

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**K**nowing that he is about to die, Moses turns to God and asks him to appoint a successor: "Moses said to the Lord, 'May the Lord, God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.'" (Num. 27-15:17).

It is a farsighted, selfless gesture. As Rashi comments: "This is to tell the praise of the righteous -- that when they are about to leave this world, they put aside their personal needs and become preoccupied with the needs of the community." Great leaders think about the long-term future. They are concerned with succession and continuity. So it was with Moses.

God tells Moses to appoint Joshua, 'a man in whom is the spirit'. He gives him precise instructions about how to arrange the succession: "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Elazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him... At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in." (Num. 27:18-21).

There are three actions involved here: [1] Moses was to lay his hand on Joshua, [2] have him stand before Elazar the priest and the entire assembly, and [3] give him "some of your authority [me-hodecha]". What is the significance of this threefold process? What does it tell us about the nature of leadership in Judaism?

There is also a fascinating midrash about the first and third of these gestures: "And lay your hand on him -- this is like lighting one candle with another. Give him some of your authority -- this is like emptying one vessel into another." (Bamidbar Rabbah 21:15)

Beneath these enigmatic words is a fundamental truth about leadership.

In *L'esprit Des Lois* (1748), Montesquieu, one of the great political philosophers of the Enlightenment, set out his theory of the "separation of powers" into three branches: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Behind it lay a concern for the future of

freedom if power were concentrated in a single source: "Liberty does not flourish because men have natural rights, or because they revolt if their leaders push them too far. It flourishes because power is so distributed and so organised that whoever is tempted to abuse it finds legal restraints in his way."

Montesquieu's source was not the Bible -- but there is, in a verse in Isaiah, a strikingly similar idea: "For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our law-giver; the Lord is our king; he will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)

This tripartite division can also be found in Devarim/Deuteronomy 17-18 in the passage dealing with the various leadership roles in ancient Israel: the king, the priest and the prophet. The sages later spoke about "three crowns" -- the crowns of Torah, priesthood and kingship. Stuart Cohen, who has written an elegant book on the subject, *The Three Crowns*, notes that "what emerges from the [biblical] texts is not democracy throughout the political system, but a distinct notion of power-sharing at its highest levels. Neither Scripture nor early rabbinic writings express any sympathy whatsoever for a system of government in which a single body or group possesses a monopoly of political authority."

The three-fold process through which Joshua was to be inducted into office had to do with the three types of leadership. Specifically the second stage -- "Have him stand before Elazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence" -- had to do with the fact that Moses was not a priest. His successor had to be formally recognised by the representative of the priesthood, Elazar the High Priest.

Power and influence are often thought of as being the same kind of thing: those who have power have influence and vice versa. In fact, though, they are quite different. If I have total power and then decide to share it with nine others, I now have only one-tenth of the power I had before. If I have a certain measure of influence and then share it with nine others, I do not have less. I have more. Instead of one person radiating this influence, there are now ten. Power works by division, influence by multiplication.

Moses occupied two roles. He was the functional equivalent of a king. He made the key decisions relating to the people: how they should be organised, the route they were to take on their journey, when and with whom they should engage in war. But he was also the greatest of the prophets. He spoke the

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word of God.

A king had power. He ruled. He made military, economic and political decisions. Those who disobeyed him faced the possible penalty of death. A prophet had no power whatsoever. He commanded no battalions. He had no way of enforcing his views. But he had massive influence. Today we barely remember the names of most of Israel's and Judah's kings. But the words of the prophets continue to inspire by the sheer force of their vision and ideals. As Kierkegaard once said: When a king dies, his power ends; when a prophet dies, his influence begins.

Moses was to confer both roles on Joshua as his successor. "Lay your hand on him" means, give him your role as a prophet, the intermediary through whom God's word is conveyed to the people. To this day we use the same word, *semicha* (laying on of hands), to describe the process whereby a rabbi ordains his disciples. "Give him some of your authority [*me-hodecha*]" refers to the second role. It means, invest him with the power you hold as a king.

We now understand the midrash. Influence is like lighting one candle with another. Sharing your influence with someone else does not mean you have less; you have more. When we use the flame of a candle to light another candle, the first is not diminished. There is now, simply, more light.

