

Unit 1

Authority and its Dynamics

Facilitator's Guide

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SYNOPSIS

This unit explores the concept of authority, our attachment to it, and its complicated role in our life. Authority and its dynamics surround us, as Rabbi Sacks explains:

Authority is something you have in virtue of office or the position you hold in a family, community, or society. Presidents and prime ministers, chief executives and team captains all have authority.

Rabbi Sacks (Lessons in Leadership, xxii – xxiii)

We often confuse “authority” with “leadership.” This session begins the uncoupling of those two concepts. Our purpose is to guide learners into the deeper understanding of our relationship with authority. Our bonds with authority figures are created from infancy, and our attitudes towards authority are often influenced by our earliest experiences. We want our learners to understand that authority is necessary, and ultimately, when all is working as it should, it is helpful and productive. The functions of authority figures are to provide direction, protection, and order, and, as with all things, these functions serve us to a limit which we will explore in session two. Understanding our primal and often subconscious relationship with authority can help us recognize when authority is useful to us and when it sets us back.

This unit looks at the story of Moses' early years to generate dialogue about our deep-rooted relationships with authority, and to help learners explore and manage their attitudes towards authority and not let their attitudes manage them.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Learners will emerge from this session with the following enduring understandings:

- Authority is necessary: it provides direction, protection, and order
- Authority is fallible, it can't fix everything
- We all have a certain relationship to authority, whether we like it or not, and those attitudes are fashioned from birth
- Authority is a resource when we know how to use it

NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR

The concept of authority is wide and complex. We anticipate that learners will want to talk about abuses of power, authority's failures, informal authority, etc. In addition, this unit is just one side of a double-sided coin, in which we distinguish leadership from authority. We want to convey the intellectually simple but emotionally complex definition of authority as a position, and leadership as a behavior. [Authority figures can exert leadership but don't necessarily do so; in fact, by definition, they are set up to preserve the status quo, whereas those exerting leadership are, by definition, challenging it].

We encourage you to make space for these complexities to emerge in the session, but have consciously designed the texts to keep learners in the emotional space of connection to authority, and the value of authority in our lives. Our purpose is to help learners realize why our relationships with authority are so primal and emotional, and why we often feel so deeply hurt, or even violated, when authority figures disappoint us or do us harm. This will provide the foundation for further exploration of navigating leadership activities in a society that is so authority-dependent, entangled in the web of authority structures. Be mindful that people have complex and sometimes difficult associations with authority figures in their (early) lives.

As the facilitator, your job is to provide authority for this class, while stepping into spaces of leadership. Strive to maintain the below timing order, whilst staying aware that different groups will naturally need to spend different amounts of time in each section.

It is recommended that the total running time for this session is 2 hours, roughly divided up as follows:

- Introduction – 20 minutes
- Framing – 10 minutes
- Hevruta Learning & Reflection– 60 minutes & 10 minute break
- Integration & Practice – 20 minutes

You might also choose to facilitate a 60 minute session; in which case, simply halve each of the recommended times. Also, if the purpose of this session for your participants is more focused on practice and application, plan to spend more time on the integration exercises. If it is more theoretical, and focused on Jewish learning, plan to spend more time on the Jewish texts and discussion.

For younger learners, take breaks between each section.

For those unfamiliar with Jewish texts, frame the excerpts as Jewish texts, not as religious texts.

INTRODUCTION

Introduce concept in big group

Ask participants what they think of when they hear “authority”



Our relationships with authority are profoundly primal. They are imprinted early in our lives, and affect our thinking, our behavior, our motivations and fears, largely subconsciously. This session unpacks the early imprinting of Moses around authority; Moses has a complex relationship with authority in his infancy - perhaps this affected his ability to step into his own authority role when he was called to lead his people out of Egypt.

Before we explore Moses, let's take some time to explore our own relationships with authority. This learning is like learning how to ride a bike. We're going to ask you to be there for each other, to support one another as we wobble. We're going to ask you to reflect on sources and resources of authority. That can be challenging. We invite you to look after yourselves and each other, while also opening yourselves and each other to this learning.

The function of an authority figure is to right the ship, maintain equilibrium, keep things on an even keel. People expect an authority figure to be comforting.

