LEADERSHIP FORMATION THROUGH MENTORING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jerusha Drummond

Since mentoring involves relationships, mentors support, encourage, and teach out of mutual respect for mentees (Freeks, 2016). Leaders drive change through urgency, creating a significant difference in the life of their followers (Kotter, 1996; Taylor, Cocklin, Brown, & Wilson-Evered, 2011). Leadership formation is assisting others in creating leadership competence (Van Gelder, 2009). The Old Testament consists of men, women, kings, prophets, judges, and military leaders, who followed the plan of God mentoring and leading people that he ordained to use in his kingdom. The Spirit of the Lord initiated the mentoring duties by Moses, Elijah, and Deborah (Deut. 31:8-9; 2 Kings 2:9-13; Judg. 4:3-7). God instructed Moses to make Joshua his successor over the people of Israel and lead them to the Promised Land (Num. 27:18-19). God told Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:16). Deborah’s prophecy from God was to deploy Barak and his troops to fight Jabin’s army (Judg. 4:6-7).

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament, mentoring is establishing a God-ordained relationship with a person(s) who will assume the mentor’s spirit of prophecy to execute the will of God (Fountain, 2004; Freeks, 2016). Leadership resembles mentoring since people submit to following the leader anticipating that they will become involved with a transformational relationship that supports the organization’s needs (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Scandura & Williams, 2004). The mentors or leaders are unique people who support, inspire, and teach those that they lead creating leadership formation in future leaders (Freeks, 2016; Van Gelder, 2009).

The Old Testament mentors or leaders sought followers that God chose to support the plans of his kingdom. In Exodus 27:18-23, God called Moses to transfer his...
mentoring spirit as the leader of Israel to Joshua. God told Elijah to anoint Elisha to the status of a prophet as his replacement (1Kings 19:16). God delivered the prophecy to Deborah that Barak followed defeating the Canaanite enemy who was oppressing the children of Israel (Judg. 4:1-9). This article will examine Old Testament mentoring as relational and transformational, probe the attributes of mentoring relationships of three mentors or leaders (Moses, Elijah, and Deborah), and explore the leadership attributes of their mentees or followers.

II. OLD TESTAMENT MENTORING IS RELATIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL

Since mentoring is about relationships, mentors support, encourage, and teach out of mutual respect for mentees (Freeks, 2016). Leadership and mentoring shape the ideas, actions, passion, and achievements of followers through emerging events or “quick-studies of daily situations” (Gibson, Tesone, & Buchalski, 2000, p. 60). Leaders help their followers through leadership formation; hence, leadership formation is assisting others in creating leadership competence (Van Gelder, 2009). Mentoring is a nurturing, intentional, insightful, and encouraging practice that validates a person’s ability to lead (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012).

Mentors cultivate relationships as supporters, encouragers, and teachers to those less experienced. Organizations produce these liaisons of supporters, encouragers, and teachers through “interpersonal relationships” requiring the mentor to instruct, inspire, nurture, promote and retain integrity in their relationships (Alcocer, 2019; Freeks, 2016; Gibson et al., 2000). Mentoring is a form of teaching and its approach is uncovered in the Old Testament (Ex. 4:28-31; 18:14-26; 24:13; Num. 27:18; Deut. 3:28; 31:7; 34:9-12; 1 Kings 2:1-9; 2 Kings 2:9; 2 Ch 2:10-15;). Most importantly, mentors give mentees feedback (Freeks, 2016) fostering growth and improvement. Leaders are vital for shaping their followers for the impending work that fosters change in organizations.

