

Lesson Plan – The Seven Principles of Jewish Leadership

The following lesson plan is a suggestion of how some of the Leadership ideas and resources contained in this unit could be incorporated into a 60-minute class period for a high-school age class. This lesson plan will focus solely on one particular idea within the thought of Rabbi Sacks. There are many other themes found in this unit of resources which would take more classroom-time to explore with your students.

Goal: To explore Rabbi Sacks' seven principles of Jewish leadership, and help your students apply them to their own lives.

1-15 minutes: Activator

Print the following 7 quotes from Rabbi Sacks on leadership and place them on the floor (print enough copies for every student to be able to pick up one – i.e., if you have 21 students in your class, print each quote three times). Ask each student to select a quote that resonates with them. Group those who chose the same quotes together and ask them to read out their quote and think/talk about why they chose it.

Quote 1: In a social order in which everyone has equal dignity in the eyes of Heaven, a leader does not stand *above* the people. He serves the people, and he serves God. The great symbol of biblical Israel, the Menorah, is an *inverted* pyramid or ziggurat, broad at the top, narrow at the base. The greatest leader is therefore the most humble. “Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on earth” (Num. 12:3). The name given to this is *servant leadership*, and its origin is in the Torah.

2. A leader is one who takes responsibility. Leadership is born when we become active rather than passive, when we do not wait for someone else to act because perhaps there is no one else – at least not here, not now. When bad things happen, some avert their eyes. Some wait for others to act. Some blame others for failing to act. Some simply complain. But there are people who say, “If something is wrong, let me be among the first to put it right.” They are the leaders. They are the ones who make a difference in their lifetimes. They are the ones who make ours a better world.

3. That is how we must lead if we want people to come with us, giving of their best. There must be a vision to inspire us, telling us why we should do what we are asked to do. There must be a narrative: this is what happened, this is who we are, and this is why the vision is so important to us. Then there must be the law, the code, the fastidious attention to detail, that allow us to translate vision into reality and turn the pain of the past into the blessings of the future. That extraordinary combination, to be found in almost no other law code, is what gives Torah its enduring power. It is a model for all who seek to lead people to greatness.

4. Teachers are the unacknowledged builders of the future, and if a leader seeks to make lasting change, they must follow in the footsteps of Moses and become an educator. The leader as teacher – using influence rather than power, spiritual and intellectual authority rather than coercive force – was one of the greatest contributions Judaism ever made to the moral horizons of humankind.

5. Leaders give people confidence by teaching them to look up. We are not grasshoppers unless we think we are.

6. A leader must indeed lead from the front. But they must also understand the pace at which people can go. Leadership is not effective *if leaders are so far ahead of those they lead that when they turn their heads round, they discover that there is no one following*. Leaders must go out in front and come back in front. But they must also “lead the people out and bring them back,” meaning, they must take people with them. They must make sure that the people are keeping up with them. They must pace the challenge.

7. Jews were the people who did not leave leadership to a single individual, however holy or exalted, or to an elite. Instead, every one of them was expected to be both a prince and a servant; that is to say, every one of them was called on to be a leader. Never was leadership more profoundly democratised... To be a Jew is to be called on to lead.

16-35 minutes: Research

In their seven groups, have your students learn the sources for their principle of Jewish leadership (the number at the beginning of their quote relates to the principle which can be found within our Leadership teaching resources page, in the *Texts from the writings of Rabbi Sacks on Leadership* section). Ask your students to research other characters from Tanach or history who model this principle. They should prepare a short presentation for the rest of the class, including the following points:

- The principle explained
- Examples from leaders in Tanach who modelled this
- Examples from history who modelled this principle
- Ways they can use this principle in their own lives

36-55 minutes: Presentations

Each group make their presentation to the rest of their class

56-60 minutes: Summing up

Summarise the principles your class explored and how they are found in Tanach and in the world of your students.