Jewish Tribune – Va’era

**Mission Statements**

Every respectable company has a mission statement; a statement that guides the action of the organisation and provides a path to achieve its goal.

What is our mission statement? What about a school? Or that of teachers and parents? I believe that this week’s sedra can help us.

Rashi notes that in some places the Torah mentions Moshe before Aharon and in other places (such as in our sedra) it mentions Aharon before Moshe. This teaches us that both were equally great.

Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl notes that this seems strange. Doesn’t the Torah itself testify that Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest prophet who ever lived? How can we say that Aharon was equal to him?

Rav Moshe answers that in Hashem’s eyes, achievement is measured by whether a person fulfils his personal mission. One who has a small mission but completes it, is just as great as one with a big mission and completes it. Aharon HaKohen fulfilled his potential and was therefore equal to Moshe Rabbeinu who likewise fulfilled his potential. The fact that Moshe had greater ability or a bigger mission is irrelevant.

Rav Yisroel Salanter used to say: “I know that in many ways I have the capacity of 1,000 men, but because of this, my obligation to serve Hashem is also that of 1,000 men”.

Greatness is measured not in terms of what one accomplishes but in terms of what one was meant to accomplish. The extent to which he uses his abilities and talents.

That is really the mission statement of any school and of all parenting and teaching too. Our role is to help each child identify and maximise his or her potential.

The school and the home must provide opportunities and outlets for every child to excel at something; to identify their strengths and weaknesses, to explore what their potential is and to facilitate opportunity to fulfil that potential.

As Rav Reuven Leuchter wrote in a beautiful article in Mishpacha recently: “A child is like a sapling, and the parent is like a gardener. We don’t need to *make* him grow. He has his own vitality, and he will grow on his own. Our job is to provide the conditions necessary for him to grow in the ideal way.”

Those conditions are many and varied. The starting point is a warm and secure environment where values are not just preached but practised and practised with passion.

But in addition, parents and teachers need to be creative to provide healthy and diverse outlets to allow children to excel and discover their talents.

In schools, offering broad enrichment activities and informal education is critical. Walking tours, Shabbatonim, Friday night Onegs, meals at Rebbes homes, Poland trips, youth groups and camps all offer conditions and facilitate growth in many children where formal educational settings cannot provide.

These forums build the child and provide outlets and opportunities that are simply not possible in the classroom. One of the many casualties of current situation is the inability to provide many of these activities.

Developing potential is a lifetime’s goal but the teenage years are critical. This is when people find direction in their life and the consequences are critical.

May we all merit fulfilling our potential and help those in our charge to do so too.

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