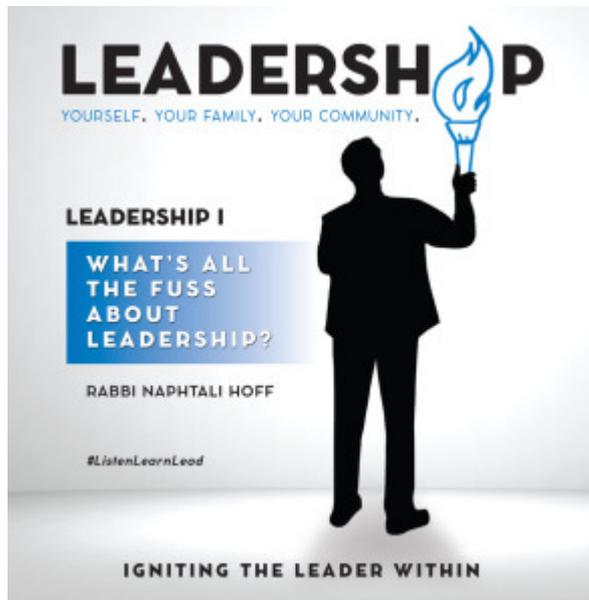


# Leadership I: What's All the Fuss About Leadership?



*Where there is no vision, the people perish. Mishlei 29:18 –*

Perhaps more so than in any era of human history, modern society has placed a pronounced emphasis on the study of human leadership. Few foci have consumed the collective interest of university researchers, think tanks, executive coaches, corporate consultants, business magnates and internet bloggers more than identifying the special mix of qualities and actions that produce and sustain strong leadership.

The topic's currency is obvious enough. At no time in our historical annals has there been a greater demand for capable, dynamic leadership – at least on such broad a scale – as there is today. Modern society has engendered the vast proliferation of large organizational structures, including governments, business corporations, and educational institutions. Each of these entities depends heavily on the skills and successes of key leaders to drive their enterprises forward. Logically, such organizations make the study and recruitment of effective management an essential, ongoing effort, and invest heavily in programs and services to nurture and assess their chief executives.

As I see it, leadership matters today more than ever before, in part for the following reasons.

1. *Shifting, less structured marketplace* – Today's work environment is more agile, dexterous, and virtual than ever before, with many offsite employees and less emphasis on traditional reporting and organizational hierarchies. Leading becomes more challenging in less structured environments.
2. *Navigating in uncharted waters* – We live at a time of constant change, with an ever-increasing demand for product development and acceptance in a fast-paced global economy.
3. *Heightened expectations* – Today's stakeholders are better informed and more demanding. They are less inclined to tolerate incompetence and wait patiently for evidence of success. Leaders today are expected to hit the ground running, but do so with short leashes.
4. *Too many failures* – We have all observed longstanding bastions of stability, such as government and big business, fail before our eyes. Traditional organizational values have come under fierce attack and we oftentimes seem to lack a moral compass by which to determine right and wrong.

These challenges, as well as many others, can make organizational leadership a daunting, perplex task.

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In this 5 part series we will explore what leadership is (as well as what it isn't,) and how leaders can develop the kind of character that will help them to gain others' respect and support and increase production. Of course, there is much more to leadership than this, including developing a vision, managing change, supervising personnel and confronting underperformers. But the first thing that any leader and aspiring leader needs to understand is the *concept* of

leadership, the underlying theory which frames leaders' thoughts and actions.

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