

Parshas Pinchas sets the stage for the leadership succession that followed the death of Moses. It begins with a recap of how Pinchas unilaterally stood up and challenged powerful people from among the Jewish People as well as Midyan to defend the honor of Gd against those who publicly desecrated the name of Gd and committed the cardinal sins of immoral sexual relationships and idolatry. Pinchas was rewarded with an eternal covenant of peace and the High Priesthood was focused among his descendants. Later in the Parsha, Gd informs Moses of his impending demise. Moses asks (27:16) that Gd select a leader that will lead the people upon exit and entry and will be able to move them out and usher them in as required. Gd informs Moses that his closest disciple, Joshua, will inherit his leadership role and that he, Moses, should place his hand on him. Gd instructed Moses that Joshua should stand in front of Elazar, the high priest, and inquire from the אורים ותומים. Why was Moses so verbose when describing the qualities required by the next leader? Why was it necessary that the appointment take place publicly before the entire community? What is the connection between the very different appointments of Pinchas and Joshua and the death of Moses?

The Gemara (Brachos 32b) states that 4 entities require, חיזוק, constant reinforcement and attention. The first of these is Torah. The Gemara derives this from the Book of Joshua, where Gd tells Joshua who assumed the leadership role after the death of Moses, חזק ואמץ מאד, strengthen yourself and be resolute,. Why was the charge duplicated with two commands, חזק and אמץ?

Moses served dual major roles for the Jewish People. He was their teacher and their leader. As teacher he was charged with teaching the people the Written as well as the Oral Law, תורה שבכתב and תורה שבעל פה. He was also the leader who led them through the desert, ensuring that their lives would be as normal as possible and that they had food and water. He was a גומל חסד, benefactor par excellence with, among others, the example he set in assuming responsibility for the remains of Joseph and his willingness, time and again, to sacrifice himself on behalf of the people. His dual role was carefully crafted to ensure that the Mesorah, in its entirety, would be transmitted to future generations.

Moses' Mesorah included a blueprint for everyday life as well as a guide for a spiritual life worthy of the chosen people. One without the other would translate into a doomed, failed enterprise. Moses' mission required that he set the tone so that upon entry to the Promised Land the people should not devote their entire attention to the settling of the land. He taught them that they must allocate time and space in their lives for the study of and adherence to Torah.

In return for his devotion to them, the people viewed Moses as their irreplaceable leader. They could not imagine life without him. In times of stress he was the first person they would turn to. Chazal say that 3000 laws were forgotten during the mourning period for Moses. The shock of losing him paralyzed the people. Who could

possibly take his place?

Moses had several close disciples, including Pinchas, Elazar, and Joshua. In fact Joshua was not the greatest of Moses' students. The 3000 laws forgotten during the mourning period for Moses were not restored by Joshua, but by Asniel Ben Knaz. While Pinchas was greater intellectually, Chazal say that Joshua distinguished himself in his attitude and his devotion to his teacher and his Torah. He arranged the chairs before the lecture and was always concerned with Moses' needs. The teacher-student relationship is built to a greater degree on the devotion of a student to his teacher than on his intellectual capacity. It was Joshua who took offense to what he perceived as a slight against Moses by Eldad and Meidad, who prophesied that Moses will pass away and Joshua will distribute the land to the Jewish People. He defended his teacher's honor, asking him to silence them. No reaction from any of his other disciples was recorded in this incident. None of them, including Pinchas, rose to defend Moses.

In contrast, Pinchas was given to independent action. He did not consult with Moses, as perhaps Joshua would have, when he instinctively rose up to punish Zimri and Kazbi, without paying heed to their status or the personal risk to himself. Perhaps his response to the story of Eldad and Meidad would have been to defend Moses' honor unilaterally, without consulting Moses. In summary, Pinchas possessed great leadership qualities, but they were not the qualities required at that time. The people needed continuity, they needed someone who could channel Moses and provide the stability they required to enter and conquer the land. Even though Pinchas would eventually assume a key role in the transmission of the Mesorah, his time had not yet come.