Transferring power, though, is like emptying one vessel into another. The more power you give away, the less you have. Moses' power ended with his death. His influence, though, remains to this day.

Judaism has an ambivalent attitude towards power. It is necessary. Without it, in the words of Rabbi Hanina, deputy High Priest, "people would eat one another alive" (*Avot* 3:2). But Judaism long ago recognised that (to quote Lord Acton), power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Influence -- the relation of prophet to people, teacher to disciple -- is altogether different. It is a non-zero-sum game. Through it, both teacher and disciple grow. Both are enhanced.

Moses gave Joshua his power and his influence. The first was essential to the political and military tasks ahead. But it was the second that made Joshua one of the great figures of our tradition.

Influence is simply more enduring than power. *Covenant and Conversation 5777* is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## Wein Online

In the midst of the sadness and angst that envelops us yet here in Israel and throughout the entire Jewish world, the story of Pinchas, the righteous zealot, rewarded by Heaven for his act of zealotry and violence, intrudes. We are still reeling from the killings and rockets and losses that we have so recently suffered. So, what are we to make of this most puzzling incident recorded for us in our holy Torah?

The Talmud teaches us that it was only through miraculous Heavenly interventions that Pinchas was able to slay the Midianite princess and the Leader of the tribe of Shimon and escape with his own life still intact. And the fact that the Lord, so to speak, extends His Divine hand of friendship, priesthood, peace and position to Pinchas, certainly shows God's acquiescence to Pinchas' act.

Yet the Talmud and Jewish tradition are of the opinion that only Pinchas' act of zealotry is to be admired. All other acts of unilateral zealotry in Jewish society in later generations are to be shunned. The prophet Elijah, who in Jewish tradition is identified somehow with Pinchas, is chastised by Heaven to moderate his zealotry and despair regarding the acknowledged evils of Jewish behavior in his time. Instead, he is assigned to be present at all circumcision ceremonies, Pesach sederim and to be the prophet of Jewish redemption and reconciliation.

He becomes the witness to Jewish loyalty and continuity. In effect, his zealotry is to be rechanneled into positive energy and eternal goodness. Elijah becomes thereby the fulfillment of God's commitment to Pinchas of peace, nobility and eternal greatness. It is this redirection of zealous energy to positive force that lies at the heart of God's commitment to Pinchas.

The Talmud teaches us that we cannot exist as human beings in this world by attempting to eliminate completely our negative instincts -- our *yetzer hara*. Our task, rather, is to redirect those instincts and forces that define us as human beings into positive and productive activities and behavior.

One of the fundamental weaknesses of other faiths has been their attempt to completely negate the natural impulses that are part of all human nature. Celibacy and long states of meditation are not the tools of lasting spiritual enhancement and human continuity. Engaging our instincts and energy and channeling them into positive projects and holy endeavors is the wish of the Torah.

The zealotry of Pinchas and Elijah should be

exploited for good causes -- the priesthood and public service, compassion for others and a sense of Jewish unity, eternity and holy mission. It is the transformation of Pinchas from the man of violence to the man of peace that is the message of the Torah in this week's parsha. The story of Pinchas is recorded for us in the Torah to teach us that such transformations are possible and indeed necessary for the ultimate good of the Jewish people and humanity generally. The Jewish story is that Pinchas becomes Elijah and Elijah becomes the harbinger of Jewish redemption and eternity. ©2017 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

### RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

## Shabbat Shalom

"Do battle against the Midianites and smite them. They are your enemies because of the plot which they plotted against you concerning the incident involving Pe'or and the incident involving Kozbi the daughter of the Prince of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague in the incident involving Pe'or" [Num. 25:17–18]. Why did Pinchas kill Kozbi? Was it because of her immoral sexual seduction of an Israelite, Zimri ben Salou, or because she and her Midianite clan worshipped the idol Pe'or? Rashi (ad loc.) is aware of the ambiguity of the verse, and suggests that the end-goal of the Midianites, and the reason for which they sent their daughters to tempt the Israelite men, was to get the Israelites to worship Pe'or.

And, in fact, there does seem to be a strong linkage between blatant sexual immorality among Jew and gentile, and worship of Pe'or as the mother of all idolatries. But what exactly is the central nature of the transgression here? Sexual immorality between Jew and gentile, or Pe'or idolatry?