Leaders drive change through urgency, creating a significant difference in the life of their followers (Kotter, 1996; Taylor et al., 2011). Transformation requires a different concept and objective in conduct, approach, and attitude (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). The authors believe that leaders must perceive change as a developing process (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). They advise us that change requires motivating leaders who understand the organization’s need to change (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Change comes in three areas: “developmental, transitional, and transformational” (Anderson & Anderson, 2011, p. 53). The developmental change improves the organization (Anderson & Anderson, 2011). The transitional change removes the old design through reorganization, mergers, or new products and technology (Anderson & Anderson, 2011). The transformational change causes a shift in the “mindset, approaches, and methodology” (Anderson & Anderson, 2011, p. 54). Transformational leaders influence and inspire followers to change to a future vision that is relational.
The Relational Mentor

As supporters, encouragers, and teachers, mentors have excellent listening skills, communication skills (both written and verbal), perseverance, strength, dependability, and poise during stressful times. While mentors listen and question; their role is to help the mentee acquire specialized views and perspectives (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012). Mentors interpret mission and vision, advocate for the mentee’s interest, and consult as a coach to help the mentee reach his or her desired goal (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012).

Mentors help mentees develop their goals through a concise plan that may include assisting mentees in solving real-life problems and making wise decisions (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012). Lewis and Kourdi (2012) also believe that mentors counsel and motivate mentees, offering a wealth of wisdom and knowledge needed in the mentees’ personal and professional life. Hence, they add that mentors must have expertise in their occupation or status and have the ability to initiate innovation (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012).

The Bible does not use the term mentor; however, the three study characters (Moses, Elijah, and Deborah) have the attributes of mentors and leaders. Freeks (2016) believes that God uses mentoring to help mentees in their personal and professional growth and development (Deut. 34:9, 2 Kings 2:19-21, Judg. 4:16). God provides the skills and knowledge for mentors and mentees through their relationship with him (Freeks, 2016). In the Old Testament, mentors help mentees discover characteristics that support their fullest potential (Freeks, 2016). The Old Testament consists of men, women, kings, prophets, judges, and military leaders, who followed the plan of God to mentor and lead people that he ordained to use in his kingdom (Deut. 34:9; Judg. 4; 7:15; 1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Kings 2; 1 Chron. 15:6; 29:9; Neh. 12:24; Isa. 6; Jer. 1; Ezra 1:3). There were many Old Testament leaders from Abraham in the book of Genesis to Malachi in the book of Malachi who served as leader/mentor. Moses and Elijah were prominent leaders in the Old Testament. As a leader, Moses was a shepherd (Ex. 3:1), and a prophet in Israel (Deut. 18:18). Elijah’s leadership role was serving as Israel’s prophet (1 Kings 17, 18, 19; 2 Kings 1:2-17; 2 Chron. 21:12-15). Deborah’s leadership roles were different from either Moses or Elijah. Deborah was a leader who served in three leadership positions as a prophetess (Judg. 4:4,5), judge (Judg. 4:4-14), and military strategist (Judg. 4:6-7,9). Skidmore-Hess and Skidmore-Hess (2012) theorize that Deborah had spiritual and political leadership qualities like no other female recorded in biblical literature.

Moses, Elijah, and Deborah are paradigms of relational Old Testament mentors. They were in a relationship with their followers and mentees. Mentoring is wisdom teaching from Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpens iron” (Thompson & Murchinson, 2018). Moses mentored Joshua supporting, encouraging, and teaching him to lead Israel to the Promised Land (Deut. 34:9). Elijah inspired and taught Elisha, who assumed Elijah’s ministry (2 Kings 19:16). Deborah motivated and supported Barak to fight Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army (Judg. 4:7). In addition to their duties as prophets, the three
leaders were successful in mentoring at least one person who would execute the will of God. Mentoring is one person giving advice and analysis in a reciprocal relationship helping another coordinate their ideas and methodologies to succeed in life (Thompson & Murchinson, 2018). Both leader and mentor are suitable idioms for Moses, Elijah, and Deborah.

The mentor’s role is to pray and leave the welfare of their mentees in the hands of God (Litfin, 1982). Litfin (1982) adds that leaders must (1) know the group needs; (2) understand what the group can and cannot accomplish; (3) encourage and inspire the group to implement tasks; and (4) help the group move toward maturity in Christ. Moses had a personal relationship with God (Zucker, 2012). He was successful in nurturing and encouraging Joshua to follow God’s teachings, accomplish God’s plans, and move the people toward maturity in God. Joshua, a trusted friend, was Moses’ military general and mentee. Moses corrected Joshua twice applying wisdom and knowledge. When Moses returned from the mountain, Joshua informed him of war in the camp during the celebration of the molten calf (Ex. 32:17). On another occasion, Joshua rebuked two men for prophesying in the camp (Num. 11:27-29). Moses countered by informing his mentee that the sound of the campsite was victory and celebration (Ex. 32:18), and the second correction was that it would please him if all the Lord’s people were prophets (Num. 11:29).