Prof. Ronald Heifetz (Quoted in INC Magazine, 1st October 1988)

Reflection Questions:

- Think about your experience of being taught to ride a bike, or the equivalent (i.e: learning to swim, to drive, etc.) Take 2 minutes to really think, feel, and remember in your body. Perhaps write notes or draw. Who was around you? What emerges from the memory?
- Share your story with a partner. Partner A shares her story for 2 minutes while Partner B simply listens - without saying a word. Then Partner B shares his/her story with Partner A, while Partner A listens silently for 2 minutes. Then take 2 minutes to discuss - what were common themes? What resonated in each other's stories?
- Share out the common themes with the large group. What do you notice? Who was your authority figure? What verbs and adjectives emerged in your stories? What patterns did you notice? How might that affect how you think about authority today?

FRAMING

We are born into a world looking to authority (our parents originally) to know the way to go. We have a strong tendency to retreat back to our dependency on authority when times get tough...

Prof. Ronald Heifetz (Lessons in Leadership, xvi)

As in the image of a parent supporting a child's bike, authority helps keep us balanced; it literally holds us, guides us, and supports us so that we do not fall. In our primal and most tender years, we are engaged in an ongoing dance of holding on to, and being held by, authority, and then gently letting go, and learning to function, at least partly, on our own. While we grow towards independence, we always exist in various authority structures: school, job, government, society.

Authority is closely related to the idea of being authored, of being written by and directed by another (even if those voices have been internalized). The voices of our authority figures may become the voices inside our head without us even knowing it.

Authority is essential to our sense of who we are and how we look after ourselves and others. As in nature (the Alpha male of a wolf pack) Authority's role is to provide: Direction, Protection, Order. We need authority to function. As infants, we literally could not live without it. As a society, we depend upon authority structures to keep things functioning, to maintain order. We tend to exist in a binary relationship with authority - we often worship authority, putting our authority figures on pedestals, turning them into celebrities, God-like figures; or we completely reject authority. Especially when authority fails us, which is

inevitable on both the personal and societal scales, we reject authority completely. Neither extreme is healthy or productive. Authority serves a critical function. We cannot exist without it. It gives us clarity and oftentimes guidance; at the same time, we should not be entirely dependent on it.

HEVRUTA LEARNING & REFLECTION

Divide into small groups or pairs, with a designated time-keeper

Find a learning partner, a Hevruta. Spend 15 minutes reading and discussing each text cluster.

Text Cluster I: Establishing Connection to Authority

“Leadership is the ability to create an environment in which others are willing to follow. It is not about power, but about influence. It is not about being obeyed, but about being respected. It is not about imposing your will, but about inspiring others to do what needs to be done.” This quote is from Rabbi Sacks’ commentary on Parshat Korach, where he contrasts the leadership styles of Moses and Korach, who rebelled against him. Rabbi Sacks explains that Moses was a humble leader who did not seek power or glory, but rather served God and the people with love and faith. Korach, on the other hand, was driven by envy and ambition, and wanted to usurp Moses’ authority. He failed to understand that leadership is not a privilege, but a responsibility.

Rabbi Sacks (Covenant & Conversation: Numbers: The Wilderness Years, p.123)

Relationships with authority emerge from and are solidified from birth. Authority figures ought to create a stable environment in which we can grow, change, and take risks.

The context of this story is an Egyptian dictatorial world in which authority is being abused. Failure of authority profoundly affects our relationship with authority structures, and can prevent us from growing in the ways we need to, and disturbs healthy attitudes towards authority.

Let’s explore Moses as a developing authority figure for the Jewish people. What is his early relationship to authority? How is it formed? Read the text together and focus on the mother-infant relationship and how it unfolds between (the unnamed) Moses and Yocheved.

Exodus 2: 1-9

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת־בַּת־לֵוִי:

וַתֵּהָרָה הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי־טוֹב הוּא וַתְּצַפְנָהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרֵחַ:

וְלֹא־יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפְיָנוּ וַתִּקְחֵהוּ תִּבְתּ לָמָּה וַתִּחְמְרָה בַּחֲמֹר וּבְצִפָּה וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עֲלִישְׁפָּת הַיָּאֵר:

וַתַּעֲב אַחָתוֹ מֵרָחֵק לְדַלֶּה מִהַיַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ:

וַתִּקְחָהּ וַתֵּרֶד בַּת־פָּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר וְנַעֲרָתֶיהָ הִלְכָת עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת־הַתִּבָּהּ בַּתּוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֶמְתָּהּ

וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרָאָהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה־נֶעֱר בֵּכָה וַתִּחַמַּל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לָדִי הָעִבְרָיִם זֶה:

וַתֹּאמֶר אַחָתָא אֶל־בַּת־פָּרְעֹה הַאֵלֶּף וַקְרָאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת מֶן הָעִבְרָיִת וַתִּינַק לָךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד:

וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בַּת־פָּרְעֹה לֵכִי וַתֵּלֶדְהָ הַעֲלָמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אִם הַיֶּלֶד:

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַּת־פָּרְעֹה הִילִיכִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה וְהִינֵקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת־שְׂכָרְךָ וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּינַקְהוּ:

(1) A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. **(2)** The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months. **(3)** When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. **(4)** And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him. **(5)** The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. **(6)** When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." **(7)** Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?" **(8)** And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. **(9)** And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it.