I would argue that a careful reading of Pinchas' act clearly emphasizes a fusion of two intermingled transgressions. In last week's Torah portion, the introduction to the story of public cohabitation begins:

"And the Israelites dwelt in Shittim, and began to whore after the daughters of Moab. And it happened that the Israelite nation served their idols...and Israel became joined to Ba'al Pe'or; the anger of God waxed hot against Israel" [ibid., v. 1–3].

What was the sin? Was it whoring, or the idolatry of Pe'or? Clearly, it was both together! This notion of the fusion of sins appears in our rabbinic commentaries. Bil'am is identified as "ben Beor" (ibid., 22:5) which might be identified with Pe'or, son of the idol Pe'or. And when the narrative continues to describe how "Balak took Bil'am to the top of Mount Pe'or" (ibid., 23:28), Rashi comments, "Balak was a

great magician, and he saw that the Israelites would eventually be punished because of Pe'or," which apparently applies to idolatry.

However, when the Talmud describes the evil counsel that Bil'am offered the nations who wished to vanquish Israel, the picture presented is one of sexual seduction by the young gentile women [Sanhedrin 106a]. It would seem that the sin was an idolatry linked to sexual abandon, both transgressions joined together.

In order to truly understand this, as well as to understand the idolatrous nature of our own society today, we must attempt to understand the nature of Pe'or idolatry. The Mishnah [Sanhedrin 7:6] teaches that Pe'or was worshipped by defecating in front of his graven image, the kind of "appetizing" religious cult which one would think hardly could attract masses of adherents.

Yet apparently Pe'or was very popular, at least for Midianites and Moabites. Yes, defecation is a perfectly normal human function, and the individual who relieves himself genuinely feels relieved! Hence, goes this thought, that is exactly how god is to be served! "Do whatever is natural to do, do whatever makes you feel good".

Is this not merely a cultural precursor to much of contemporary, postmodern, ego-centric, hedonistic thought toward life?! Discipline and consistency have become the "hobgoblin of little minds," and self-expression takes precedence over duty to family, to country, and to ideals. It is a mindset that grants individuals the right not only to their own opinion but also to make up their own facts.

This is the very antithesis of the Biblical directive (at the predawn of human history in the Garden of Eden) for self-control and self-limitation – not eating forbidden fruit and defining good and evil based on God's objective Divine will, not on one's subjective, instinctive desires.

Pe'or denies absolute morality. For Pe'or, the human is no different from animal; he is a creature of instinct, who may defecate publicly just as animals defecate publicly, and he has no innate responsibility – not even before God.

What was the greater crime, worshipping Pe'or or indulging in public fornication? In truth, they are one and the same. Pe'or teaches that if one feels like fornicating, one fornicates when and with whom one wishes to do it. After all, sex has nothing to do with love and sanctity, and everything to do with a natural physical urge, much more in line with defecation than a sacred union.

Rabbinical voices such as Menachem Meiri (13th Century Spain) were absolutely correct: idolatry has less to do with theology and much to do with the "disgusting, immoral practices" of those who follow the teachings of the likes of Pe'or. Zimri ben Salou was not only expressing his desire; he was rebelling against

Moses, against God, and against the very foundation of Torah. ©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**A**fter being told that he will soon die, Moshe (Moses) asks God to appoint a successor so that the Jews “not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” (Numbers 27:17) God responds by telling Moshe to appoint Yehoshua (Joshua). In the words of the Torah, “take Yehoshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay thy hand upon him.” (Numbers 27:18)

One wonders why Moshe did not recognize that Yehoshua was his successor on his own. After all, the Torah had previously described Yehoshua as ministering to Moshe. (Numbers 11:28)

Rabbi David Silber argues that, in truth, Moshe did not want Yehoshua to succeed him. Moshe was a teacher par excellence who reached out to his people with extraordinary compassion and love. Yehoshua on the other hand, sees the world through a military lens where there is a clear delineation of right and wrong. Several examples underscore this difference.

