

Shabbat Shalom.

I am Henry Hirschel you may not know who I am, I am the husband of Norma Kaufman who you likely know. Cindy invited me a few months ago to give a drash, so here I am today.

I must say while reading the parsha I felt a strong inclination for a glass of sweet red wine of the Manischewitz variety.

Va'era means, "and I appeared," This parsha begins with G-d speaking to Moses.

G-d decides to reveal himself because of a concern for humanity and its future.

G-d tells Moses that he had revealed himself to the patriarchs and established with them the covenant to give them the land of Canaan and that this was the time to fulfill that promise. God instructed Moses to notify the Israelites that he had heard their cries and that he was now ready to deliver them from Egypt and bring them to the land of Canaan.

Moses did relay the message but also protested his new leadership role. Saying that if the children of Israel did not listen to me how will Pharaoh listen to me? I have a speech impediment and the Israelites did not take me seriously. G-d's response was simple; G-d placed Moses into the leadership role as G-d's representative and told him to have Aaron speak to Pharaoh.

Va'era begins the story of deliverance that employs "four expressions of redemption,": Deliver the Israelites from enslavement, redeem them, acquire the Israelites as his own chosen people at Mount Sinai, and finally bring them to the land he promised to the patriarchs.

To persuade or influence Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage, the Torah describes the first seven plagues.

God turns the Nile to blood, sends swarms of frogs that overrun the land. G-d sends Lice that infest all men and beast. G-d sends Hordes of wild animals to invade the cities. Then pestilence kills the domestic animals. G-d creates painful boils that afflict the Egyptians. And the seventh plague fire and ice combined to ascend from the skies as a devastating hail. After all that Pharaoh's heart "was hardened" and he would not let the children of Israel leave Egypt.

When studying this parsha what intrigued me most was the fact that Moses was change agent. He changes the world of both the Israelites and the Egyptians. A man that perceived himself as a simple individual became a substantial leader; [in fact he could have been a candidate for Time "Man of The Year" based on the changes he facilitates.]

As I indicated earlier Moses told the Israelites that God would liberate them from slavery in Egypt and deliver them to the land of Israel. They would not listen to Moses because their spirits were crushed by cruel bondage (Exodus 6:9).

Rabbi Shapiro said, “The hard-learned message for Moses as a leader of people, as well as for those of us blessed with a front row seat to the evolution of his development as a leader of the Israelites and facilitator of their transformation and change, is that everything healing, everything important, everything transformative begins with authentic connection.”

Let me digress for a moment to provide a little background about myself to help put my next remarks into context. My journey covers a wide spectrum of topics with one end anchored in educational psychology and the other accounting. Applied organizational transparency in high growth organizations is a sweet spot. Why is this important? I find colorful pearls in gray areas of organizations while driving transformational change.

Getting back to Pharaoh, Moses, and organization change...

Pharaoh and Moses are both Titans of their time. Pharaoh an absolute autocrat that was the result of family lineage. Moses a reluctant leader with a staunch support structure and a mandate to provide freedom.

Take just a moment and think about the number of times you have been in a situation where you are under the influence of a Pharaoh, may it be a relative, a business leader, boss, ... Now think about how your personal Pharaoh influenced the decisions you made to have the freedom you are looking to achieve.

Transformational leadership requires three components. The first two components are fairly mechanical:

1. Defining objectives and goals, which are necessary to accomplished. In Va’era, the goal is to become free from Egyptian bondage by asking Pharaoh to “let my people go.”
2. The second is to have a strategic plan. Moses had a plan with G-d. Moses was to lead Pharaoh to the right answer, “let my people go,” and then to help the Israelites transition from bondage to freedom.
3. The third step is difficult to put into words... I call this magic. Move people to do something they may not even understand. What is “Magic”? Magic is comprised of soft skill, squishy stuff that is hard to define. In my mind Magic includes “being present,” Gratitude, and Spirituality.

Moses had these three components to work with because the Israelites had a common culture and tradition providing a common path to a focused solution.

Being Present recognizes that we can only do one thing at a time. We focus on with what is happening now...

- We need to bear witness to our own actions as well as those who surround us.
- Being present helps the mind to flow and not become trapped in an endless loop.

Spirituality:

- Spirituality is the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul.
- Judaism has a body and a soul. The two dances in harmony, in a wondrous union of seeming opposites. The soul finds expression through its embrace of the body, and body comes alive through its fusion with soul.
- We call the body of Judaism halacha. Literally, means “the way” – the way we live, the things we do, the things we are careful not to do. This is the foundation to make great transformation change.

And

Gratitude: a positive emotion that involves being thankful and appreciative.

When going outside the confines of the Va’era and applying “Moses” transformation the ability to help others experience the state of being present, showing gratitude, and having a spiritual experience can fundamentally change the course of an organization.

The result is the swelling of ideas that encapsulates the richness of the human spirit. The blossoming of ideas and thoughts become transformational with enduring and with lasting impact.

Shabbat shalom.