

Preparation for the First National Aliyah:

A Study of Sefer Yehoshua's First Chapter

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Sefer Yehoshua is usually one's first encounter with Navi in elementary school. With so many chapters dealing with war and division of land, it can leave a nine year old feeling lost and overwhelmed. However, when one returns to the *sefer* once again as an adult, there is real depth offered that perhaps a fourth grader (or, as is the case in Eretz Yisrael, a second grader), could not appreciate.

In the opening verses of the first chapter, Hashem speaks to Yehoshua regarding how to lead the nation. Rav Yehuda Mali, in his *sefer Shiurim B'Sefer Yehoshua*, points out that there are two major transitions taking place from the time period of Moshe Rabbeinu to the time period of Yehoshua. The first transition is a change in leadership, i.e. a new person, and the second transition is *B'nai Yisrael's* status, going from living *al pi neis*, a miraculous lifestyle, to *al pi tevah*, a more natural lifestyle. The beginning of *Sefer Yehoshua* fuses the natural with the miraculous, giving way, eventually, to a more permanent natural lifestyle for the nation.

Let us look at the first transition from Moshe to Yehoshua. In both the Torah (Bamidbar 27:18) and the Mishnah (*Pirkei Avos* 1:1) and various Midrashim (such as *Bereishis Rabah* 58:2), we are told that Yehoshua is to take over after Moshe Rabbeinu. Why Yehoshua and not Moshe's sons? After all, Moshe's brother, Aharon the *Kohen Gadol*, was succeeded upon his death by his sons (Bamidbar 20:23-29). The negation of Moshe's sons Gershom and Eliezer is a case of "והתורה אינה ירושה לך", leadership in Torah is not inherited (see *Pirkei Avos* 2:12), rather, there must be self actualization that merits one taking on a Torah leadership position. Yehoshua displayed the qualities necessary to continue Moshe's leadership as explained in *Bamidbar Rabah* (21:14):

Hashem said to him (Moshe), "He who guards a fig-tree shall eat its fruit" (Mishlei 27:18). Your sons did not learn Torah, whereas Yehoshua would be the first to arrive and the last one to leave the Beit Midrash, and he would arrange the benches and lay out the mats. Since he serviced you with all his might, it is only appropriate that he service B'nai Yisrael and not lose out on his reward. "Take Yehoshua the son of Nun" to uphold that which is said "he who guards a fig-tree shall eat its fruit".

אמר לו הקב"ה "נצר תאנה יאכל פריה" (משלי כז, יח). בניך ישבו להם ולא עסקו בתורה, יהושע... היה משכים ומעריב בבית הוועד שלך, והוא היה מסדר את הספסלים והוא פורס את המחצלות. הואיל והוא שירתך בכל כוחו, כדאי הוא שישמש את ישראל, שאינו מאבד שכרו. "קח לך את יהושע בן נון" לקיים מה שנאמר "נצר תאנה יאכל פריה."

Yehoshua was an example of "לא המדרש העיקר אלא המעשה", what matters is not the academic study, but rather one's actions (*Pirkei Avos* 1:17) and "גדולה שימושה של תורה יותר מלימודה", even greater than learning Torah is the practice of Torah (*Berachos* 7b). We see this displayed by Yehoshua:

But his attendant, Joshua, the son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from the tent.

Shemos 33:11

ומשרתו יהושע בן נון נער, לא ימיש מתוך האהל.
שמות לג:יא

The Midrash explains:

Moshe's sons did not succeed him, rather Yehoshua did. "And he who guards his master shall be honored" (Mishlei 27:18). This is referring to Yehoshua who serviced Moshe day and night, and because he serviced his master, he merited the Holy Spirit and prophecy.