Reflection Questions:

- How would you describe Moses's early experience with authority?
- Who were the authority figures in Moses' early life and how did they behave?
- We will be exploring the distinction between authority and leadership: authority provides stability, direction, protection, and order; leadership often is destabilizing for the sake of a larger cause. In what ways did the women in Moses' early life exert leadership, and how might that have affected his relationship with authority?
- What comes up personally for you as you read the text?

Text Cluster II: Stepping into Authority

Moses began his career as a leader unable to speak in public; he ended it as one of the most eloquent visionaries the world has ever known.

Rabbi Sacks (Lessons in Leadership, xxviii)

The below texts reveal the moment in which Moses is "chosen" by God, the ultimate authority figure, to step into an authority role, a role in which he will be required to nurture his people, and also challenge the status quo, disrupt the society around him, and exert leadership. Moses' ambivalence about this role can be associated with his disrupted speech, his being "heavy of lip and heavy of tongue (Exodus 4:10)." Why might Moses be resistant to step into a position of authority, given his background? As you read these texts, look for connections to the texts above.

Exodus 3: 10-11

וַעֲתָה לֵךְ וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֹהִים מִי אֲנִכִּי כִּי אֵלֶךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:

(10) Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt." **(11)** But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?"

Exodus 4: 10

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֹהִים בֵּי ה' לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנִכִּי גַם מִתְּמול־גַּם מִשְׁלֹשׁ גַּם מֵאֵז דְּבַרְךָ אֶל־עַבְדְּךָ כִּי
קִבְדִּיפָה וְכִבְדִּי לְשׁוֹן אֲנִכִּי:

(10) But Moses said to the LORD, "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

Avivah Zornberg, (*Moses: A Human Life*, "Moses in the Family" p. 112-113)

In the wake of Freud and other contemporary thinkers, Julia Kristeva claims that language originates in an experience of loss, the loss of "an essential object that happens to be, in the final analysis, my mother." [...] In Moses' early life, his mother is lost, briefly retrieved, and then replaced by another mother, complete with a new tongue. Never does he speak of this loss, or of the double loss, as God urges him back to the brothers and the mother tongue of a primal existence. Only when he speaks about speech, reflexively mourning what he is not, does the world of the symbolic begin to open up for him.

Reflection Questions:

- What might Moses be afraid of?
- How do you understand the symbolism of the "heaviness of mouth" to which he refers?
- How does Avivah Zornberg's interpretation complexify and enhance your reading?
- What role does God play; how does God use authority here?
- Begin to place yourself in this story. How might you react if you were called to play such a role?

Text Cluster III: God and Authority

Rabbi Sacks (Shemot 2017/5777)

The heroes of the Bible are not figures from Greek or any other kind of myth. They are not people possessed of a sense of destiny, determined from an early age to achieve fame. They do not have what the Greeks called megalopsychia, a proper sense of their own worth, a gracious and lightly worn superiority. They did not go to Eton or Oxford. They were not born to rule. They were people who doubted their own abilities. There were times when they felt like giving up. Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah and Jonah reached points of such despair that they prayed to die. They became heroes of the moral life against their will. There was work to be done – God told them so – and they did it. It is almost as if a sense of smallness is a sign of greatness.

Exodus 4: 11-12

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו מִי שֵׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם אֹי מִי־שׁוֹם אֵלֶם אֹי חֲרָשׁ אֹי פֶקֶח אֹי עִוֵּר הֲלֹא אֲנִכִּי ה':
וְעַתָּה לֵךְ וְאֲנִכִּי אֶהְיֶה עִם־פִּיךָ וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר:

(11) And the LORD said to him, "Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? **(12)** Now go, and I will be with you as you speak and will instruct you what to say."

