

## BALANCING VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In the Bible's opening book, Genesis, G-d creates the world in six days and rests on the seventh. However, there is a difference between how G-d plans to create the world and how He in fact does so. To understand the biblical text, we first need to explore the concept of G-d's names.

Describing ourselves to people who don't know us can be challenging. Each of us has our essential name, such as Isaac or Karen or Taylor, but that doesn't provide much information. Some of the other names we use are a bit more informative because they describe a role we play in daily life, such as teacher, father, scientist, and so on. G-d uses the same approach to try to make scripture clearer. Each of G-d's names refers to the aspect or emanation of Him that is being projected in the section of scripture where the name appears. For example, in the section describing the story of Noah, when G-d is bringing the flood, He uses a name that means He is judging (Elokim). But when He saves Noah, He uses a name that means he is being merciful (Havaya).

Let's examine the text. At the beginning of the process of creating, G-d says:<sup>1</sup>

1 In the beginning of G-d's creation of the heavens and the earth

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים  
אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

In the following chapter, we see how, after the fact, He describes Creation:<sup>2</sup>

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that the Lord G-d made earth and heaven.

ד אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בְּיוֹם  
עָשָׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ  
וְשָׁמַיִם:

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In the first verse, regarding the intention to create the world, the Bible uses a unique name for G-d and a specific term for the act of creation: “In the beginning, G-d (Elokim) created (bara) the heavens and the earth.” Elokim is the name of G-d associated with justice and perfection. The verb for creation here is “bara,” meaning the creation of an idea, a concept, a new intention.

When the completed creation is reviewed in the following chapter, another name of G-d is added, and another verb for creating is included: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created (bara), on the day that the Lord (Havaya) G-d (Elokim) made (asa) earth and heaven.” The name Havaya is added, which represents compassion and flexibility. The verb asa is used, which signifies the *completion* of the actual creation.

The above differences teach an important concept about the largest start-up in history, one that can be applied to leadership. When planning the world, when creating this new concept and intention, G-d aimed high, so He used the name indicating perfection and justice. When we create a new idea, a new concept, we must also aim high, dream big. There is no room for compromise or hesitation; we must strive for exactness and seek perfection. In the planning stage, we should aim for excellence and precision.

However, when we read about the conclusion of Creation, G-d uses the verb “asa” and the name Havaya to explain that when the world was actually created, He invoked the attributes of compassion, mercy, and flexibility. When it comes to action and implementation, we need to have compassion and flexibility to reach our goal. While we remain guided by our perfect intention, to succeed we also need to make practical compromises, particularly to keep people on the team along with us in pursuit of the goal.

We have discussed this idea as it applies to how we create new opportunities, but it also applies to how we interact with other people. We can expect the best from people and see their true potential. We can see all they can be and have high expectations. However, we must also understand that everyone is human and

imperfect, so we need to be flexible and accommodating and understand that people are constantly works in progress.

My company was awarded a contract to modernize a major aspect of the house-buying process in the UK. A new system had to be brought online to serve all solicitors, estate agents, and homeowners. It had to be electronic and fast. The competition, amongst about forty companies, had been long and grueling, and as the winners, we had committed to building a fully automated system over the Internet to meet all the government's requirements. The system had to go live in six months, when new legislation became effective. The vision was grand and uncompromising.

However, as we began to implement our solution, it became clear that an "instant" automated system would not work for many reasons: many lawyers had no Internet access; the actual automation would need to be modified as we learned from experience how things would really work; and in practice, there would be an initial interface, format issues with customers, and so forth.

So we put together a minimal automated system, with an army of workers operating in the background to manually deal with the many issues that arose. From the outside, everything looked automatic, but inside, smart people were making it work. Within twelve months, everything had been automated, and the results were very close to the original vision. Had we not been flexible and dealt with reality, the project would have joined the heap of other automation failures plaguing the UK e.

## **In conclusion**

To succeed as a leader, dream big, aim high, and plan for perfection. Then compromise, re-evaluate, recalibrate, and embrace the humanity of the process.