Yehoshua leads the Jews in the war against Amalek. “And Moshe said to Yehoshua, choose us men and go fight with Amalek.” (Exodus 17:9) Interestingly, as Yehoshua battles Amalek, Moshe’s hands are raised in fervent prayer to God. (Rashi, Exodus 17:11)

When Moshe descends from Mt. Sinai, when the Jews worshipped the golden calf, Yehoshua meets him and tells him that he hears the noise of war in the camp. Moshe responds that he does not hear the voice of victory or defeat—rather he hears a tortured cry (kol anot). (Exodus 32:17,18) Yehoshua hears a war cry. Moshe, the teacher par excellence hears the angst of his people—nothing more than a painful calling out for help.

When Moshe is told that two men Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp, Yehoshua suggests that they be done away with. In Yehoshua’s words, “my Lord Moshe, shut them in (k'laim).” (Numbers 11:28). This is the language of the general. Moshe on the other hand, suggests that Eldad and Medad and all others be given the chance to prophesize. In Moshe’s words, “would that all the Lord’s people were prophets.” (Numbers 11:29)

In requesting an heir, Moshe couches his language using the terminology that the people need a shepherd. This was Moshe’s hope that the new leader be much like himself—a shepherd of Israel. He could not perceive that Yehoshua, a more warlike figure, was a suitable successor.

It is here that God tells Moshe to take Yehoshua “a man in whom is spirit and lay thy hand upon him.” God is telling Moshe that while Yehoshua,

at this point, lacks the characteristics of being a shepherd, if Moshe would but place his hands on his head teaching him his style of leadership, he would be endowed with spiritual teaching.

Rabbi Silber argues that not coincidentally, the Torah at its conclusion, when describing the death of Moshe, points out that “Yehoshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moshe had laid his hands upon him.” (Deuteronomy 34:9) In other words, Moshe had succeeded in teaching Yehoshua the values of the shepherd. The expression, placing his hands atop Yehoshua, means that Moshe had succeeded in transmitting to Yehoshua the vital qualities of a teacher who is soft, compassionate and sensitive.

Powerful leadership is one in which quiet tranquil compassion is at its base. And most important, the test of real leadership is the ability to leave a legacy, to transmit a value system to the next generation. No one lives forever. The test of success is whether one’s values and principles can transcend one’s lifetime into the next—as Moshe’s love, compassion and softness did with Yehoshua. ©2017 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

**RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG**

## TorahWeb

**P**inchas turned back Hashem’s wrath from upon B’nai Yisrael, when he was zealous, displaying Hashem’s zeal in their midst, and he was given Hashem’s covenant of peace (paraphrase of Bamidbar 25:11-12). Rashi interprets “beka’o -- when he was zealous” as “benokmo -- when he avenged”, emphasizing Pinchas’ action, i.e. killing Zimri and Cozbi (25:8, 14-15), rather than his zeal.

Toras Chaim (Sanhedrin 82a) explains that it was Pinchas’ anger which led him to act immediately when he saw the chilul Hashem. Had he waited until the sinful deed ended, his killing of the perpetrators would be an act of murder and a capital offense. Thus it was his zeal which enabled his vengeful act.

Perhaps it was Pinchas’ zeal itself which turned back Hashem’s anger. In effect, Pinchas’ anger substituted for the anger Hashem should have expressed (Rashi 25:11), thereby ending the anger and the plague (25:8).

Since zeal and anger can often be expressed inappropriately and lead to unwarranted divisiveness, Hashem gave Pinchas His covenant of peace.

One who cohabits with a gentile woman, zealots may kill him (ibid 81b). If the sinner is not killed by zealots, his punishment is kares (ibid 82a, based on Malachi 2:11-12). Even for zealots, the license to kill such a sinner is limited to a cases where the sin is committed publicly (b’farhesya) (Avodah Zara 36b).

The Ran (Sanhedrin 82a) suggests that the punishment of kares is also limited to when the sin is committed in public. It is the chilul Hashem, not the sinful act itself, which warrants kares. It was precisely the chilul Hashem which aroused Pinchas' ire.

The gemara (ibid 82a) interjects the story of the burning of Yehoyakim's skull in the middle of the discussions of zealots killing a public sinner. Ostensibly, it is an unrelated story, told by R' Chiya ben Avuya, whose previous statement deals with one who cohabits with a gentile woman. Perhaps there is a deeper connection than merely being stated by the same amora. Yehoyakim violated the laws of the Torah publicly (Yerushalmi Pe'ah 1:1). It is not the severity of the sin for which he is singled out, but the insolence to sin without shame (Rambam Hilchos Teshuva 3:11). In this way, Yehoyakim's public sin and gruesome punishment is related to one who cohabits publicly with a gentile woman, who is punished by kares if not killed by a zealot.

