great effort to save, care for and empathize with a single goat, modeling a leader who is ceaselessly responsible, understanding, compassionate, and forgiving, and though

responsible for a group, is attentive to each individual.

The King (Political Leader)

In the absence of dedicated political statesmen from the end of the Second Temple period to the establishment of the State of Israel, rabbinic leaders were also called upon to exercise political power, emulating a very limited kingship. The rabbinic approach to exercising authority has been one of the great experiments in the history of political leadership. The Jewish people were guided by a highly educated scholarly class - the Jewish version of Plato's vision in the *Republic* of a philosophically-enlightened political leadership. From the 8th to the 11th centuries, the rabbinic leaders of Babylonia developed a centralized, efficient and effective political and educational bureaucracy, which handled the affairs of the Jewish communities in Muslim lands and organized a sophisticated educational system that attracted students from all over the Diaspora. With the decline of Babylon, the highly decentralized Jewish communities of Western Europe developed institutions to maintain cohesion and identity. Rabbis exerted authority without violent coercion, without any of the executive institutions of enforcement, and without the abuses of kingship, through moral and spiritual persuasion and social pressure. Their strongest instrument of communal discipline was the threat of *herem*: a member of the community who did not abide by the laws of the community would no longer be entitled to the social, economic, and religious privileges of the community. This successful experiment in non-violent, enlightened leadership teaches that the best religious leaders appeal to those inner principles that move us to do the right thing without external coercion.

The Priest

The role of the *Kohen*, the Priest, also contributes to the rabbinic conception of leadership. The *Kohanim*, members of a specific Israelite lineage, officiated in the Holy Temple, where the *Kohen's* cultic ritual position put him in intimate contact with families and individuals seeking to make amends, interpersonally and spiritually, opening up opportunities for going beyond ritual, to healing relationships. Hillel takes the biblical *Kohen* Aaron as a model and advises his rabbinic students: "Be among the students of Aaron: love peace and chase peace, love people and bring them close to Torah." (Avot 1:12) The Jewish leader, imitating the ideal *Kohen*, serves as a model of socially-engaged righteousness, actively reaching out to those who are morally challenged, and proactively working with people to promote mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. He is not just to love peace but to initiate negotiations - even to resort to a few white lies if necessary to bring together those who have become estranged. The outsider status of a rabbi, like that of a *Kohen*, enables him to affirm each individual, even those who are otherwise disparaged by the community, and to serve as trusted, impartial negotiator to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation .

The Prophet

The relationship between rabbinic and prophetic leadership is more complex, and its contemporary resonance more controversial. With Moses as model, the prophet is the ideal leader of Israel. God speaks to the prophet and with this divine authority the prophet guides Israel to follow God's Will and chastises them when they stray. The rabbis of the Talmud recognized the unique authority of the prophet, but also declared the cessation of prophecy early in the Second Commonwealth. The consensus rabbinic position asserted that legal guidance by supernatural inspiration and appeal to charismatic spiritual authority is no longer admissible; the rabbis have

full authority to interpret and implement the Torah by their own hermeneutical logic and rules of collective decision making. (Bava Mezi'a 59b)

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Serious and sustained discussion of prophecy in Jewish mystical texts (*Kabbalah*) of the 13th and 16th centuries indicates that these thinkers entertained the possibility that prophecy had not ceased entirely and could be revived. Other forms of ongoing divine inspiration, such as the perception of a heavenly echo or a personal visit from the prophet Elijah, also were widely acknowledged in the Talmudic and medieval periods. These forms of inspiration are less direct and less reliable than prophecy, but imply that direct communication with God is still possible at some level.

