

# LEADERSHIP

by Rabbi Label Lam

*It was in the second year, in the second month on the twentieth of the month, the cloud was lifted from the Tabernacle of the Testimonies. The Children of Israel embarked on their journeys from the Wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud rested in the Wilderness of Paran. They embarked for the first time at the bidding of HASHEM through Moshe. The banner of the camp of the children of Judah embarked first according to their legions, and over his legion was Nachshon ben Aminadav. Over the legions of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nethanel son of Zuar. And over the legion of the tribe of the children of Zevulun was Eliab son of Helon. The Tabernacle was dismantled and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari embarked, the bearers of the Tabernacle embarked. (Bamidbar 10:11-17)*

The Tabernacle was dismantled: When the banner of Judah moved Aaron and his children entered and disassembled the Curtains and covered the Holy Ark...And the children of Gershon and Merari dismantled the Tabernacle and loaded it on wagons... (Rashi)

On the one hand we are told about the collective travels of the entire congregation as a coordinated unit and then we are treated to a lengthy description about who and what went first and then second and what triggered the initial move. Would it not have been more harmonious if everyone simultaneously and spontaneously jumped into action?

Many stories are told about the hostile and fragile relationships between Jews and the porritz - landlord in feudal Europe. In a certain district populated with many Jewish families the economy was beginning to slump. The local porritz had already started to pressure Moshe, who had a large family for delinquency in paying the rent. He begged for extension after

extension. The porritz lost his patience. He demanded that Moshe pay his rent by the next week or face beatings and jail-time. Moshe was frightened. He tried to scrape the money together. Time was running out. He had no choice but to gather his family, a few possessions and flee. On his way out of the village on the only road to the big city Moshe meets the porritz. "Where do you think you're going?" he asks. Moshe calmly informs him that he is headed to the big city. The porritz demands to know the reason for the journey. Moshe tells him that it is a Jewish holiday. The porritz questions Moshe suspiciously, "I'm working with Jews my whole life and I know of no holiday at this time of the year!" Moshe confidently informs the porritz, "This is a holiday known as 'Z'man Pleitaseinu'." Bedazzled, the porritz proceeds to the village. There he sees all the Jews going about their business. The porritz asks one man, "Isn't tonight a Jewish Holiday?" The fellow laughs, "What holiday!?" The porritz tells him, "I just saw Moshe and his whole family heading to the big city. He said that tonight is

a Jewish Holiday- uhhhh Z'man Pleitaseinu!" The fellow sighs and explains to the porritz. "Z'man Pleitaseinu" (the time of our escape) is a different type of holiday. Everyone keeps it at a different time. Today is Moshe's day and soon we will all have our turn to celebrate."

It's no mistake that Nachshon the son of Aminadav, who was the first to enter the sea when it was about to split, is found at the head once again. Not everything that Jews do is Judaism. There was a heavenly signal and someone had to make an appropriate response. That set a whole chain reaction in motion. That sensitivity to the presence and sudden absence of a cloud and the good sense to know where to move to next is an intangible quality called leadership. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).