How should one react nowadays to one who sins publicly, pridefully, and without shame? Vengeful acts are unthinkable, forbidden and counterproductive. Egregious sinners were eliminated at a time of open miracles and clear Divine Providence (see the halacha of moridin, Avodah Zara 26b) to prevent others from being swayed by a small minority of sinners. Today, however, such actions would be viewed by the majority as outrageous thuggery. Vigilantism of this sort is counterproductive and prohibited (Chazon Ish Yoreh Deah 2:16).

While we dare not imitate Pinchas' actions, we also dare not ignore his emotional reaction. Equanimity in the face of chilul Hashem betrays a lack of zeal. In our analysis, it was the zeal itself which turned back Hashem's anger and stopped the plague. Our visceral reaction to public, shameless sin, especially in sexual relationships, such as those reacted to by Pinchas, should contain a measure of zealous outrage.

Zeal and anger, in word as in deed, can be expressed inappropriately and lead to unwarranted divisiveness. In striking a balance between zeal and apathy, we must pray to be given Hashem's covenant of peace in the spirit of Pinchas. ©2017 Rabbi M. Willig and TorahWeb.org

**DR. ARNOLD LUSTIGER**

## Vort from the Rav

**"**And one young male goat for a sin offering to the Lord." (Numbers 28:15)

The Talmud (Chullin 60b, quoted by Rashi on this verse) indicates that at the dawn of creation the sun and moon were of equal size, until the moon approached God and complained that two kings cannot wear one crown. In response, God shrunk the moon. Enigmatically, according to the Talmud, the goat sacrifice that we offer on Rosh Chodesh is an

atonement of sorts for God Himself for making the moon smaller. God's diminution of the moon (pegimas halevanah) is symbolic of the fact that He left creation incomplete. Homiletically interpreting the words as "a sin offering for God," the Talmud states that the Jewish people bring a sacrifice to atone, as it were, for the Holy One Blessed be He for not having completed the work of creation.

This imperfection is reflected in man's constant struggle with nature and its catastrophes. Nature's hostility to man is represented by pegimas halevanah. God wants man to rule and be victorious over nature; to do so, man himself must symbolically reverse pegimas halevanah, and thus become a partner with God in creation. Man is obliged to perfect what his Creator "impaired." Pegimas halevanah also represents the exile of the Divine Presence, reflected in Israel's own exile and the resultant persecutions. Physical reality and spiritual-historical existence both have suffered greatly on account of the dominion of the abyss, of chaos, and their fates parallel one another. As a result of the difficulties that He has caused man through both natural catastrophes and persecution, represented by pegimas halevanah, God requires an "atonement" on Rosh Chodesh. (Boston, 1967; Halakic Man, pp. 106-107) ©2017 Dr. A. Lustiger & torah.org

### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

## Tishbi will Answer

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit  
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**W**ith great anticipation we await the coming of the prophet Elijah as described by the prophet Malachei, as he will provide answers to all our questions in Jewish law and current questions to situations at hand. (Some say that Pinchas was the prophet Elijah). This is the meaning of the term "Teku", ("Tishbi Yetaretz Kushi'ot V'abayot")

For example, with reference to Jewish law, when collecting a debt, do we leave enough money so that the debtor would be able to subsist? When evaluating a person's debt to donate to the Beit Hamikdash, we always are cognizant and sensitive that the person who is donating has enough left over to subsist. Does this also apply to collecting debts as well?

The Talmud (Baba Mitziah 114a) decides this question by the words and opinion of the prophet Elijah who appeared and using one of the thirteen principals of derivation of the Torah, answered this question. (As an aside, his view was not accepted by all, and though it was accepted by the majority, it was not because he was a prophet but rather because he was equal or perhaps better in scholarship than the sages).