God apprised Moses that his successor was Joshua (Num. 27:18; Deut. 31:7-8). He encouraged and strengthened his mentee, following God’s command to make Joshua the next leader of the people of Israel. Moses implored Joshua to maintain strength, courage, and composure in crisis (Deut. 31:7).

Angel (2009) recognizes parallels in the relationship of Moses and Joshua. First, Moses and Joshua thought that if God killed his people, God’s reputation was at risk among the surrounding nations. They appealed to God that his great name was in jeopardy (Num. 14:13-18; Josh. 7:7-9). Second, Moses and Joshua, standing on holy ground, heard God’s voice. They listened and communicated with God to solve life’s problems. God told Moses and Joshua on two different occasions to take off their sandals (Ex 3:5; Josh. 5:15). Angel (2009) says, “Shoes symbolize human involvement in the world” (p.151). Angel (2009) implies that Joshua removed his sandal from one foot since he maintained a prophetic relationship with Moses, his mentor (Josh. 5:15). Whereas Moses “used God’s continued supervision with human efforts at cultivating a real society” (Angel, 2009, p. 151). God spiritually led Moses as his mentor, so he removed both shoes (Angel, 2009).

As God informed Moses of his successor, he also told Elijah to anoint Elisha to become a prophet (1Kings 19:16). Zucker (2012) posits that Elijah mentored Elisha for six years and more, developing a relationship that allowed Elisha to mirror the miracles of Elijah. Elisha’s heroic exploits are similar to his mentor’s. Elisha multiplied the widow’s oil (2 Kings 4:1-7; 1 Kings 17:10-16) and restored a Shunammite woman’s son from death (2 Kings 4:32-35; 1 Kings 17:17-22). Elijah intentionally nurtured his relationship with Elisha. He asked Elisha to request a final act before he left earth (2 Kings 2:9). Elijah realized that Elisha needed to obtain his spirit to achieve miracles (2
Kings 2:9). He understood that Elisha would receive his request for a double portion of his spirit by witnessing his transition into heaven (vv. 9-11). Elisha moved toward maturity in God when he picked up Elijah’s cloak, called on Elijah’s God, and demonstrated the work of Elijah as the next prophet (v. 14).

Relational mentors move their mentees toward maturing in Christ (Litfin, 1982). Good mentors make wise decisions encouraging and inspiring mentees through examples of modeling (Zucker, 2012). Elisha demonstrated the perseverance, and strength of his mentor by shadowing and communicating with Elijah from Gilgal to the Jordan river (2 Kings 2:1-9). After Elijah departed in a whirlwind into heaven, Elisha accepted Elijah’s mantle and called on the name of the God of Elijah (2 Kings 2:14).

Deborah followed the work of Joshua leading Israel when there was a void in Israel's leadership (Mock, 2015). Deborah’s relations with God was respected by the people of Israel who would seek her as Israel’s judge (Judg. 4:5). She conveys God’s authoritative word to the people of Israel as their prophetess (Pierce, 2018). As judge and prophet of Israel, she called Barak to lead the army to battle (Pierce, 2018). Pierce (2018) and Hertzberg (2013) perceive that Barak respected the words of Deborah to fight the Canaanite army, and he asked Deborah to accompany him to battle.

Herzberg (2013) sees a parallel between the leadership of Deborah and Moses. Both leaders defeated their enemies through God’s word, and both leaders formed excellent mentoring relationships with their mentees. Moses called his mentee, Joshua, to fight with Amalek (Ex. 17: 8-16). Deborah and Barak led the Israeli army to defeat the Canaanite army at Mount Tabor (Judg. 4). Deborah confirmed the word of God to Barak that he might maintain his composure in crisis (v. 14). God discomfited the enemy and his chariots by the sword (v. 15). Herzberg (2013) asserts that God was in the fight with Moses when he parted the Red Sea drowning the Egyptian’s army (Ex. 14:22-27), and God was in the battle with Deborah and Barak killing the Canaanite men by the sword (v. 16).