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- <sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1
- <sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:4

## LEADING FOR LASTING OUTCOMES

The Ten Commandments were received twice. The first time, Moses went up the mountain to get the tablets, which consisted of two pieces of stone carved and engraved entirely by G-d. However, on his return, he found the nation worshipping the golden calf, so he shattered the tablets. In Deuteronomy Chapter 10, Moses recounts how after the golden calf debacle, G-d commanded him to carve two new tablets upon which would G-d engrave the Ten Commandments, to replace the first set. In addition, G-d told Moses to make a special chest, called an ark, to house the tablets.<sup>1</sup>

**1** At that time, the Lord said to me, “Hew for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to Me onto the mountain, and make for yourself a wooden ark,

**א** בַּעַת הַהוּא אָמַר  
יְהוָה אֵלַי פֶּסֶל-לָךְ שְׁנַיִ-  
לוּחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרִאשֹׁנִים  
וְעָלָה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וְעָשִׂיתָ  
לָךְ אָרוֹן עֵץ:

**2** And I shall inscribe on the tablets the words that were upon the first tablets which you shattered and you shall place them into the ark.”

**ב** וְאֶכְתֹּב עַל-הַלּוּחַת  
אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל-  
הַלּוּחַת הַרְאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר  
:שִׁבַרְתָּ וְשִׂמְתָם בְּאָרוֹן:

**3** So I made an ark of acacia wood, and I hewed two stone tablets like the first ones, and I ascended the mountain, with the two tablets in my hand.

**ג** וָאֲעַשׂ אָרוֹן עֵצִי  
שֵׁטִים וָאֶפְסַל שְׁנַיִ-לּוּחַת  
אֲבָנִים כְּרִאשֹׁנִים וָאֲעַל  
:הַהָרָה וְשִׁנִּי הַלּוּחַת בְּיָדִי:

**4** And He inscribed on the tablets, like the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you on the

**ד** וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל-הַלּוּחַת  
כַּמִּכְתָּב הַרְאשֹׁן אֶת  
עֲשֹׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר  
:יְהוָה אֵלֵיכֶם בְּהָרַ מִתּוֹךְ:

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mountain, from the midst of the fire, on the day of the assembly, and the Lord gave them to me.

הָאֵשׁ בַּיּוֹם הַקֹּהֵל וַיִּתְּנֵם  
יְהוָה אֵלַי:

5 And I turned and came down from the mountain, and placed the tablets in the ark which I had made, and there they were, as the Lord had commanded me.

ה וָאֶפֶן וָאָרֶל מִן־  
הַקֹּהֵל וָאֵשׁ אֶת־הַלְחֵת  
בְּאָרוֹן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי וַיְהִי־  
שָׁם כְּאֲשֶׁר צֻוֵּי יְהוָה:

This second set of tablets had three distinct differences: Moses carved them, Moses made the ark to house them, and they came with very specific verbal details from G-d to Moses about the commandments and how to keep them.

The first set of tablets, made by G-d, did not endure, but the second set did. Why? Because the latter were carved by Moses and came with instructions for where to store them and how to follow them in everyday life. In this way, they became meaningful, relevant, and acceptable to the nation. To this day, these teachings continue to guide and inspire much of the world.

In a leader–follower or employer–employee relationship, there can be a gap between what the leader/employer envisions and what the follower/employee can grasp and internalize. It is not enough to have a brilliant philosophy or a great idea—the message needs to be packaged, conveyed, and explained in a tangible fashion that’s relevant to the person or team you hope to inspire and motivate.

Our company decided to create a new division and go into a new market with new products. A few of us worked on the strategy for over a year, eventually producing a detailed plan. It then came time to communicate the plan to those who would start implementing it. People seemed to understand the long PowerPoint presentation, but they were not very engaged or motivated. Someone advised me that the plan would only be useful if others could envision its results in the future. So working with those who would implement the plan, we prepared a description of what the business would actually look like in five years: locations, facilities,

product brochures, etc. This really sparked the employees' imagination, made the project theirs, and motivated them to dig into the more detailed business plan. The new venture became a big success, even though the original plan was only about half right!

## **In conclusion**

As employers and leaders, we need to ensure that our vision and instructions are communicated in a way that is clear, tangible, relevant, and meaningful to the recipients. For plans to be motivating and lasting, they must be understandable and contain enough detail to be relatable for the people who will be implementing them.

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy Chapter 10

## LEADING AND ENCOURAGING WITH HONESTY

It had been more than a year since the children of Israel had left Egypt. They had received the Torah at Sinai, worshipped the golden calf, and built the Tabernacle, where G-d's presence could dwell. They were ready to enter the Promised Land. But the people were worried and asked Moses whether they could send spies to bring back information that would help them conquer the land. G-d (grudgingly) approved their wish. Ten spies brought back frightening reports about the Promised Land, causing panic among the people. They rebelled, and as a result, G-d decreed that they would wander in the desert for forty years, with their children entering the Promised Land instead of them.