Bamidbar Rabah 12:9

שלא ירשו בניו של משה מקומו, אלא יהושע ירש מקומו. "ושמר אדניו יכבד" (משלי כ"ז, יח) זה יהושע, שהיה משמש את משה ביום ובלילה... ולפי ששימש אדוניו, זכה לרוח הקודש... זכה לנבואה.
במדבר רבה יב:ט

While at this point we may understand why Yehoshua was chosen, what does this leadership position entail, and was Yehoshua successful? Rav Avraham Remer zt"l points out, in his *sefer Ma'avor Ha'Aretz*, that choosing a leader necessitates two very important requirements which are related to us after Moshe Rabbeinu learns he will not enter Eretz Yisrael.

Let the Lord, the God of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will go forth before them and come before them, who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

Bamidbar 27:16-17

יפקד ה' אלקי הרוחת לכל בשר איש על העדה. אשר יצא לפניהם ואשר יבא לפניהם ואשר יוציאם ואשר יביאם ולא תהיה עדת ה' כצאן אשר אין להם רעה.
במדבר כז:טז-יז

First, he must be "*ish al haeidah*", a man over the congregation. Rashi, quoting the *Tanchumah*, explains that this is someone who aids each individual in the nation on his particular level, a leader for all, not just some select members. Second, "*asher yeitzei lifneihem*", who will go forth before them. Here Rashi quotes the *Sifrei* that a Jewish leader is not like *malchei ha'umot*, foreign leaders, who enjoy prestige, but do not do the actual work, rather a Jewish leader is "יוצא בראש" "ונכנס בראש", a proactive head who leads the nation both going and coming.

Two additional requirements: *haskamat Hashem*, Hashem's approval, which is implicit from *Sefer Bamidbar* and the opening of *Sefer Yehoshua*, as well as *haskamat B'nai Yisrael*, the people's approval. This is seen towards the end of the first chapter in *Sefer Yehoshua*, but is powerfully expressed in chapter four after crossing over the *Yarden* and entry into Israel is complete.

The Gemara in *Bava Basra* (75a) compares Yehoshua to Moshe with the following allegory: "פני" "פני יהושע כפני לבנה" "פני משה כפני חמה", the face of Moshe was like the sun, but the face of Yehoshua was like the moon. What does this mean? A simple understanding is that Yehoshua is a

microcosm of Moshe. Just like the moon is the reflection of the sun, so too, Yehoshua's leadership mimics Moshe's. However, if one looks deeper into this statement there is something being conveyed about the time periods during which Moshe and Yehoshua were guiding *B'nai Yisrael*. Moshe, described as the sun, represents a time when the sun shone so brightly, it was the sole force. This implies that Moshe was the strength and everyone else was passive, they followed Moshe Rabbeinu and gave themselves over to him. This was demonstrated at various junctures: Moshe split the *Yam Suf*, the nation marched after him; Moshe hit the rock, and then the nation was able to drink; Moshe received the Torah and the nation answered with "*na'aseh v'nishma*", we will do and we will hear.

Yehoshua, on the other hand, who is likened to the moon, which doesn't shine so brightly and allows the stars to illuminate, turns *B'nai Yisrael* into active participants in settling Eretz Yisrael. During *Kriat HaYarden*, Yehoshua instructs the nation how to cross, in what order and where to stand, yet, the *Kohanim* with the *Aron Hashem* lead the way, Yehoshua himself goes last. (See Radak on Yehoshua chapter 4:5.) The conquest of Yericho is not Yehoshua's war, rather all of *B'nai Yisrael* join with Yehoshua to bring down the walls of the city. So, too, with all the battles waged in the *sefer*, the nation is actively bringing about the results – the conquest of Ai, Ma'aleh Beit Choron, and the war against the northern kings. With Yehoshua at the helm, the nation takes an active role in order to succeed.

So was Yehoshua a successful leader? At the onset of Yehoshua's leadership, he is labeled "*meshares Moshe*" (Yehoshua 1:1), "Moshe's minister", but, by the end of his life and of the *sefer*, he is called by the very same appellation which Moshe received: "*Eved Hashem*", a servant of G-d (24:29). One of the greatest honors bestowed upon individuals in Tanach.