Deborah, the relational leader, knew the needs of the people (Judg. 4:4). She knew what Barak was able to accomplish with God’s help (v. 6). Deborah encouraged and inspired Barak to gather the army to defeat the enemy (vv. 7-8). She inspired Barak to implement the word of God (v. 9). Deborah and Barak used their relational skills to sing a victory song about God as a warrior for his people Israel (Judg. 5).

Moore (2007) explains that mentoring in the Old Testament engaged the spirit of the mentor. The Spirit of the Lord is a segment of the mentoring mission of Moses, Elijah, and Deborah (Deut. 31:8-9; 2 Kings 2:9-13; Judg. 4:3-7). God’s response to mentoring is to transfer the spirit of the mentor to the mentee. Joshua received Moses spirit of leadership (Deut. 34:9), and Elisha received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit to accomplish miracles (2 Kings 2:9). In Deborah’s story, the Lord went ahead of Deborah and Barak, giving them the victory defeating Sisera and all his chariots and army (Judg. 4:15). In that incident, God subdued the enemy of the children of Israel (vv. 23-24).

There are several benefits to relational mentoring. If the mentor enjoys his or her role, he and she will gain the satisfaction of leading and guiding others to achieve their goal (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012). The mentor will develop his or her skills helping the
mentees to reach high performance in their ability as leaders. There is a strong personal bond in relational mentoring (Lewis & Kourdi, 2012). The mentor and mentee experience growth together as transformational leaders through the teaching, motivating, nurturing, and supporting process.

*The Transformational Leader*

The transformational leader produces a change in the organization by causing followers to go beyond the anticipated goal (Strauss, Griffin, & Rafferty, 2009; Taylor et al., 2011). Through vision and inspiration, transformational leaders have a positive effect on their followers’ efficacy or preferably their followers’ ability to implement tasks (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Strauss, Griffin, & Rafferty, 2009). Theorists agree that the transformational leader is influential and charismatic displaying moral conduct that people do not hesitate to follow (Schneider & Schröder, 2012; Strauss et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011).

Moses, a transformational leader, made changes in his leadership by relying on Jethro, his father-in-law, who served as a mentor to him (Ex. 18:14-26). Jethro counseled Moses to use the people to help him with his judging tasks (v. 19). Moses chose able men from Israel assigning them the job of judging the people (vv. 25-26). On another occasion, when the people complained, Moses cried to the Lord for help, and the Lord gave him 70 elders to assist him (Num. 11:12). Moore (2007) postulates that Moses mentored 70 elders who would help with his prophetic duties (Num. 11:16-17) as he tutored the children of Israel as a father (Deut. 6:7-9; 20-25; 11:19-21; 29:9-15). Moses developed a relationship with the people that he led nurturing, encouraging, and teaching them to obey the law of God (Deut. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

God called Moses to commission Joshua to take the leadership position amid the congregation (Num. 27:15-23). Moses placed some of his honor on Joshua, who had the spirit of leadership on him (v. 18). Moses laid his hands on Joshua, filling him with the spirit of wisdom to lead Israel’s people (Deut. 34:9). Joshua began leading the people so that they would obey him as their transformational leader (v. 20). As a transitional leader, Joshua did not compromise but followed the voice of God, successfully leading a different generation to inhabit the Promised Land (Josh. 1-24).