The elders of the generation said that Moses' face radiated like the sun while Joshua's face reflected like the moon. Oftentimes a leader or a particular institution becomes so identified with a cause that their adherents can't imagine how the cause can possibly survive without him or it. With the loss of their leader, they become engulfed in doubt and despair. For example, at the time of the destruction of the Temple many Pharisaic Jews thought that the rapid demise of the Jewish nation was an inevitable and foregone conclusion. They could not imagine how they would continue without the central institution, the Temple, in their life. At the funeral for Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hurkanus, Rabbi Akiva lamented that he has much currency to exchange but no currency expert to consult. With the passing of his teacher, he felt helpless and forlorn. Joshua, faced with the loss of his teacher Moses, was bewildered as well. [The Rav noted that after the passing of his grandfather, Reb Chaim, his father, Reb Moshe ZT"L, found it difficult to function and study. He noted a similar experience with the passing of his father.] The Jewish People were overcome with trepidation and confusion. How can we continue without the leader and teacher we have relied on for so long? There are many examples of this attitude today as well, where an organization or a group has a charismatic and great leader who they deem to be irreplaceable and become paralyzed with his passing, unable to move on.

Joshua was also concerned. This was the greatest moment of his life. He needed reinforcement and encouragement for the role he was about to assume. How could he possibly replace Moses? History is witness to many unfortunate examples where a successor did not measure up to his predecessor, resulting in a calamity for both leader and people. Gd told Joshua “My servant Moses has died and you will take the people into the land”. Why repeat the obvious, that Moses died? Gd was commanding Joshua that he must be strong and resolute in assuming the dual role of Moses. Gd said he was not asking Joshua to replace every aspect of Moses. That would be impossible. Gd spoke uniquely with Moses, face to face. Moses could count on a direct line of communication to Gd whenever he felt the need. Joshua, you need not replicate those aspects of Moses. However, you must be the strong leader that leads them into battle. You must also be their caring leader who teaches them Torah and kindness, acts as their judge, and be the one they turn to in difficult times and when they need reassurance. Both attributes are required of the Jewish leader. That is why the dual charge of חזק ואמץ is repeated twice.

When the Jewish People entered the land, they became engrossed in settling and cultivating it. Each person was inclined to tend to his fig tree and vineyard. In that case, what will become of Torah? Gd charged Joshua with a seemingly inherently contradictory mission: to ensure that both dimensions, conquest of the land and adherence to Torah, must be stressed. However, from Gd’s perspective there was no contradiction. The Rav noted that a similar attitude was displayed by the early pioneers in Eretz Yisrael. They were focused on settling and cultivating the land and abandoned Torah. An enterprise that sacrifices one for the other cannot succeed. The same mission to conquer and teach occurred in the time of Ezra as well.

Even though Joshua was not on the same level as his teacher, he had to face Moses and deliver a Torah discourse to demonstrate that he was a worthy successor. Joshua, don’t underestimate yourself and say that you cannot approach Moses’ erudition. Every Jew has a portion in Torah and should never consider his Torah inferior to another’s. Ramban (27:19) says that Joshua had to replace Moses’ roles of military leader, and judge and teacher. The dual charge of חזק ואמץ refers to the multiple roles Joshua had to assume. Joshua had to demonstrate that he was capable of being a military leader who would lead the people in a successful conquest of the land, while also being a leader that could teach them Torah and set an example of kindness. He acquired these traits from his teacher.

Chazal say that the people worshipped Gd all the days that Joshua was their leader, something the great Moses, his great teacher, could not claim. Gd showed Joshua that he could be as successful as Moses, and in some areas even greater. Because he represented Moses, there was no gap between them in the chain of leadership. Moses asked that the leader be chosen before he died so he can validate him in the eyes of the community. Moses intended that they come to view Joshua as Moses’ legitimate

successor and that he was worthy of their obedience and loyalty.

The Torah tells us that Moses was commanded to place his hands on Joshua in front of the entire congregation and Joshua was to inquire from Elazar and the **אוריים ותומים**. Why was it necessary for Moses to grant Joshua from his personal honor, **הוד** ? Because Joshua had to show the people that he was a worthy successor to Moses in both military leadership and Torah erudition. The people needed to feel confident in their next leader. Joshua's discourse before the congregation gave them confidence in him that he was capable of leading them into the Promised Land and fulfill the promise Moses made to them 40 years earlier in the midst of their suffering under Pharaoh's lash.

Rambam writes in his introduction to Mishne Torah that Elazar, Pinchas and Joshua received their Torah from Moses, however he transferred and commanded the Oral Law to Joshua alone, who was his (Moses) student. This Mesorah chain, encompassing the Written and Oral Law, passed from Moses to Joshua and from Joshua to the Elders, etc. Rambam later enumerates the Mesorah chain in reverse, where he notes that Pinchas received the Mesorah from Joshua, who received it from Moses who received it from Gd. Even though Pinchas was a disciple of Moses, the Mesorah was initially entrusted to Joshua alone after the death of Moses. Pinchas had to wait his turn, as his skill set was not the one that was needed at that time. Moses realized that and made sure to afford his closest disciple and worthy successor, every opportunity to succeed.

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