

Exodus 32:1-35 The Absence of Leadership

Leadership skills and abilities are critical when leading people from one place to another or in accomplishing desired goals and plans. Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines Leadership as:

- A position as a leader of a group or organization
- The power or ability to lead other people

In Exodus 7, YeHoVaH spoke specifically to Moses about his and Aaron's role to Pharaoh, to go to Egypt, confront Pharaoh and bring His people out of the land of Egypt, the land of bondage, and lead them to a land that flows with milk and honey.

In Chapter 20, YeHoVaH spoke specific Commandments to all the people and specifically instructed them not to make graven images, bow down to them, or worship them.

YeHoVaH spoke directly to the people and told them that He was the One who brought them out of Egypt, the land of bondage. Moses had been instructed to come up into the mountain to receive YeHoVaH's instructions for the Israelites and those who had joined themselves to Israel. By default, Aaron would have been the one left to demonstrate leadership.

In this portion of Exodus, we will witness the effects of weak leadership or the absence thereof, the pressures that leadership faces from a demanding and rebellious people and observe the consequences of the absence of leadership at a critical time in Israel's history.

Before Moses ascended into the mountain, he left appointed leadership in place.

Ex 24:14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

On display is an epic failure of leadership caused by fearing the people they were supposed to be leading. Instead of leading the people, the people caused the leader to do what they wanted and therefore led the leader. When a leader becomes a people pleaser, their ability and authority to lead becomes diminished.

Ex 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Aaron was present along with Moses, Hur, the elders, and the people when YeHoVaH said:

Ex 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Ex 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Ex 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Although Aaron and Hur specifically had been left to answer the people, the people gathered to Aaron.

Ex 32:2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

Instructions were given to the men to bring the golden earrings from their wives, sons, and daughters. This indicated that women, boys, and girls wore earrings.

Ex 32:3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

Ex 32:4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Ex 32:5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.

The people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings unto the god made of their hands.

When people worship the way, they want to worship, it is the god they have created the way they want their god to be.

This kind of worship is commonplace in Christian and Messianic circles.

Ex 32:6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Ex 32:7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

Ex 32:8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Ex 32:9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

Stiff necked – 07186 קָשֶׁה qasheh {kaw-sheh'} Meaning: 1) hard, cruel, severe, obstinate 1a) hard, difficult 1b) severe 1c) fierce, intense, vehement 1d) stubborn, stiff of neck, stiff-necked 1e) rigorous (of battle) Usage: AV - stiffnecked + 06203 6, hard 5, roughly 5, cruel 3, grievous 3, sore 2, churlish 1, hardhearted 1, heavy 1, misc 9; 36

06203 עֹרֵף 'oreph {o-ref'}

Meaning: 1) neck, back of the neck, back 1a) back of the neck 1a1) of fleeing foe 1a2) of apostasy (fig.) 1b) stiff of neck, obstinate (fig.)

Origin: from 06202; TWOT - 1700a; n m

Usage: AV - neck 17, back 7, stiffnecked + 07186 4, stiffnecked 3, backs + 0310 1, stiffnecked + 07185 1; 33

Ex 32:10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

Wrath – 0639 אַף 'aph {af}

Meaning: 1) nostril, nose, face 2) anger

Origin: from 0599; TWOT - 133a; n m

Usage: AV - anger 172, wrath 42, face 22, nostrils 13, nose 12, angry 4, longsuffering + 0750 4, before 2, countenance 1, forbearing 1, forehead 1, snout 1, worthy 1; 276

The only thing that keeps you and I from being stiff-necked, is faith in Yeshua and obeying the Commandments of YeHoVaH. Apart from that, we are a stiff-necked people.

Moses intervened on behalf of a people who would ultimately cause him not to enter the land of promise.

Ex 32:11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Ex 32:12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Ex 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

Moses reminded YeHoVaH of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, His servants. Moses' intervention caused YeHoVaH to repent from His wrath. However, it did not change the people and they were unaware of what YeHoVaH had planned to do to them.

Ex 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Ex 32:15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

YeHoVaH wrote on the Tablets of Stone that which had been spoken from His mouth.

