

When I first realized that this week's parasha is Korech, I thought for a short moment about taking the week off. It's a difficult parasha. A small group of Israelites rebel against Moses, asking, in effect, "Who made you the boss? Why you and not us?" God gets very angry at their rebellion, thinks for a bit about destroying the people, then destroys Korech, his co-rebels and their families, by opening up the earth and letting them drop into a fiery pit. Harsh punishment, I think, for questioning authority.

But what if the story isn't here to teach us to respect authority, but to teach Moses – and other leaders – to include those who follow? What if Korech teaches us about the attributes of a good leader, as much as about blind obedience?

What makes a good leader? No doubt, it requires vision and persistence. No doubt, it requires the ability to work with others. No doubt, it requires, as Rabbi Marc pointed out at the Annual Meeting last Sunday, trustworthiness. But maybe this parasha tells us that leadership also requires the ability to let go, to let others find their way on a path you have created and nurtured.

Many years ago, I started a small program. (Not here). This is a program that has grown and flourished, a program whose present recipients know nothing of my personal involvement. And that makes me happy – it was valuable enough that it not only survived my departure – and it feels like it's been around for a long time. The best innovations become institutions, whether it's Mitzvah Day, or the chocolate seder, or even Ruach.

I'm often amazed at the coincidence that the weekly parasha provides. Each week, the lesson I need somehow emerges in the text. Cathy, thank you for the gifts you have given us, your kindness and warmth. And especially for Ruach. You have set out a path for us. And, like a good leader, you trust us with your precious creation. The ability to let go is one of the great attributes of leadership. We will hold onto you through the gift of Ruach. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Betsy Stone