With reference to current situations at hand, Elijah would be able to adjudicate monetary disputes where the court of law could not and the money was

held in abeyance, or he would advise us whether something has been defiled, or whether a piece of meat that was left unattended (Basar Shenisaleim Min H'ayin) belonged to a Jew or non-Jew. As well, whether or not we could establish a meal on wine rather than just bread, or can we write Tefillin using the skin of a fish. These and similar questions the prophet Elijah would be able to answer in his role as a prophet, may that time come speedily. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

### RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

## RavFrand

*Transcribed by David Twersky*

*Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman*

In Parshas Pinchas, Rashi says that Moshe Rabbeinu now knew that he was not destined to go into Eretz Yisrael with the Jewish people and as such, he needed to make sure that they would have a proper leader following his passing. Rashi speaks about the altruism of Moshe Rabbeinu's request to the Almighty under these circumstances: "This is stated here to inform you of the praiseworthiness of the righteous. When they take their leave from the world, they put aside their own concerns, and deal with the concerns of the public." [Rashi on Bamidbar 27:15]

Moshe continues his request, delineating the desirable attributes of a worthy Jewish leader: "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and who shall bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd." [Bamidbar 27:16-17]

However, despite what Rashi wrote in pasuk 15, as quoted above, Rashi says something in his comment on the very next pasuk, which seems to contradict his earlier remarks about Moshe's altruism. Rashi writes in pasuk 16: "Once Moshe heard the Omnipresent say 'Give Zelophehad's inheritance to his daughters,' he said, 'The time has come that I should claim what I need (i.e. -- that I should think of my family) that my sons should inherit my high position.'" How do we reconcile what seems to be an apparent contradiction in Rashi? Was Moshe being altruistic or was he looking out for the needs of his own family?

The sefer Avir Yosef, in connection with this question, references the Sefer HaChinuch's explanation of why the Torah instituted a section regarding laws of inheritance. Why is it that the Torah legislates that when a person dies all of his property and all of his possessions go to his children? The Chinuch writes that we all come down to this world with a mission that the Almighty has in mind for us. All the things He provides for us in this world are tools to complete our designated mission. After a person leaves this world, sometimes his mission is incomplete. Even if it is complete, he

wants people to build on what he has accomplished thus far in carrying out his mission.

Therefore, the Chinuch writes, the person (people) who is (are) usually most appropriate to carry on the father's mission in life is (are) his child (children). Genetically, emotionally, and in terms of talents children often get their strengths and talents from their parents. Children are obviously not clones but they certainly are similar to their parents in many ways. Therefore, if there are people in the world that are typically "fit" to carry on the mission of their parents, it is indeed their children. For that reason, the Chinuch says, the Torah legislates that children should take possession of their parent's tools to carry on their mission.

If the person now leaves the world and he expects his children to carry on his mission, they in fact need those worldly possessions to be able to carry on their father's work. If that is the case, it the reason Moshe Rabbeinu asked that his children inherit his position may not be that he was interested in nepotism or that he was looking for a job for his kids. Moshe Rabbeinu was way beyond that and way above that.

Moshe Rabbeinu's mission in life was to be the teacher of Israel, the master of all the prophets and the leader of the Jewish people. He felt that his children were best suited to carry on that mission. They were, after all, his children. It was certainly within the realm of possibility that they would be the ones destined to carry on that mission.

Obviously, the Almighty had different plans. He told Moshe "this is not what I had in mind." "It is appropriate that Yehoshua now take the reward for his years of service. He was your faithful disciple who never left your tent." About this, Shlomo HaMelech wrote, "he who guards the fig tree will eat its fruit." [Mishlei 27:18]

Therefore, we see that Moshe Rabbeinu was not totally off the mark. For as his loyal disciple and servant of many years, Yehosua had become the individual most suited to carry on Moshe's mission in life. However, this was never about the position that one's children would have in life. This is indeed, as Rashi says, about Klal Yisrael -- the future of the Jewish people and the qualities of the future leader of the Jewish people. That was Moshe Rabbeinu's motivation.

Moshe's motivation was always the welfare of the people. There was no personal agenda. That is why Rashi introduces this teaching of Chazal by saying, "Look at the greatness of the righteous. They are not concerned about their own needs. They are concerned about the community." In that context, Moshe felt that the people most suited to carry on his mission were his children. Therefore, with the good of the people in mind, he said, "It is now the time that my children should assume my position of leadership."

The Almighty felt that Moshe Rabbeinu was mistaken about who was most appropriate to assume leadership in Klal Yisrael at this historical juncture. In His Eyes, Yehoshua should have this job. However, this does not diminish from the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu's only concern was indeed that the people should have the proper leader.

