

FROM THE EDITOR

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We live in an age where many people in positions of leadership unfortunately view such appointments as opportunities to benefit themselves, along with their friends and relatives, lining all of their pockets, often at the expense of those who they were elected to govern and whose interests they were meant to put first.

But, what does real leadership look like?

In his book *The Prime Ministers*, Yehuda Avner shares a rare behind the scenes perspective of the first five Jewish heads of the State of Israel, to whom he served as a close advisor. Among the many amazing events that he describes in incredible detail is Menachem Begin's first morning as the prime minister of Israel.

When asked by a reporter how it felt to be entering into the office of the Prime Minister on his first day, Begin explained: "I have the feeling of the chazan – the cantor – on the High Holy Days, when he stands alone before the Holy Ark and he appeals to the Almighty in the name of the whole congregation, and he says to G-d, 'I have come to plead before you on behalf of your people, Israel, who have made me their messenger, even though I am unworthy of the task. Therefore, I beseech you, O L-rd, make my mission successful.' 'Amen!' exclaimed somebody from the back of the room. 'Ken yehi ratzon' [May it be so], echoed Begin, and with an air of consecration, hands clasped, and eyes lowered, he walked into the office of the Prime Minister."

From almost the moment he entered into his new office, Begin was immediately met with a series of crises: a letter from then President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, requiring a response and two telephone calls back-to-back. The first telephone call concerned international affairs: the firing of two rockets from southern Lebanon into northern Israel by the PLO, in what was likely a deliberate provocation designed to test Begin on his first day in office. Begin immediately began consulting with General Ephraim Poran to formulate a firm, appropriate response.

In the midst of this crisis, however, came a second, urgent telephone call. Begin was notified that Rabbi Raphael Levin, who was now running the yeshiva that his father, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the famous "Tzaddik of Jerusalem", had founded, was on the phone for him. Begin apologized to General Poran for the interruption, explaining that it would only take a minute.

Begin listened intently to what Reb Raphael had to say, exclaiming, "Oy vey," at the news that the yeshiva was without the means to pay its electrical, water, and telephone bills. In the midst of his tense discussion regarding the rocket attack, Begin instructed Reb Raphael to send him the bills, promising that he would personally see to having them sorted. Upset by the prolonged interruption, General Poran started to walk out, but not before Begin instructed Poran to keep him informed of any developments. Begin concluded his call with Reb Raphael by saying, "It's a mitzvah I want to perform. So don't fret, Reb Raphael. Your task is to sit and learn and teach. We shall see to the rest."

Begin then instructed his close friend and aide, Yechiel Kadishai, to get a hold of a certain wealthy English Jew, Sir Isaac Wolfson, who might be able to assist Reb Raphael. As Begin began analysing the letter from Carter with Avner and considering its implications, his phone buzzed. He immediately recognised the voice on the other end of the line as Wolfson's. After exchanging pleasantries and discussing a bit of politics, Begin got right down to business, explaining why he had called and making a heartfelt appeal, "...I would not be troubling you now did I not sincerely believe that saving Reb Raphael's yeshiva is a mitzvah – a sacred and noble deed. And knowing of your charity, I thought you might want to have a share in it." Wolfson's generosity was overwhelming and Begin repeatedly thanked him.

Standing there and taking it all in in utter awe, Avner described the scene unfolding before him: "Had a passer-by happened to overhear how Begin had opened his heart to Reb Raphael, and to Sir Isaac Wolfson, he might have gone away thinking an Israeli Prime Minister's job was to run some sort of yeshiva appeal, punctuated by affairs of state. Just to watch him handle, in one and the same breath, and with equal zeal, a presidential letter from the White House, a military flare-up in Lebanon, and a yeshiva solicitation in Jerusalem, was a spellbinding experience."

And that's what it means to be a Jewish leader: to recognise that representing the Jewish people is a holy mission and a grave responsibility, that whether the threat is rockets fired by an enemy or a financial crisis facing a yeshiva – be it a physical danger or a spiritual one – every such event is crucial to the interests of the entire Jewish people, and, as such, requires delicate handling and complete, focused, uncompromising attention.

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ON THE COVER:
A BUSINESSMAN
STANDING IN FRONT
OF A WALL OF TOUCH
SCREENS, AS HE
REACHES OUT TO MAKE
CONTACT WITH ONE,
BRILLIANTLY CAPTURING
IN A SINGLE IMAGE OUR DUAL THEMES
FOR THIS ISSUE OF LEADERSHIP AND
TECHNOLOGY.