Most rabbis today have no prophetic pretensions, though an essential part of their jobs is using their rhetorical skills in the mode of the biblical prophets, to inspire, criticize, and correct the community as necessary. They relate to their congregants as autonomous individuals and exercise their authority through moral persuasion. Hasidic and Haredi communities make stronger authority claims for their rabbinic leadership and hold a different view of the leader-follower relationship. The Hasidic tradition, beginning with the charismatic Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer Baal Shem Tov in the 18th century, sees its rabbinic leaders, the *Tzaddikim*, as mediators of divine inspiration and endowed with spiritual powers usually ascribed to prophets. The direct corollary of this enhanced authority is the elevating of submission on the part of the Hasidic follower to a supreme spiritual virtue. Submission to the legal decisions of the rabbi in halakhic matters, is regarded as a virtue in all Orthodox communities. Hasidism extends this submission to compliance with the advice and guidance of the rebbe or *Tzaddik* in all areas of life, since all his pronouncements are considered to be divinely inspired. This submission to the *Tzaddik*, however, is not a goal in itself, but instrumental to a higher purpose.

Since the 19th Century, this intensified reverence for rabbinic authority in the Hasidic communities has influenced the non-Hasidic, Haredi communities. The Haredi movement of meticulous halakhic pietism coalesced as a reaction against the Jewish Enlightenment of the late 18th and the 19th centuries. One of the more explicit and influential formulations of their ethos is the concept of *emunat hakhamim*, “faith in the Sages,” articulated by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892-1953). He extends the definition of inspired sages to rabbinic scholars of his own generation with an appeal to personal experience of an almost mystical quality.

Systemic Challenges

The Paradox of Authority and Service

The position of many congregational rabbis today is based on a model in which the congregational rabbi is a communal leader whose credentials are earned through study and training and apprenticeship to the Tradition and its teachers, but whose practical authority over the congregation is granted by his selection through a

democratic process. This sets up an authority paradox: tradition mandates that the rabbi be granted respect and stature in the community and be authorized to direct, correct, and constructively criticize the very congregation that pays his salary. Rabbis work hard to find the proper balance that acknowledges they are accountable to God in their role as guardian of the authenticity and vitality of the Tradition yet practically accountable to the people they serve. The rabbi must learn to appeal to the will of his congregants to perfect themselves and grow spiritually. If that sometimes requires telling his congregants something they don't want to hear, his financial vulnerability helps assure that he will be respectful to the sensitivities of his congregants and use gentle persuasion to achieve spiritual goals.

The paradox of authority and service is rooted in a deeper, existential paradox. While service of God and others is the essential spiritual path of the rabbi, and such service implies a high degree of self-effacement, the position of communal authority puts the rabbi in the position of being a focus of attention, someone to whom the congregation looks for leadership, for guidance, for inspiration, and for public representation. The danger of this public persona is that the resulting egotism can be dangerous to spiritual health and honest self-awareness. Further, the communal demands of a rabbinic leader often make it difficult to find time for personal spiritual growth, and this can have a deleterious effect on the rabbi's continuing ability to inspire his congregation. A rabbi's responsibilities to the community prevent him from indulging in spiritual self-absorption, (which can be a valuable spiritual lesson in itself.)

Autonomy versus Paternalism

The role of rabbi as teacher contains another paradox. The most effective teacher is one who trains and strengthens the student to become self-reliant, and this is a goal all denominations share. This ideal is expressed in the Torah itself, when Moses endorses the independent prophecy of Eldad and Medad, which appeared to threaten his authority. Joshua had complained and urged Moses to "shut them up." Moses responds, with complete generosity of spirit and no defensiveness: "Are you jealous on my account? Would that all God's people were prophets, that God would bestow His spirit upon them (Num 11:29)."

By contrast, Hasidic and Haredi leadership ideologies, demanding great reverence for the rabbi and submission by his followers, take a different approach. Lawrence Kaplan summed up the significance of this position: "Above all, the ideology of *da'at Torah*, with its extreme reading of *emunat hakhamim*, is perhaps the central element in the ethic of submission that characterizes the anti-modern, *haredi* worldview." The notion of *da'at Torah* posits that expert scholars of Torah, who have deeply internalized the thought process of Torah to the exclusion of all other modes of knowledge, can render authoritative opinions that express the principles of Torah, not just on matters defined as *halakhic*, but on all aspects of life. This view of rabbinic leaders as nearly infallible and endowed with divine authority, has cultivated an intense social cohesion within Haredi groups. This ideology also results in a stark and intentional isolation from other Jewish groups and isolation from society in general. It has conditioned a process of infantilization among many followers regarding taking

responsibility for choices. R. Dessler stated that the goal of one's development in Torah life is to attain self reliance, to "become fit to judge ourselves in truth," but the ethos of this ideology tends to keep its adherents in a state of dependence and submission. When the rabbinic leader is a head of an isolated organization, supported by reverent students, and conferring only with like-minded colleagues, it is possible for such a leader to lose contact with social, political, moral and spiritual reality, with potentially dangerous results for his community and himself.