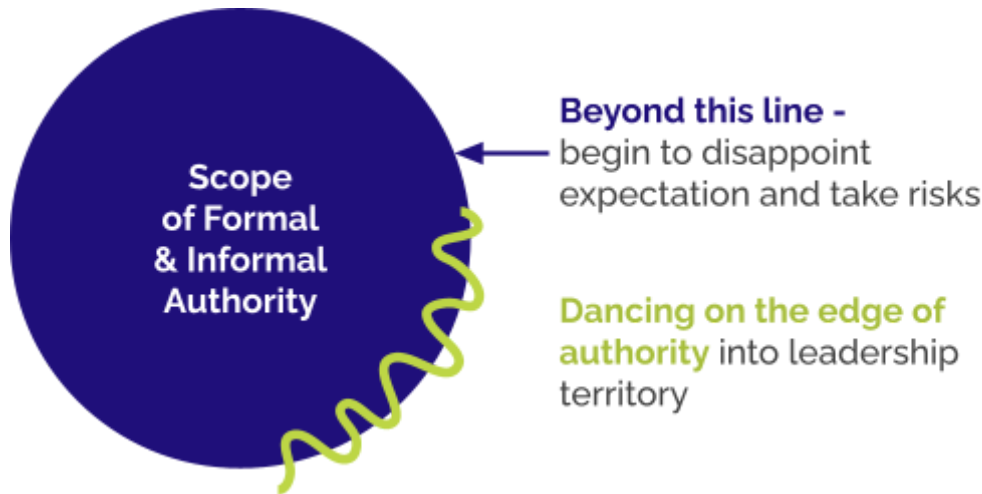
Reflection Questions:

- God is asking Moses to do something hugely risky here, assuming a position of authority and exerting leadership. How does God respond to Moses' fear?
- What does Rabbi Sacks imply about Moses' relationship to his own authority? What do you think the relationship is between a person's sense of her own authority and her ability to exert leadership? What is Rabbi Sacks implying about that relationship?
- One might interpret God's reaction to Moses as providing Direction, Protection, and Order. How might God/religion/spirituality provide these in your life?
- What do we gain when we authorize others over us? What do we lose?

INTEGRATION & PRACTICE

Introduce concept in big group

Give individual time for activity, then get back into Hevruta to discuss



The “Scope of Formal & Informal Authority” represents the roles we are expected to play - in our personal and professional lives. When we’re hired for a job, the job description would go inside that circle. When we play the role as it is expected, we are within our scope. Leadership, though, requires dancing at the edge of what is expected, in order to create change. Before we can dance at the edge, it’s helpful to know what is expected of us, what the status quo looks like.

Leadership Exercise:

Spend a few minutes working alone and then partner with a Hevruta to discuss the questions

- 1.** Draw a circle on a piece of paper. Think about an area of your life where you might want to make a change - professionally or personally. Then fill in your Scope of Authority circle: what are all of the expectations of how you should behave?
- 2.** Next, think about a change you want to make. What would that involve doing that is not expected of you? Whom might that disappoint? What feels “wobbly” about it? What might you need in order to be able to try that change?
- 3.** Share your Scope of Authority with your Hevruta. Discuss the following questions:
 - How has your Scope of Authority served as a resource to help protect and direct you? How might it be constraining you?
 - Spend a moment thinking about the restriction authority might have on your life. Where do you meet authority constraints in your head and in the day to day?

4. Large group debrief: Share core themes and patterns and insights that emerged from your small group discussion.

Closing Circle

Big group or in Hevruta

So much of what we know has been taught to us by authority figures. Some of what they taught us must be constantly reinforced. Some of it must be let go of for us to keep growing. As we close this session, please share something that you either:

- A. Learned
- B. Re-Learned, or
- C. Un-learned in this experience.

TAKE-AWAY EXERCISE

In big group

It is inevitable that we will assume an authority role in our lives; in our families, jobs, communities, and societies at large. We will be in a position where we are responsible for providing direction, protection, and order for others, and for maintaining the status quo and equilibrium of the group. This role will inevitably trigger our feelings towards authority. It is important to remember that authority is necessary and ultimately beneficial to society, if it is not abused. It is also important to remember that there is other work, leadership work, that challenges the status quo, that we will want to step into, whether we are in an authority position or not.

Think about the figures in your authority circle that you drew above. Our dependencies on authority affect what we give voice to, and what we refrain from giving voice to. Just as Moses's ability to express himself was influenced by his earliest relationships with authority, so too our abilities to be authorized, to step up and give voice, are influenced by our earliest relationships with authority. As you leave this session, try to pay attention to what you give voice to and what you refrain from giving voice to. We encourage you to make observations about your attraction to and dependency on authorities and the times when you feel authority as a constraint. Make a record of this. It may begin to tell you about your attachments and how you might begin to grow within and beyond them.

UNIT LESSON SUMMARY:

Authority provides us much-needed direction, protection, and order. Our attitudes towards authority are formed early in life.
Authority is a necessary tool for providing stability.