Finally, after four decades of wandering, Moses informed the nation that they were about to enter, conquer, and settle the land as G-d had promised their forefathers.<sup>1</sup> Just as the spies had reported, Moses also told them that the inhabitants were intimidating giants.

1 Hear, O Israel: Today, you are crossing the Jordan to come in to possess nations greater and stronger than you, great cities, fortified up to the heavens.

א שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲתָהּ  
עַבְרָה הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְבֹא  
לְרֶשֶׁת גּוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים וְעָצִימִים  
מִמֶּנּוּ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וּבְצֻרֹת  
בַּשָּׁמַיִם:

2 A great and tall people, the children of the 'Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard said, "Who can stand against the children of 'Anak?!"

ב עַם־גְּדוֹל וָרָם בְּנֵי  
עֲנָקִים אֲשֶׁר אֲתָהּ יְדַעְתָּ  
וְאֲתָהּ שָׁמַעְתָּ מִי יִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי  
בְּנֵי עֲנָק:

3 You shall know this day, that it is the Lord your G-d Who passes over before you as a consuming

ג יְדַעְתָּ הַיּוֹם כִּי  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוֹאֵקֶעְבֵּר



fire He will destroy them, and He will subdue them before you; and you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the Lord spoke to you.

לְפָנֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֲכָלָה הוּא  
 יִשְׁמַדְתֶּם וְהוּא יִכְנִיעֶם  
 לְפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹרֵשְׁתֶּם וְהֵאבַדְתֶּם  
 מִמָּהֵר כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה לְךָ

Years earlier, when the spies had gone to assess the land and had come back with a similar report, they’d scared the entire nation! Why, forty years later, was it all right for Moses to recount the difficulties of conquering the land? And why, this time, were they able to enter it?

The first time, Moses had asked the spies just to report the facts, leaving interpretation of the facts open—and panic ensued. The second time, Moses took control of the situation. He defined the challenge: the inhabitants were more powerful—literally giants. Then he explained the solution and provided comfort: “Don’t worry, G-d is with you and will protect you.” He didn’t shy away from describing the difficulties, but at the same time, he explained that the people had what they needed to succeed; he encouraged them.

When dealing with a challenging situation, it isn’t useful to ignore or minimize the issues and potential difficulties. Discounting real problems is not the way to provide reassurance. True comfort and encouragement are only meaningful when given with honesty.

In business, we’re constantly faced with conquering new lands—expanding into new markets, new countries, or both. Like the children of Israel, we check the situation out: buy reports, hire experts, visit in person, etc. We then review the information. My experience is that immediately, the prophets of doom and gloom enumerate all the reasons why we could fail. The optimists try to minimize the obstacles and press ahead. But success comes only from really understanding the difficulties, focusing on the

organization's unique strengths for facing these challenges, and developing strategies to overcome them.

## **In conclusion**

When dealing with a daunting situation, don't minimize real issues. Be honest and show that you grasp the nuances of the situation before offering answers and reassurances. Once you've acknowledged and identified all challenges and threats, then work on solutions while providing encouragement and support.

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 9:1-3

## BECOMING A GOOD PUBLIC SPEAKER

The fifth of the five books of Moses, the book of Deuteronomy, primarily contains Moses' last will and testament to the children of Israel as they are poised to enter the Promised Land. Moses uses this book to recount many events and commandments previously recorded in the other books. Deuteronomy in Hebrew is "Dvarim" and literally means "Words." The book is filled with Moses' words, as indicated in the book's first line.<sup>1</sup>

1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on that side of the Jordan in the desert, in the plain opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Hazeroth and Di Zahav.

א אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר  
דָּבַר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּמִדְבָּר  
בְּעֵרְבֵהּ מִזֶּה סוּף בֵּין-  
פָּאָרָן וּבֵין-תּוֹפֵל וְלָוָן  
וְחֵזֶרֶת וְדִי זָהָב:

Decades earlier, G-d had called on Moses to lead the Jewish people from slavery. At that time, Moses declared, "Bi, Adonai, lo ish D'varim anochi": "Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words—not now, not ever—I am heavy of speech and heavy of tongue."<sup>2</sup> Here, Moses is very clear that the job of leading the Jewish people demands an ability to speak well, but because his speaking is impaired he cannot do the job. So G-d appoints Moses' brother Aaron to be his spokesperson. Moses and Aaron return to Egypt and successfully free the slaves.

Yet in Deuteronomy, the same Moses (not Aaron) delivers a thirty-three-chapter summation and exposition of his life's mission, and his words are revered and well received.

