

# INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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PARSHAS PINCHAS

## Follow the Leader

**Moshe spoke to Hashem saying, "May Hashem, God of the spirits of all mankind, 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..." (27:15-17)**

This week's *parsha* includes a remarkable conversation between Moshe and Hashem about the succession plan for leadership of Bnei Yisroel after Moshe's demise. Initially, after seeing that the daughters of Tzelafchad prevail in their quest to inherit their father's share in Eretz Yisroel, Moshe is moved to ask Hashem if his children could succeed him as leader. However, Hashem informs Moshe that He has other intentions; namely, that Moshe's faithful servant Yehoshua be rewarded for his service (see Rashi 27:16).

Hashem then enjoins Moshe to "take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun..." (27:18). Rashi (ad loc) explains that Hashem wanted Moshe to persuade Yehoshua by telling him how fortunate he was to get to lead the children of Hashem. Yet, a few verses later (27:22), when Moshe actually fulfills what Hashem had asked him to do – "Moshe did as Hashem commanded him. He took Yehoshua..." – Rashi (ad loc) comments that Moshe convinced Yehoshua by informing him of the great reward for the leaders of the Jewish people in the World to Come.

Hashem had asked Moshe to tell Yehoshua how fortunate he was to be offered the ultimate leadership position of Hashem's children, yet Moshe basically talked to him about the retirement benefits. Why did Moshe change what Hashem had initially asked him to tell Yehoshua?

To begin to understand what transpired

we must start by examining how Moshe described the kind of person necessary for his job. Moshe makes a specific request that Hashem appoint someone who "will go out in front of them and come in before them." Moshe then adds, "who shall take them out and who shall bring them in..." (27:17). This request seems a bit contradictory; does the leader go out in front of them and come in before them, or does he take them out and bring them in?

There is a very enigmatic statement in the Gemara (*Kesuvos* 105b) regarding leadership (it's one that haunts shul rabbis the world over), "Abaye said – this young rabbi who is beloved by the people of his town, it is not because they think he has such fine character, it is because he doesn't rebuke them in religious matters." Abaye's statement is very difficult to understand: If a rabbi is beloved, it's because he isn't doing his job. However, the converse seems just as bad: If he is doing his job (criticizing his constituency), he will be despised. Surely, a hated rabbi cannot be considered to be doing his job properly either!

The Torah is teaching us the fundamentals of leadership. Every leader has two roles; one is to lead by example, the other is to direct the people to do what needs to be done. The primary responsibility of a leader is to inspire the people to act in a certain way; i.e. a leader needs to be relatable and charismatic enough that the people will follow his lead. They need to look up to him, want to emulate him and his way of living, and buy into his goals in



order to help fulfill his vision for the community.

But a leader also has an important, albeit secondary, role; to make sure his followers are doing what they are supposed to be doing, even when they don't want to do the right thing. This is a much harder task, as it must come from an outside force rather than an inner motivation. A leader is empowered to force his constituents to do the right thing, even when they don't want to.

Moshe's request from Hashem reflects these two roles; "he must lead them out and lead them in," but if they don't want to then he must "bring them out and bring them in." This also explains the two versions of what Moshe was to tell Yehoshua. Hashem was telling him to persuade Yehoshua by extolling the privilege of inspiring the children of Hashem through leadership. The word Rashi uses in that verse (27:18) is *l'hanhig* – to lead. When Moshe tells Yehoshua he is referring to the less pleasant aspect of leadership – criticizing and forcing the people to do what they do want to do. Rashi in that verse (27:22) uses the word *parnes* – provider. The ultimate power behind a leader is that he is their provider; which is how he can force them to do the right thing. But this is very difficult and unpleasant to do, and as Moshe tells Yehoshua, "the reward for providers of the Jewish people is in the next world."



# A Will to Want Not

***If a man will die and he has no son, you shall cause his inheritance to pass over to his daughter (27:8).***

This week's *parsha* recounts the entire incident of the daughters of Tzelafchad who wished to inherit their father's portion in Eretz Yisroel, even though he predeceased the actual distribution of the land of Israel to the respective tribes. The issue lay in whether or not a daughter may inherit property from her father in a case where there are no sons.