### A Jewish Leader Needs More Than Just G-d Given Talent

My next comment relates to the very next Rashi following the one we just discussed. On the pasuk "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh appoint a man over the assembly" [Bamidbar 27:16], Rashi comments about the peculiar title "G-d of the spirits" (Elokai ha'Ruchos): "Why is this stated? Moshe said before Him, 'Master of the World! The personality of each individual is revealed before You; they do not resemble each other. Appoint a leader who can put up with each individual according to his personality.'"

A myriad of personalities exist within the Jewish nation. Klal Yisrael never was a monolithic body. The Rabbis tell us "Just as no two people look alike, no two people have exactly the same opinion" [Brachos 58a]. People have different personalities, different opinions, different approaches, and differing emotional makeups. Therefore, a Jewish leader needs to tolerate and suffer with all these personality types according to each one's own quirks and temperament. This was Moshe's request to Hashem. He must appoint someone who could handle the whole spectrum of personalities found within the Jewish nation.

I saw an observation made by Rav Simcha Zissel, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva in his sefer, Saam Derech. He calls attention to the fact that the Torah says in the subsequent pesukim "Take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lean your hand upon him... You shall place of your splendor upon him, so that the entire assembly of the Children of Israel will pay heed." [Bamidbar 27:18; 20]

This means that a person cannot just step into being the leader of Klal Yisrael. The leader needs to be invested with Divine Spirit and be inspired -- not just from Moshe Rabbeinu, but from the Ribono shel Olam. This placement of the hands whereby Moshe Rabbeinu gave "semicha" to Yehoshua symbolized the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu was a conduit. The Master of the Universe passed on these talents -- the wisdom and the intuition necessary to lead the people -- through Moshe to his Divinely chosen successor.

No person is born with the talents required for leadership of Klal Yisrael. He does not come to such talent on his own. It requires S'yata d'Shmaya [Help from Heaven]. Only the fact that the Almighty gives those people the necessary tools to do the job enables them to succeed. If that is the case and indeed it was

all going to be a gift from the Ribono shel Olam, then why was it necessary to appoint someone who could (to use Rashi's expression) "tolerate the personality of each and every individual?" If the Almighty provides all the wisdom and strengths necessary for the job to the leader anyhow, why does it matter who He chooses? Let Him take absolutely anybody for the job and then give him the necessary tools!

Rav Simcha Zissel explains that the talents the Almighty can grant a person fall into the realm of intellectual capabilities: Knowledge of Torah, Divine Help, intelligence, the skills required to lead people in battle, and organizational and bureaucratic skills. The Almighty could indeed provide all these. However, there is one thing that the Ribono shel Olam cannot give to a person -- those are his middos tovos -- his personality traits, the type of mensch [person] that he is -- that a person needs to achieve on his own. That cannot be a gift from Hashem. Hashem does not take a person who has a temper and who has no patience and is irritable and suddenly make him into an accepting and tolerant person.

Therefore, as a prerequisite for the job, Moshe Rabbeinu says to the Ribono shel Olam -- it must be a person who suffers the quirks of each and every member of Klal Yisrael. Yes, Hashem can give him the intellectual capabilities and the organizational skills. He can give him all those talents. However, the middos, the character traits, the type of mensch the person is that is cannot be a gift. The person must work on himself and earn them during his lifetime. He must be the type of person that has worked on his personality and has perfected his character to the degree that he can now tolerate all types of personalities and "suffer" (be sovel) the entire spectrum of human idiosyncrasies. These are not G-d given talents. They are things a person develops on his own.

Moshe Rabbeinu sought this type of person as his successor when he addressed "the G-d of all spirits". ©2017 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

### YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

## Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA SICHA OF HARAV YAAKOV MEDAN

*Adapted by Binyamin Fraenkel*

*Translated by Kaeren Fish*

**O**ur parasha records the rise of two great new leaders who are fundamentally different from one another in terms of their personality, as well as in the way they achieve their status.

