

## Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



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Parashat Pinchas  
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פרשת פנחס  
כ"א בתמוז תשע"ז

Torah Reading: *Bemidbar* (Numbers) 25:10-30:1

In this *parasha*, Hashem gives Pinchas, the grandson of Aharon, a covenant of peace; Hashem explains to Moshe the distribution of the Land of Israel to male heirs in their respective tribes; the daughters of Tzelophchad successfully petition to inherit their father's portion; Moshe appoints Yehoshua (Joshua) as his successor.

Any good leader sustains a vision for the future. Moshe knew that his time on earth as leader of his people was drawing to an end. Therefore, he had a conversation with Hashem and followed through with what needed to be done (27:12-23):

**יב** ויאמר ה' אל-מֹשֶׁה, עֲלֵה אֶל-הַר הָעֵבְרִים הַזֶּה; וּרְאֵה, אֶת-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי, לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. **יג** וּרְאִיתָהּ אַתָּה, וְנִאָּסַפְתָּ אֶל-עַמִּיךָ גַם-אַתָּה, כְּאִשֶׁר נִאָּסַף, אַהֲרֹן אַחִיד. **יד** כְּאִשֶׁר מְרִיתֶם פִּי בְּמִדְבַר-צֹן, בְּמְרִיבַת הָעֵדָה, לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי בַּמִּים, לְעֵינֵיהֶם: הֵם מִי-מְרִיבַת קֹדֶשׁ, מִדְבַר-צֹן. **טו** וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה, אֶל ה' לֵאמֹר. **טז** יִפְקֹד ה', אֶל-לֵהִי הַרוּחַת לְכָל-בֶּשֶׂר, אִישׁ, עַל-הָעֵדָה. **יז** אֲשֶׁר-יֵצֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם, וְאֲשֶׁר יָבֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם, וְאֲשֶׁר יוֹצִיאֵם, וְאֲשֶׁר יָבִיאֵם; וְלֹא תִהְיֶה, עֵדַת ה', כְּצֹאן, אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לָהֶם רֹעֵה. **יח** וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, קַח-לָךְ אֶת-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נוּן--אִישׁ, אֲשֶׁר-רוּחַ בּוֹ; וְסָמַכְתָּ אֹתוֹ-יָדְךָ, עָלָיו. **יט** וְהֶעַמְדַתְּ אֹתוֹ, לְפָנֶי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן, וְלִפְנֵי, כָל-הָעֵדָה; וְצִוִּיתָהּ אֹתוֹ, לְעֵינֵיהֶם. **כ** וְנִתְּתָה מִהוֹדָךְ, עָלָיו--לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ, כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. **כא** וְלִפְנֵי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן יַעֲמֵד, וְשָׂאֵל לֹוּ בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים לְפָנֶי ה': עַל-פִּיו יֵצְאוּ וְעַל-פִּיו יָבֹאוּ, הוּא וְכָל-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתוֹ--וְכָל-הָעֵדָה. **כב** וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה, כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֹתוֹ; וַיִּקַּח אֶת-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, וַיַּעֲמֵדְהוּ לְפָנֶי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן, וְלִפְנֵי, כָל-הָעֵדָה. **כג** וַיִּסְמַךְ אֶת-יָדָיו עָלָיו, וַיְצַוְהוּ, כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה', בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה.

**12** Hashem said to Moshe: 'Go up to this mountain of Avarim, and behold the land which I have given to the children of Yisrael. **13** When you have

seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aharon your brother was gathered; **14** because you rebelled against My commandment in the wilderness of Tzin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes.' – These are the waters of Merivat-kadesh in the wilderness of Tzin. **15** Moshe spoke to Hashem, saying: **16** 'Let Hashem, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, **17** who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of Hashem not be as sheep which have no shepherd.' **18** Hashem said to Moshe: 'Take Yehoshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him; **19** and set him before Elazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. **20** And you shall put of your honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Yisrael may listen. **21** And he shall stand before Elazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Hashem; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Yisrael with him, even all the congregation.' **22** Moshe did as Hashem commanded him; and he took Yehoshua, and set him before Elazar the priest, and before all the congregation. **23** And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as Hashem spoke by the hand of Moshe.

Two fundamental principles appear here. The first is that any organization requires a leader and an unbroken succession of leadership. We see any number of examples in our world of the chaos that ensues without a strong leader to direct and inspire a group. Whether it is the anarchy of some countries after the fall of a dictator, the disarray of some religious sects without a named successor, or the turmoil of a corporation without a CEO, it becomes clear that any ship requires a captain at the helm. Moshe realized this, sought guidance as to how to proceed, and appointed a successor before his own tenure came to an end.

But it is not just a leader that is required; it needs to be the right leader to steer a given group in the right direction. Yehoshua was the man for the job. He had served Moshe well (*Shmot 24, Bemidbar 11*, and others); he was a prince of his tribe (*Bemidbar 13*); and he had defended the vision of Hashem among the spies (*Bemidbar 14*). He had already proven his leadership qualities.

In addition, the Torah makes clear that Yehoshua had the critically important imprimatur of God. He faced a monumental task: replacing the only leader whom Bnei Yisrael had ever known and upon whom they relied for everything. How could Yehoshua ever hope to have the people follow him and believe in him as they had believed in Moshe?

Much of the linguistic structure of the first chapter of *Sefer Yehoshua* (The Book of Joshua) addresses some of the ways that Yehoshua was eased into his leadership position. For example, both Moshe and Yehoshua – and only Moshe and Yehoshua – are referred to as “עבד השם” – *eved Hashem* (servant of Hashem); the text equates the two men, showing that they were also equated in the eyes of the Bnei Yisrael. Hashem assures Yehoshua that “just as I was with Moshe, I will be with you; I will not leave you and I will not abandon you.” (Yehoshua 1:5). In addition Yehoshua, in the very first verse of his eponymous book, is referred to as “משרת משה” – *mesharet Moshe* (the one who ministered to Moshe), indicating that Yehoshua “sat at Moshe’s feet” and learned from him. The first chapter of *Sefer Yehoshua* also repeats the phrase “חזק ואמץ” – *chazak v’ematz* (be strong and courageous) is four times; it is the same phrase that Moshe uses to address Yehoshua twice in the 31<sup>st</sup> chapter of *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) as he hands over the mantle of leadership. Yet another connection between the two men is that it was actually Moshe who gave his successor the name Yehoshua; his given name was Hoshea (see *Bemidbar* 13:16); both names literally mean “savior.”

It is clear when studying *Sefer Yehoshua* that the Bnei Yisrael did indeed rally around Yehoshua, though his is not to say that they did not hit some bumps along the road. Yehoshua led them through seven years of conquering the land followed by seven years of dividing up and settling the land.

In one of the more ironic twists in the *TaNakh*, Yehoshua himself neglected to appoint a successor upon his death, and subsequently the Bnei Yisrael reverted to tribalism and disarray, as outlined in the book of *Shoftim* (Judges). The nation comes together again only after Hashem appoints Shmuel (Samuel) as the first national prophet, in the first chapter of the book bearing his name.

Strong, appropriate, and accepted leadership is a necessity for any successful enterprise: a principle first outlined in our own Torah.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- What qualities must a good leader possess? Why these qualities?
- Compare and contrast the leadership of various communities to which you belong: your classroom teacher, your rabbi, your mayor, etc. Should they all be doing the same things as a leader? How might one decide what each leader should be doing?
- How would you have felt if you had been Yehoshua, facing the task of taking on the leadership of Bnei Yisrael? How would you have felt if you had been a member of Bnei Yisrael, facing the prospect of a new leader?