Now let us look at the second transition that took place when Yehoshua became *B'nai Yisrael's* leader. Throughout the first chapter of *Sefer Yehoshua* there is a phrase that is repeated many times: "*chazak, v'ematz*", be strong and have courage (verses 6, 7, 9 and 18). Originally the term appears in Devarim 31:7, when Moshe was inducting Yehoshua. Why did Yehoshua have to fortify himself? Rav Yehuda Mali points out that Yehoshua was faced with three major challenges.

First, he had to "fill Moshe's shoes" (or lack thereof as in Chapter 5, paralleling Moshe's experience in Shemos 3:5). Moshe led *B'nai Yisrael* for forty plus years like a father carrying his infant child, (Bamidbar 11:12) "כאשר ישא האמן את הינק". He led them out of Mitzrayim, turned them into *b'nai chorin*, free people, gave them the Torah, was the father of all *neviim* (prophets), the army's head and the chief judge.

Second, in capturing Eretz Canaan, the odds were heavily stacked against *B'nai Yisrael*. Surrounding Yehoshua at all times were enemies, the residents of Canaan. They lived in fortified cities, several giants among them and every time *B'nai Yisrael* attacked one group they were left exposed and vulnerable to the remaining adversaries.

The third challenge Yehoshua faced was the transition from living a life of miracles, to one of a more natural reality. This is seen in the economic and military sphere in terms of their income and protection, as well as the spiritual domain, how *B'nai Yisrael* learned Torah:

Three excellent leaders arose for Israel, they were: Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. And because of them three excellent gifts were bestowed upon Israel; they are: the well, the pillar of cloud and the manna [water, protection and food]. The well was provided in the merit of Miriam, the pillar of cloud in the merit of Aharon and the manna in the merit of Moshe. When Miriam died the well disappeared... and it returned in the merit of the other two (Moshe and Aharon). When Aharon died the clouds of Glory disappeared... both of them [the well and the clouds of Glory] returned in the merit of Moshe. When Moshe died they all [the well, the clouds of Glory and the manna] disappeared.

Taanis 9a

שלשה פרנסים טובים עמדו לישראל, אלו הן: משה, ואהרן ומרים. וג' מתנות טובות ניתנו על ידם ואלו הן: באר וענן ומן. באר-בזכות מרים, עמוד ענן-בזכות אהרן, מן-בזכות משה. מתה מרים, נסתלק הבאר... וחזרה בזכות שניהן. מת אהרן, נסתלקו ענני כבוד... חזרו שניהם בזכות משה. מת משה-נסתלקו כולן.

תענית ט.

With the three gifts that Hashem gave *B'nai Yisrael*, we see the embodiment of the phrase "כאשר" "ישא האמן את הינק", with the removal of Hashem's three gifts *B'nai Yisrael* transitioned into a new phase. Now the nation has to learn to stand on its own, the baby is being weaned and *B'nai Yisrael* has to "grow up". As *Sefer Yehoshua* tells us:

And the manna ceased on the morrow when they ate of the grain of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna anymore; and they ate of the produce of the land of Canaan that year.

Yehoshua 5:12

וישבות המן ממחרת באכלם מעבור הארץ, ולא היה עוד לבני ישראל מן, ויאכלו מתבואת ארץ כנען בשנה

ההיא

יהושע ה:יב

But it is worthy to note that the last year [B'nai Yisrael were in the desert] was the end of miraculous conditions... and now as they stood ready to enter into the land of Israel, they had to accustom themselves to natural conditions under Hashem's watchfulness. Therefore, Hashem acted towards them in a transitional manner, like a nursing child who is being weaned, the caretaker slowly introduces the baby to solid food... so too, Hashem started to wean B'nai Yisrael from miracles and they began to experience the world of nature... when the water from Miriam's well stopped, B'nai Yisrael understood that this was not a punishment, rather the beginning of their adjustment to a more natural lifestyle.