God called Elijah, a transformational leader, to be His prophet (1 Kings 17:18, 24). Freeks (2016) describes Elijah as a wanderer who would travel from one city to the next as God led him (2 Kings 2:1-6). Moore (2007) mentions that the Scripture placed Elijah in the cannon without reference to a father (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah relied on Father God as his source of strength. Elijah turned the heart of the people back to God with a victory on Mount Carmel where the fire of God consumed the altar and all that was on it and the water around it (1 Kings 18:37, 38). After Elijah’s victory on Mount Carmel, Jezebel vowed to kill him, so he ran to a mountain complaining to God that he was the only prophet left (1 Kings 18, 19). God strengthen Elijah initiating a God transformation by sending Elijah to anoint Jehu as king and Elisha to succeed him as a prophet (1 Kings 19:15).
Elisha, a change agent, was called to develop as a prophet, with a servant’s heart making the life of the people and his surroundings better through the power of God (2 Kings 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Elisha was attentive, patient, resilient, and reliable fostering an excellent rapport with Elijah referring to Elijah as his father (2 Kings 2:12). The transformational leadership between Elijah and Elisha illustrates the affinity that they enjoyed as prophets modeling a smooth succession to the next generation (Moore, 2007). Elijah used leadership formation through mentoring to assist Elisha in creating his leadership abilities to become the next prophet of God with a double portion of Elijah’s spirit (2 Kings 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

Deborah’s story is exceptional since she is a woman, prophetess, and the judge in Israel (Judg. 4:4-5). As a judge, she is a developmental leader who supervised Israel’s dilemma of anguish by Jabin, king of Canaan. Deborah attained a solution to enhance Israel’s oppression (Osherow, 2016) using her prophetic gift as prophetess and judge to transform Israel from defeat to success. As a woman in the Old Testament, Deborah is a transitional leader removing the old design of male leadership and developing a new model of female leadership. Osherow (2009) says that Deborah’s position as a judge was an “image of accord” because the people came to her for decisions (v. 5; p. 79). As Judge and deliverer of Israel, she was a liberator, who called the people to worship God (Judg. 5:2, 3, 9). The people of Israel credited Deborah and Barak with obedience to God’s word, and the land had rest for forty years (Judg. 5:2, 31). God’s victory over the Canaanites through Deborah and Barak was the final blow to the Canaanite nation (Merrill, Rooker, & Grisanti, 2011).

We do not know why in this period of Israel’s lifetime, the women (Deborah and Jael) had to enter the fight to defeat the Canaanites (Judg. 4:7, 18-22). Deborah did not hesitate to do what God ordained (v. 9). Barak would not fight unless Deborah accompanied the men into battle (v. 8). Even so, Deborah went with the ten thousand men and Barak to battle the Canaanites (v. 10).

III. MENTEES AND FOLLOWERS AS LEADERS

The aspiration for followers and mentees is to become leaders and mentors in their organizations or communities. Followers and mentees enjoy a relationship of mutual trust, that conveys personal development and advances productivity through support, encouragement, and teaching (Freeks, 2016; Ristic, Trifkovic, Ghinea, & Paravina, 2015). The leadership and mentoring quality manifested in Moses, Elijah, and Deborah were unmistakable in their mentees.

Joshua was victorious in the battle with Ai and Jericho because God told him to be strong and very courageous doing all that the Lord commanded (Josh. 1:6-7). God promised Joshua that he would prosper wherever he went (v. 7). God vowed to be with Joshua; God made the sun stand still over Gibeon until Joshua and his men won the battle against their enemies (Josh. 10:1-15). Joshua and the Israelites conquered the Southland and the Northland defeating the kings of the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Josh. 12:7-8). Joshua, like Moses, appointed
teams from the people of Israel to survey the land and give a report that he may consult the Lord (Josh. 18:4-10). God’s work through Moses yielded fruit in Joshua, who was a successful leader. Ristic et al. (2015) propose that the mentor’s accomplishments are evaluated through their mentees’ success stories. Joshua was a successful leader who was courageous and powerful, fulfilling the promise of God, defeating the enemies and inhabiting the Promised Land (Josh. 21:43-45). However, the Bible does not mention a successor to Joshua (Josh. 24).