Contemporary Challenges

Denominational Challenges

Leaders of the Reform and Conservative movements tend to stress to their congregants the importance of moral issues and social justice and downplay the technical legal details and textual resources of Jewish tradition, which had for centuries strengthened the sense of Jewish cultural and spiritual identity. The Orthodox approach to *Halakhah* is in danger of slipping into mere mechanical performance. Whenever a legal system stresses compliance over principled integrity, it risks becoming shallow and subject to cutting ethical corners, stressing ends over means. A recent series of financial and business scandals involving Hasidic and Haredi rabbinic leaders in the United States has led to some soul-searching on just this point and prompted some rabbinic leaders to remind their colleagues and congregants of the traditional prophetic calls for greater attention to be paid to the moral principles and core values of Torah life. A major portion of a congregational rabbi's vocation involves counseling and emotional support of congregants. Orthodox rabbis find that the detailed training in *Halakhah* they received in *yeshiva* does not prepare them for the more personal psychological assistance they are called upon to give their congregants on a daily basis. This in an area in which Reform and Conservative seminaries have excelled, offering or directing their candidates to courses in therapy and counseling, and a few Orthodox yeshivot are beginning to learn from this example.

The Israeli Rabbinate

Throughout much of Jewish exilic history, rabbinic leadership mixed religious, social, and political functions, and this is still true of most congregational rabbis of the Diaspora.

The modern State of Israel, by ironic contrast, by its very Jewish national identity, has put the Israeli Rabbinate in the awkward position of having to find its place and shape its roles in a novel and not always congenial social and political setting.

Some rabbis have opted to join the State government, either as politicians or as part of a rabbinic bureaucracy. The politicization of the rabbinate has generated dangerous antagonism within the Israeli body politic. When rabbis represent the narrow special interests of their particular religious communities on issues such as education subsidies and government religious policies, they abandon the impartiality and sense of general care and responsibility for all Jews and the goal of fostering communal unity that had been a hallmark of the traditional rabbinate. Other rabbis have joined a State bureaucracy that has developed to take charge of narrowly-defined issues of religious identity and ritual function. They are responsible, not for a

willing congregation by choice, but for a national citizenry that is diverse, largely non-religious, and often indifferent or resistant to rabbinic involvement. This has led to alienation and resentment on the part of significant segments of the Israeli populace, and has left many of the traditional rabbinic functions – such as social support and community building – unattended.

Other Israeli rabbinic leaders, mostly of the Hasidic and Haredi communities, have rejected becoming agents of the State and have retained their traditional roles through cultivating and serving their own voluntarily-constituted communities. But the self-isolation of these communities has sparked considerable social tension with non-religious Israelis. The Haredi leadership, far from addressing this problem or working to ameliorate it, or even seeing such amelioration as a value, tends to reinforce the ethos of isolation and separatism. Nor is this isolation limited to rejection of secular society, but entails a dismissal or disparagement of other religious Jews as well, leading to a movement that lacks adequate external feedback or checks and balances.

Spirituality

Across all denominations, one finds a long-standing reticence with regard to explicit and sophisticated discussion of Jewish theology, spirituality, and mysticism, a pattern rooted to some extent in halakhic mandate and cautionary historical experience. Most rabbinic sermons and classes deal with moral or legal issues or textual exegesis, only rarely with theology or mysticism. During the 1960s and 1970s, the drift of some young Jews away from Judaism towards more overtly spiritual or mystical religions was partly attributable to a perceived lack of spiritual resources in Jewish tradition. In truth, the theological and mystical depth and sophistication of Jewish Tradition is profound, but modern Jewish leaders have had to work at becoming more familiar with these traditions themselves in order to convey them authentically to their communities.