What a transformation! How did Moses "find his voice"? What changed to turn Moses into *the* speaker, the leader, the great influencer?

When Moses understood his mission and internalized that he was a messenger with a task to accomplish, he revealed abilities and

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found strengths previously unrealized. The voice of self-doubt, the fear of failure, and the fear of rejection were all eclipsed. Moses reinvented himself and succeeded far beyond his wildest dreams. Through willpower, faith, and motivation, he transformed himself from “*not* a man of words” to an iconic leader of an entire nation shaped by his teachings and guidance.

The Maggid of Mezritch<sup>3</sup> explains the following cryptic verse in Kings II:<sup>4</sup>

15 “And now fetch me a musician.”  
And it was that when the musician  
played, the hand of the Lord came  
upon him.

טו וְעַתָּה קְחוּ-לִי מַנְגֵן  
וְהָיָה כִּנְנוֹן הַמַּנְגֵן וַתְּהִי  
עָלָיו יַד-יְהוָה:

The literal translation of the Hebrew text is: “And now fetch me a musician. And it was that when the musician **became an instrument of song**, the hand of the Lord came upon him.” The Maggid explains: When the musician (hamenagen) becomes like his instrument (kenagan)—meaning he ceases to be self-conscious, thus turning into a conduit for the expression of the music—then the spirit of G-d manifests through him.

As soon as we realize that public speaking necessitates rising above our shyness and insecurity and focusing on properly sharing our message, we gain the confidence needed to do justice to the message. Furthermore, as the sages learned from a verse in Proverbs,<sup>5</sup> when a message is heartfelt and delivered with passion and integrity, it is accepted. If we believe in our message, people will receive it.

One of the most common fears is of public speaking. People fear rejection. Yet this fear is very self-centred, all about “What if I fail?” and “What will people think of me?”. The keys to speaking in public are to be well prepared, be an expert on the content of the communication, and believe in the message. If you’re passionate

about the value of your message, you become a vehicle for transferring it to others.

Churchill wasn't a born orator; he worked very hard to transform himself into a great public speaker. Early in his career, he didn't have a particularly attractive speaking voice—he talked in a monotone, without much change in pitch, pace, or volume. He also suffered from a speech impediment, as he struggled to pronounce the letter *s*. But he understood the power that words could have on an audience and was determined to master public speaking. “Of all the talents bestowed upon men,” he said, “none is so precious as the gift of oratory. He who enjoys it wields a power more durable than that of a great king.”<sup>6</sup>

His secret to successful public speaking during the war was having a clear mission—which in his case was literally a matter of his country's life and death—being an expert on everything that was happening and needed to happen for success, and preparing meticulously for his speeches. Here is a description of what he did even after he had the final version of a speech: “[H]e has it typed on pieces of paper measuring around 4” x 8”. The text is now set in ‘broken lines to aid his delivery,’ and includes stage directions (‘pause; grope for word’ and ‘stammer; correct self’), each . . . a dramatic, vibrant occasion.”<sup>7</sup>

When I give a speech, the hardest thing for me to convince myself of is that I've done sufficient homework to be an “expert.” In university, I worked in a physics lab each summer. After a couple of summers, my professor said we should publish the results of our work on high-power lasers. He told me how to prepare everything, and once it was all done, he announced that I would be delivering a speech on the subject at a symposium full of PhDs with many years of experience. I announced that I could not do it. As a student, I would know less than anyone in the audience. He assured me that the opposite would be the case—on this narrow subject, I had studied more than anyone likely to be in the audience. Countless dry runs later, during which I was coached on content and delivery, I

made the speech at the symposium. It went very well, and I was able to handle the audience's questions adeptly.

## **In conclusion**

To succeed in public speaking, focus not on yourself but on your message and the goal of your talk. Be extremely well prepared. You have something important to say, and you're passionate about it—so you're the right person for this job. Become the channel through which the communication is shared, and you'll feel yourself shift from fear to self-confidence.

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 1:1

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 4:10

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Dov Baer ben Avraham of Mezeritch (Hebrew: רַב דּוֹב בַּעַר בֶּן אַבְרָהָם מֵמְזֵרִיטֵץ) (died December 1772 OS), also known as the Maggid of Mezritch, was a disciple of Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidic Judaism, and was chosen as his successor to lead the early movement.

<sup>4</sup> II Kings 3:15

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 27:19

<sup>6</sup> Churchill, "The Scaffolding of Rhetoric," unpublished essay, 1897.

<sup>7</sup> William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Alone 1932–1940* (New York: Delta/Dell, 1988), 33–34.