Ex 32:16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

Ex 32:17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

Ex 32:18 And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

Shout – 06030 עָנָה `anah {aw-naw'}

Meaning: 1) to answer, respond, testify, speak, shout 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to answer, respond to 1a2) to testify, respond as a witness 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to make answer 1b2) to be answered, receive answer 2) (Qal) to sing, utter tunefully 3) (Qal) to dwell

Origin: a primitive root; TWOT - 1650,1653; v

Usage: AV - answer 242, hear 42, testify 12, speak 8, sing 4, bear 3,

Mastery – 01369 גְּבוּרָה gebuwrah {gheb-oo-raw'}

Meaning: 1) strength, might 1a) strength 1b) might, valour, bravery 1c) might, mighty deeds (of God)

Usage: AV - might 27, strength 17, power 9, mighty acts 4, mighty 2, force 1, mastery 1; 61

Cry – 06030 עָנָה `anah {aw-naw'}

Meaning: 1) to answer, respond, testify, speak, shout 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to answer, respond to 1a2) to testify, respond as a witness 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to make answer 1b2) to be answered, receive answer 2) (Qal) to sing, utter tunefully 3) (Qal) to dwell

Origin: a primitive root; TWOT - 1650,1653; v

Usage: AV - answer 242, hear 42, testify 12, speak 8, sing 4, bear 3,

Overcome – 02476 חָלוּשָׁה chaluwshah {khal-oo-shaw'}

Meaning: 1) weakness, defeat, prostration

Usage: AV - being overcome 1; 1

Sing – 06031 עָנָה `anah {aw-naw'} Meaning: 1) (Qal) to be occupied, be busied with 2) to afflict, oppress, humble, be afflicted, be bowed down 2a) (Qal) 2a1) to be put down, become low 2a2) to be depressed, be downcast

Origin: a primitive root [possibly rather ident. with 06030 through the idea of looking down or browbeating]; TWOT - 1651,1652; v

Usage: AV - afflict 50, humble 11, force 5, exercised 2, sing 2, Leannoth 1, troubled 1, weakened 1, misc 11; 84

Nu 21:17 Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

Sing – 06030 עָנָה `anah {aw-naw'}

Meaning: 1) to answer, respond, testify, speak, shout 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to answer, respond to 1a2) to testify, respond as a witness 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to make answer 1b2) to be answered, receive answer 2) (Qal) to sing, utter tunefully 3) (Qal) to dwell

Usage: AV - answer 242, hear 42, testify 12, speak 8, sing 4, bear 3,

Moses allowed his anger to cause him to cast down and break the Stone Tablets that YeHoVaH had given him. This was after Moses had caused the Almighty to repent from His anger.

Ex 32:19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

Anger – 0639 אָפַח 'aph {af}

Meaning: 1) nostril, nose, face 2) anger

Usage: AV - anger 172, wrath 42, face 22, nostrils 13, nose 12, angry 4, longsuffering + 0750 4, before 2, countenance 1, forbearing 1, forehead 1, snout 1, worthy 1; 276

Ex 32:20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

Ex 32:21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

Ex 32:22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

Ex 32:23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex 32:24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Ex 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

Ex 32:26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Out of all the people, only the tribe of Levi, acknowledged to be on YeHoVaH's side, dedicated themselves to the service of YeHoVaH.

Ex 32:27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

The results of what Moses commanded them to do indicate that not every man his brother, nor every man his companion, nor every man his neighbor was slain. For there were at least six hundred thousand men who had come out of Egypt, but only three thousand men were slain.

Ex 32:28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

Ex 32:29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

Ex 32:30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

The atonement Moses made was not with the sacrifice of an animal, but with asking for forgiveness and being willing to take upon himself the sins of the people.

Ex 32:31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

Ex 32:32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

YeHoVaH declared that every person was responsible for their own sin by saying, "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My Book."

Dt 24:16 The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Ex 32:33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

Ex 32:34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

Ex 32:35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made. We don't know how YeHoVaH plagued the people, but we do know that He did not go with them but sent an angel to lead them.

In the Absence of Leadership

- Seek first His Kingdom
- Remember YeHoVaH's Commandments
- Acknowledge YeHoVaH
- You must exercise restraint or self-control
- Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit
- Don't follow the crowd
- Do what you know is right
- Remember YeHoVaH is with you always