

# Moses' Advice on Leadership

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

As Moses prepared to relinquish leadership of the Israelites, he had advice about the type of leader who should succeed him.

Moses entreats God to appoint as his replacement "A man in whom there is spirit." What does that phrase mean? Our sages offer a very interesting interpretation. They explain Moses was asking for a leader who would be able to deal with each individual according to his or her own temperament. In other words, Moses understood that people need a leader who honors diversity.

A good leader cannot insist that everyone think alike or be alike. Having lived with the people for so long Moses understood their variousness and idiosyncrasies. He pleaded for a leader who did not automatically condemn those who were different. Moses asked God to send Israel a leader who knew the wisdom of the Talmud — "teach your tongue to say 'I don't know.'"

Studies have demonstrated that as people ascend the ladder of leadership, their sensitivity to others tends to diminish. Moses knew that the Israelites needed a leader who could remain both principled and compassionate. As we enter a new season of choosing national leadership, here is another timely lesson from Moshe *rabbeinu* — Moses our teacher.