



## Dear Jewish Leader, Are You Up to the Task?

*Dear Jewish leader (that's YOU!):*

I believe in you. With an abundance of *Kavod* (honor and respect), I ask:  
Do you believe in you too?

### **Are you Miriam?**

You once raised your voice and led our people through. With hope in your heart, you guided us on the most terrifying journey through two walls of water, each threatening to drown them and you. You did it so simply- with a song. You wove disparate melodies into a holy community, teaching us to sing through our trials and tribulations. Because of you, we gathered regularly in each other's tents to hum, sing, and commiserate too. You crafted a levitical chorus before the Levites even figured out the power of song!

But now, amidst a new disruption, wandering again *bamidbar* (in the wilderness), [you fear you have lost your voice](#).

### **Are you Moses?**

You had no voice. But you had charisma, God-infused courage, and enough *chutzpah* to go up against the pharaohs of former glory. Digging deep within yourself, you realized you possessed the power of persuasion and intensity of inspiration to motivate others captivated by "can't do." You disrupted long held lessons of how to live. You led us out of the comforting oppression into the oppressive comfort to do something different, creating something new. With advice from Jethro, your father-in-law, a leader from a previous generation, you created systems to serve the needs big and small. Your legacy was our arrival at the gateway to the Promised Land.

But now, post-disruption, wandering again *bamidbar*, you [privately question your ability to do it again](#), to motivate, instigate, and innovate.

## **Are you Aaron?**

You had a booming voice which you used strategically to market Moses' messages of the moment. You transformed mumbled intentions into wise words of wonder, that alternately warned off and warmed. Here you were speaking truth to power, fascinated that pharaoh did flinch. There you were whispering words of comfort, preparing the multitudes with poetry and prose.

And now the virus vexes you, as you are separated from Moses and unsure about how to channel Miriam's magnificent musicality. So you find yourself worried about acting alone, [fearful that the failings you are well aware of](#) will lead you all into another go-round with the golden calf of conflict and catastrophe.

Miriam. Moses. Aaron. Once accomplished innovators, illuminators, disruptors, you now quietly question your ability, your capacity, your endurance, to do it all over again.

## **That's me. And I bet it's you too.**

We are:

Synagogue leaders.  
Organization officers.  
Staff and clergy.  
Volunteers and paid.

We once split seas.  
We once invited manna from heaven.  
We touched the tormented and uplifted their souls.  
We made things happen!

And now this happened.

A simple sickness has upended our world. Like the [skin disease that sent Miriam into self-quarantine](#), it now sends all souls back into their tents, far out of our reach. Worse than the golden calf, this calamity has corrupted our meticulously-built capacities to help and heal, to support and give solace.

## **What must we do?**

To survive and sustain,  
To rethink and retrain,  
To transform and refrain  
From succumbing to anxiety and fear?

The answer's quite simple if we are willing to hear: we contain all we need within. Within ourselves maybe not, but within our communities absolutely. If we lift up and nurture those capacities.

How?

### **Miriam,**

Keep singing your songs, the old ones and new, as you channel the horror and the hope right through you. Partner with the younger ones who zoom to and fro. Together stream soulful singing in short spurts of strength and inspiration.

### **Moses,**

Keep inspiring. Convince us all's not lost, that we can retool now for the long journey ahead. Remind us that having wandered before, and now wandering again, we will get there sometime, somewhere and somewhen. Tell us about Noah and his wife Naama too who together saved the animals and saved themselves too. Recall the resilience that we have inside, how we faced down oppression and creatively survived. And how we will all come through this together, that we will arrive at the Promised Land once again.

### **And Aaron,**

Keep speaking to lift up the truth: from today's doctors, ancient wise ones, and also from you. At physical distance, let a virtual stream flow, creating social connection with those we do and don't know. Give others the wisdom they need to get through. That's what you, the sacred spokesperson, should endeavor to do.

And you three get moving, go raise up new voices, and uplift those who comfort and care. Let younger ones teach you. Let them question old ways. Encourage them clearly to lead their own way. Their partnership and leadership will be needed if in this world we want to stay.

## **We don't need all the answers.**

This disruption is bigger than us few. Everything we took for granted is being changed and rearranged too.

Go stream your inspiration, your gifts are quite centering, but to accomplish this feat, we have got to embrace intentional mentoring.

To embrace others who might have answers we haven't considered.

To encourage them to go forth and split that sea.  
To collect nourishing manna for them, you and me.  
To rise up and assume their God-given roles,  
We will *kvell* as they comfort the tormented and uplift tired souls.

And you'll sing and connect, empower and embrace,  
New tech, new skills, and new leaders who guide.  
And together we all will learn to survive.

## **Go help them make things happen.**

We are counting on you. I know you can do it. I wonder: Do you?

**With an abundance of *Kavod*** (honor and respect)!

Rabbi Paul Kipnes

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<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/dear-jewish-leader-are-you-up-to-the-task>