The Torah describes the appointment of Yehoshua: "And the Lord said to Moshe: Take to yourself Yehoshua, son of Nun, a man of spirit, and lay your hand upon him, and set him before Elazar the kohen and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight. And you shall bestow some of

your honor upon him, that all the congregation of Bnei Yisrael may be obedient. And he shall stand before Elazar the kohen, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of the Urim before the Lord; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all of Bnei Yisrael with him, even all the congregation. And Moshe did as the Lord commanded him, and he took Yehoshua, and set him before Elazar the kohen and before all the congregation, and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moshe." (Bamidbar 27:18-23)

Yehoshua is of the same generation as Moshe -- the older generation that came out of Egypt. Yehoshua, of whom the Torah says, "... but his servant, Yehoshua, son of Nun, a young man, did not depart out of the Tent" (Shemot 33:11), follows the same career path as a Chief of Staff in our days. He starts out as a rookie who runs from one task to the next, following orders; afterwards he advances gradually through the ranks, eventually reaching the top. He progresses slowly but surely, through conscientious effort, until finally he succeeds Moshe as leader of the nation.

Pinchas belongs to the younger generations, and he is wholly animated by the spirit of God. Pinchas becomes a leader by taking action within a set of sudden and dramatic circumstances. He does not climb the leadership ladder rung by rung, like Yehoshua, but rather achieves instantaneous fame owing to his special deed: "And behold, one of Bnei Yisrael came and brought to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moshe, and in the sight of all the congregation of Bnei Yisrael, who were weeping before the door of the Tent of Meeting. And when Pinchas, son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the kohen, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a spear in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel, into the chamber, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly, so the plague was halted from Bnei Yisrael." (Bamidbar 25:6-8)

Pinchas observes the abomination that is being perpetrated in the camp of Israel and the absence of any authoritative response. Moshe and Aharon stand on the sidelines, not knowing what to do. The gemara fills in some of the missing information as to what is going on at that moment: "He seized her by her hair and brought her to Moshe. He said to him, 'Son of Amram! Is this woman forbidden or permitted [to me]? If you say she is forbidden -- who permitted you to marry the daughter of Yitro?' [Moshe] could not recall the halakha, and everyone moaned and wept; this is as it is written, 'who were weeping before the door of the Tent of Meeting.' And it is written, 'And Pinchas, son of Elazar, saw' -- what did he see?

"Rav said: He saw the act, and remembered the halakha. He said to him [Moshe], 'Great-uncle, this is what you taught me when you came down from

Mount Sinai: One who engages in intercourse with a non-Jewish woman is punished by zealots!' He said to him, 'He who reads the letter -- let him be the agent [to carry out its instructions].'" (Sanhedrin 82a)

The midrash describes Moshe as being involved in the event, but the verses portray him and Aharon as standing by helplessly.

Josephus describes a dialogue between Moshe and Zimri at that time. Zimri tells Moshe that his role as leader is finished; his leadership was necessary for the period of the desert, but now that Am Yisrael will be entering the land, where every man will have his own inheritance, there should now be freedom of conscience and a liberal approach that allows the individual to make his own choices. Moshe's role is over, and so he should not interfere in what is happening with the daughters of Midian; this is no longer his responsibility or his business.

Moshe is struck dumb by this argument, not knowing how to react. His disciplined, organized leadership cannot deal with a breach of this order.

Pinchas observes all of this and understands that the appropriate response will not be forthcoming from Moshe and Aharon, the elders of the congregation. In a burst of zealotry, he avenges the honor of God and of the camp of Israel, killing Zimri and the Midianite woman.

Zimri, prince of the tribe of Shimon, did not understand the significance of the entry into the land and its inheritance. He and the people of his tribe thought that the national unity of Israel would no longer have any place; from this point onwards, it would be "each to his own."

Zimri was wrong, and Pinchas had to demonstrate this. The tribe of Shimon was also punished by not inheriting their own portion, since they did not understand the significance of inheriting and settling the land.

In the wake of his deed, Pinchas becomes a leader in Israel. He does not lead "by the book," like Moshe and like Yehoshua. In contrast to them, at the critical moment, he had the ability and the insight to perform an extraordinary act, to prevent the nation from disintegrating. Pinchas's leadership epitomizes the teaching, "In a place where there are no men, try to be a man."

Both types of leadership are necessary for the nation's existence. There must be a regular, organized, reasoned leadership that is attained with sustained effort over a long period, and there is sudden, momentary leadership that responds to problems that the regular leadership is sometime unable to deal with. *(This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat parashat Pinchas 5774 [2014].)*

