

Vaera

There were three incidents that occurred in Moses's life before God speaks to him through the Burning bush, choosing him to lead the Israelites to freedom, that tell us the kind of person-- and leader--- he will be.

The first was when Moses sees an Egyptian overseer beating an Israelite slave and intervenes, accidentally killing the Egyptian.

The next day, Moses sees two Israelites fighting, and tries to calm the situation down and make peace between the two men. You may remember that this is when the instigator retorts to Moses, "Will you kill me like you did the Egyptian overseer?"

And last, when Moses flees Egypt and arrives in Midian, he sees Jethro's seven daughters being harassed by Midianite shepherds and steps in to defend the daughters.

In the first incident, Moses intervenes when the dispute was between an Israelite and non-Israelite. The second was between two Israelites, and the third incident involved a group of Midianites.

In all three instances, Moses shows a commitment to Justice. Not just for his own people, but to ALL people.

God chose Moses because of that commitment to selfless justice.

This past Monday we took a day to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the tremendous impact he had on our country trying to equalize the rights of it's citizens no matter the color of their skin, their religion, or their or their economic place in our communities.

In 1963, King met Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel at the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago where the former was the featured speaker. Heschel felt very strongly that how we did or did not engage with the plight of the black community was the ultimate 'test of our integrity'.

The two came together again later that year, when both men addressed the United Synagogue of America's Golden Jubilee Convention in New York. King expressed his deep accord with Heschel's cause this time—which was to stand against the Soviet Union's treatment of its Jewish population—by restating his own view that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

In March 1965, Heschel responded to King called for religious leaders to join the Selma to Montgomery March for voting rights in 1965, Heschel responded, along with other rabbis from around the country. The march had a deep spiritual impact on Heschel, and he recalled feeling like his “legs were praying” as he walked next to

King. And, in fact, today, when we speak of the importance of Social justice work in Judaism, we often speak of it in terms of, "Praying with our feet".

Martin Luther King Jr, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel would go on to inspire other rabbis and faith leaders from all different backgrounds to work together to combat the ills and injustices of our world, and this work continues on to this day.

Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel both emanate the characteristics of Moses, who stood up for not only his people, but for injustice wherever he found it. These two men reflect the kind of leaders we all should strive to be. May we have the strength to guide the next generation of leaders in their footsteps.

As each of us walk the paths of our lives, may we strive to pray with our feet, and march together as one.

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