Gender and Leadership

In the Orthodox community, leadership is largely a male prerogative, based on legal tradition and cultural predilection. A male-dominated hierarchy is often not sensitive or informed regarding issues vital to the religious lives of women. There have been some attempts in the more liberal wing of Orthodoxy to find leadership roles for women, as halakhic counselors for women's issues and as teachers in day schools and congregations. Modern Orthodox rabbis are witnessing an upsurge in women's attendance in religious classes of all kinds. The Reform and Conservative movements have ordained women as full-fledged rabbis and have women prayer leaders, and generally promote a full integration and equality of women and men in religious communal life, but are also considering the import of recent studies that have tracked a decrease in male involvement in synagogue life when women serve as rabbinic leaders. The challenge when it comes to women's leadership is to move beyond a conception of equality as mere imitation or caricature of male leadership styles, with women donning male uniforms and adopting male titles and roles, to authentic woman's leadership. There is significant precedent for genuine women's leadership in Jewish tradition. Not only Judaism, but all religious traditions today could benefit from authentic female leadership that brings women's sensibilities and skills to address the serious problems of contemporary religion and society, especially the swelling tide of intolerance, hatred and violence fueled by religious passions.

Leadership for the Future

Maimonides' conception of the role of leader as to "complete every shortcoming, remove every excess," can be applied as a prescription for future Jewish leadership in general. Each of the major groups of the Jewish community has certain strengths and weaknesses, and ideally, each group and its leaders can learn from each other. The Reform and Conservative communities have developed leadership approaches that are highly professional on the social and political levels, yet can benefit from strategies of the Orthodox communities for increasing lay participation and promoting in-depth Torah education. The Haredi communities have developed intensely cohesive groups and a focused educational system that inculcates a high degree of traditional halakhic expertise and text skill among its rank and file, but at the expense of spiritual maturity and intellectual honesty. Modern Orthodox communities strive for a healthy balance between traditional practice and intellectual sophistication, but do not always succeed in promoting serious halakhic awareness and meticulous practice.

A vision for the future of rabbinic leadership would combine all the strengths of these approaches: a robust rabbinic leadership that is learned in the full range of Torah Tradition and well-trained in interpersonal skills and counseling, with a full command of and commitment to the legal, ethical and spiritual dimensions of Judaism. Such leadership would not be afraid of scientific and academic knowledge, because it trusts the infinite divine wisdom of Torah and really understands Torah as the structure of reality that can be fully explored using the full range of human knowledge. Leadership requires passion and enthusiasm for conveying this vital approach to Torah to all Jews, with the conviction that our calling is not only to serve all Jews, but to serve all humanity.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Meir Sendor

Following are sources taken from the Jewish tradition on the theme of 'Leadership'.

The Ideal Leader

Text 1: Rabbi Joseph Lookstein, to graduating students at Yeshivah University

When one reads rabbinic *Responsa*, one finds two ways rabbis signed their names.

Some sign as "Rabbi so-and-so, who sits upon the throne of the Rabbinat in the town of such-and-such." Others sign as "Rabbi so-and-so, servant to the servants of God in the town of such-and-such." "Make sure you are the second kind of Rabbi."

Text 2: Micah 6:8

"He has told you, man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and love kindness, and walk modestly with your God

Questions :

How does the idea of enslavement and service to God guide religious leaders? Is there a conflict between the idea of 'service' and the need to 'lead'?

What are the particular qualities that characterize true religious leaders? Are these things common across all religions or religion-specific?

To what extent does religious leadership rely on submission by followers of the faith? Can religious leaders impose their will on their followers? What mechanisms might they use to impose their will?

How do religious leaders maintain their impartiality and fidelity to the highest religious standards if they are reliant on their communities for employment? Discuss the tensions of that situation and suggest alternative models that might be preferable.

Discuss the role of religious leaders in matters of politics and the State. Can religious leaders maintain their authority if they become involved in matters of State or secular concerns? Can they, if they do not?

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The Essay Collection: "The Future of Religious Leadership" is available at www.elijah-interfaith.org. Paper presenting Jewish perspective by Rabbi Meir Sendor.

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