The Sefer Hachinuch (*Mitzvah* 400), in his discussion of the laws of inheritance, rules that although the Torah ascribes directives in dealing with inheritance, there is no obligation for a parent to leave an inheritance for a child. This imperative is only found in regards to the nations of the

world.

This seems a little difficult to understand; it is within every Jewish parent's nature to be concerned for his child's financial well-being, with special emphasis placed upon ensuring his child's security even after the parent's death. The Chinuch's ruling seems contrary to the innate character of the Jew. What could possibly be the Chinuch's reasoning?

A similar question can be asked on a ruling of the Talmud. The Gemara (*Kesuvos* 49b) states that a parent need only be concerned for the financial well-being of his child until the age of six. How can we possibly fathom a Jewish parent

considering his child financially independent at the age of six?

The attribute of kindness defines a Jew's nature. Therefore, there is never any doubt that a Jewish parent will assume responsibility for his six-year-old child. Rather, the Torah is sending a profound message to the child to appreciate all that his parents are doing for him, for their financial assistance is done out of a sense of compassion, not obligation. Providing for your children is an expression of love, not a fulfillment of an obligation. Once a child begins to internalize his parents' motivation for supporting him, it will strengthen the child's love for his parents.

## Standing on their Shoulders

***The sons of Reuvein: of Chanoch, the family of the Chanochite... (26:5)***

Prior to Bnei Yisroel entering Eretz Yisroel, Hashem commanded Moshe and Elazar to conduct a new census. To all the family names, the letter "hey" was added as a prefix and "yud" as a suffix. For example, the family of Chanoch was referred to as "HaChanochi." Rashi (ad loc) explains that those letters formed the name of Hashem. The reason for this change to their names is that the nations of the world mocked the purity of the Jewish lineage.

They pointed out that Bnei Yisroel tracing their genealogy according to the tribes of their father was a fantasy. They claimed that since the Egyptians had complete control of the Jewish males (who were slaves), surely they had violated the Jewish women; leading to many Jews being descendants of the Egyptians. Therefore, Hashem attached His name to

the names of the Jewish families in order to attest to the purity of Jewish ancestry.

It is difficult to understand how adding two letters to Jewish families' names deflects the claims of the nations. The only possible answer is that Hashem had no intention of deflecting the claims of the nations. Rather, this was done to assuage the insecurities of Bnei Yisroel themselves. At this time, Bnei Yisroel were recovering from a plague that decimated a significant portion of the nation. This plague came as a punishment for their involvement in licentious behavior and acts of depravity while consorting with the daughters of Midian. These transgressions seem to indicate characteristics distinctly attributed to Egyptian nature and culture.

Consequently, these transgressions

committed by Bnei Yisroel might have led some to give credence to the notion that the allegations of the nations of the world were indeed true. Therefore, Hashem lent His holy name to the Jewish families to reassure them that they were of pure lineage.

However, there is also a much deeper lesson to be learned here. We often ascribe our own failings to issues that are beyond our control, when in truth we must own our mistakes and work to improve ourselves. We tend to blame our parents or circumstances beyond our control for things that we ought to own as our responsibility. Hashem is lending His name to our lineage to tell us that our past is in His hands, but our present and future are in our own control.

### **Follow the Leader Continued:**

Just as Moshe made sure that Yehoshua would fully understand both roles of leadership, we must understand and apply these same principles to our own homes. A parent's leadership role is primarily to inspire his children to follow in the proper

way to live. The children have to look at his example and feel like they want to emulate him. A key component of this is that the parent needs to be someone whom they want to emulate. Of course, a parent has to criticize and gently redirect his children when they make mistakes. But

even then, the primary goal is to make sure the children understand he is doing it out of love for them, not because he wants to control them. In this way, they will choose to follow in his path long after they have left their parents' house.



4000 Alton Road  
Miami Beach, FL 33140

To dedicate an issue of Insights please email:  
[info@talmudicu.edu](mailto:info@talmudicu.edu)  
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