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, and God granted his request (2 Kings 2:9). After Elijah’s translation into heaven by a whirlwind, Elisha implemented miracles healing the water of Jericho and pronouncing a curse on children who mocked him causing a female bear to maul forty-two of the youths (vv. 19-25). Elisha’s miracle cleaning the water at Jericho symbolizes not only a physical act but the spiritual work of the Holy Spirit cleaning the life of believers as an excellent example for modern-day mentors and leaders to follow (Nantenaina, Raveloharimisy, & McWilliams, 2015). Elisha delivered a widow and her two sons from creditors by multiplying the pot of oil which the widow used to sell and pay their debt (2 Kings 4:1-7). He accomplished a similar miracle as Elijah when he raised the Shunammite woman’s son from death (vv. 8-37). Elisha achieved many miracles with his double portion of Elijah’s spirit: purifying the pot of stew for the sons of the prophets, feeding one hundred men with twenty loaves of barley bread, healing Naaman’s leprosy, and causing the iron ax head to float to the top of the water (2 Kings 4, 5, 6).

Nantenaina et al. (2015) posit that Elisha saw needs in his community and acted to transform the people and his town. His leadership qualities were service, loyalty, confidence, nurturer, and encourager. Elisha stayed near Elijah’s side, watching how the prophet handled events that he may achieve greater miracles (Nantenaina et al., 2015). Nantenaina et al. (2015) believe that Elisha was a transformational leader for his community because he executed the miracles that provided needed help to the people and society through his faith in God.

Barak, a follower of Deborah, is a military leader who changed the status of his community by winning the battle against the Canaanites with the help of Deborah and Jael (Judg. 4:21-22). Barak heeded the words of Deborah the prophetess to deploy troops of ten thousand men at Mount Tabor to fight Jabin’s army (vv. 6-7). Barak and Deborah depended on the Lord to give them success in the battle against Sisera, commander in Jabin’s military (v. 9). The prophecy Barak received from Deborah was accurate about a woman (Jael), delivering the fatal blow to Sisera driving a peg into his temple while he was asleep (v. 21). Deborah and Barak celebrate with a song recognizing God as the victor and Deborah and Barak as collaborators (Judg. 5:12-13).

Mentee and follower thrive when they receive and act on the support, encouragement, and teaching of their mentors. The mentees in this article enjoyed a considerable resemblance with their mentors, received their spirit of wisdom to lead, pursued their mentor receiving leadership formation, and obeyed the voice of the Lord in their life. Ristic et al. (2015) state that it is the responsibility of the mentee to accept
the support, encouragement, and teaching of their mentors assuming responsibility for their personal and professional development as mentees or followers

IV. Conclusion

Mentors are intentional when encouraging, nurturing, and confirming those that are less experienced in achieving their desired competence to lead others. Leaders influence willing followers through concepts, behavior, emotion, and actions that foster the vision of the organization. Leaders and mentors share similar traits that help their followers and mentees succeed. Leaders and mentors are teachers with vision, trust, commitment, wisdom, expertise, and sound counseling skills that ensure those who follow will improve their personal and professional development. Leaders and mentors use leadership formation to help those that they mentor to develop the leadership skills that provide excellent performance in their chosen occupation or status in life.

The mentoring relationship is visible in the Old Testament through many leaders or mentors. God called the prophets, developed, directed, and mentored many of Israel's men and women, including Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, and Deborah. Joshua assumed the spirit and leadership quality of Moses using strength and courage to finish the assignment that God gave him leading Israel to the Promised Land (Josh. 14). God transferred Elijah's spirit to Elisha who assumed the prophetic duties of his prophet father, Elijah (2 Kings 2:9-25). Deborah was successful as an encourager, visionary inspirer, and the leader for Barak’s army (Judg. 4). Following the voice of God, Deborah and Barak brought success to Israel defeating the Canaanites (Judg. 5:2). Moses, Elijah, and Deborah were leaders and mentors who led their mentees successfully because the Spirit of God assisted the mentor and mentees in developing their abilities as leaders.

About the Author

Jerusha Drummond is a doctoral student (EdD degree) in the Christian Leadership Program at the Rawlings Divinity School, Liberty University. Currently, she serves as an associate minister, Director of Missions, and Sunday school teacher at Reedy River Missionary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. She is married to Rev. William Drummond.

Jerusha Drummond

Email: jhdrummo@gmail.com
V. REFERENCES


