



Generational Leadership and the Future of Israel

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Since God's call to Abraham, *Lech Lecha*, Israel has captivated the hearts and minds of the Jewish People. Throughout our plight in exile, we have yearned for the redemption of our homeland and have remembered Jerusalem – 'even in our darkest hours.' The importance of Israel is not one that is trivial, but rather dynamic to the definition of our people. In the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, we learn that a nation is defined as a "people with a unique history, culture, language and homeland." Undoubtedly, the Jewish people share all of these characteristics. However, how can we assume nationhood without a land of origin? We cannot. Having lived in the Land of Israel for over four-thousand years, the Jews have been responsible for collectively shaping her from ancient landscape to modern statehood. To us, our attachment to the land of Israel is blatantly obvious. While we understand this at the present time, how can we impart this understanding throughout the generations?

As leaders concerned with the future of Israel, we must look forward towards creating the next generation of leaders to advocate for our homeland. As Rabbi Tarfon in Pirkei Avot 2:21 taught, "your job is not to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it." This provides the entire basis of generational leadership, which ensures that when you are finished, there is someone to pick up where you've left off. In order to be successful leaders, we must learn from the past, while reaching towards the future to ensure continuity. Our success is only defined by the legacy which we leave.

Fostering the next generation of leaders is no small task, but neither is it daunting, and neither are we 'free to desist from it.' The following are a few ways in which we can successfully breed future leaders. First and foremost, we must instill within our youth the burning desire to stand up for Israel and her right to exist. While we must teach our youth to love Israel unconditionally, we must also instill within them the value of critically assessing the state which we love. In caring deeply for Israel, we must not refrain from being critical. We must demand that Israel maintain her integrity, even in her times of trouble. In this regard, we must run programs that provide an unbiased look at the reality of our time, while using the past to provide context. Only in doing so, will we have the ability to create action plans for the *future*.

Additionally, we must encourage our youth to partake in the numerous travel programs to Israel. Only in the Land of Israel can the connection root itself so deeply, that it becomes a part of the consciousness of the individual. Only in Israel can our attachment to the land be fully understood.

Finally, in cultivating our future leaders, we must emphasize the importance of the Hebrew language. The Hebrew language is the link to our ancestors, the chain of Jewish understanding, and in collaboration, it provides the fence to the unification of Am Yisrael – a nation yearning for *kibbutz ge'ulateinu*, the redemption of the land of Israel. Hebrew is essential for Jewish survival.

The feeling towards generational leadership is describe by Rabbi Tarfon in Pirkei Avot 2:20, "the day is short [and] the task is great." While we must apply ourselves to the 'great task' ahead, we must also



realize that our time is limited and therefore work efficiently to cultivate successors who will take over when our day's light runs out. We must equip our successors with the tools necessary to lead the next generation. We must provide our regions with well-designed programming which uses the past to spark meaningful thoughts about the present and future of Israel. And we must encourage our youth to travel to Israel in order to substantiate their relationship with the country. Reclaiming the Hebrew language, in order to strengthen our ties to the modern State of Israel and our fellow Jews around the world, is also an essential part of this initiative. When we accomplish this, then just like Abraham, we have created a nation of great minds and great hearts, and we too will be a blessing.