Netziv on Bamidbar 20:5

אבל ראוי לדעת דבשנה האחרונה היה סוף הליכות הנסיי...ועתה היו עומדים ליכנס לארץ ישראל ולהתנהג בהליכות הטבע תחת השגחת ה'. על כן התנהג הקב"ה עמם בשנה זו בדרך הממוצע, וכמו אומנת ילד היונק העומד להגמל מחלב, כבר איזה משך לפני הגמלו מרגלת את הילד מעט מעט באכילת לחם...כך החל המקום יתברך להפרישם מן הנס ולהעמידם על הליכות עולם הטבע...והנה כשנפסק המים מן הבאר, הבינו ישראל שזהו שלא בתורת עונש על איזה דבר, אלא כדי להרגילם לחיים טבעיים

נצי"ב על במדבר כ:ה

Until *Yehoshua*, *B'nai Yisrael* lived a miraculous lifestyle. While living in the desert, all their basic needs were provided for in a miraculous manner. For shelter, they had the *ananei haKavod*, the clouds of Glory. For sustenance, they received the manna and had *be'er Miriam*, the spring of water in Miriam's merit. As for their clothes, the Midrash (*Shir HaShirim Rabah* 4:11) tells us they were always fresh and clean, and would grow with *B'nai Yisrael* as needed. Now with Moshe's death a life dependent upon nature begins. Reality hits in *Yehoshua* 1:11 when the nation is told, "הכינו לכם צדה", prepare food for yourselves. Rashi explains *tzeidah* as

klei zayin, weapons, not food, since for the next few weeks they would still have the manna. They will no longer have the protection of the *ananei haKavod* and they are about to begin the conquest of the land, so the nation must be certain they can protect and safeguard themselves.

Even the nature of the wars changed, moving from more miraculous, as demonstrated in the conquest of Yericho, to subsequently more natural tactics throughout the *sefer* as seen in the war against the Northern Kings. In terms of the spiritual domain, *B'nai Yisrael's* Torah learning went through a major metamorphosis. In the desert, *B'nai Yisrael* received their halachic guidance from Hashem through Moshe as the medium. (Bamidbar 9:8) "ויאמר אלהם משה, עמדו, ואשמעה (Bamidbar 9:8) "מה יצוה ה' לכם", *And Moshe said to them, stand still, and I will hear what Hashem will command concerning you.* Now as the nation enters Eretz Yisrael, any halachic arguments will be resolved through our very own *talmidei chachamim*, all of the theoretical is becoming practical. Each town has a *beis din* (rabbinical court), the army functions according to halacha and the *mitzvos hateluyos ba'aretz*, may be observed. This is expressed in the Gemara:

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: Three thousand laws were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moshe. In an effort to retrieve these forgotten laws, the people of Israel said to Yehoshua, "Ask Hashem what these laws were." He said to them, I cannot do that: "The Torah is not in Heaven." Later in history the Jewish people said to the Prophet Shmuel, "Ask Hashem to reveal these forgotten laws to you." He told them in response, it is written: "These are the commandments", which teaches that from this time forward, a prophet is not authorized to introduce anything new, i.e. after the revelation through Moshe, no law may be introduced. Rav Yitzchak Nafcha said: The law regarding a sinful offering whose owners have died was also forgotten during the period of mourning for Moshe. They said to Pinchas, regarding this and similar laws that were in doubt, "Ask Hashem what the halachah is." He said to them: "The Torah is not in Heaven." They said to Elazar, "Ask Hashem." He said to them, it is written: "These are the commandments", which teaches that from this time forward, a prophet is not authorized to introduce anything new... Yehoshua's strength waned and consequently he forgot three hundred laws and seven hundred uncertainties occurred to him. All of Israel were prepared to kill him unless he could tell them these laws and resolve these uncertainties. The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to him: To tell you these forgotten laws is impossible. Instead, go and occupy Israel with war, as it says: "And it came to pass after the death of Moshe, the servant of Hashem, that Hashem said to Yehoshua (... and now arise cross this Jordan")... R' Abahu said: Nevertheless, Otniel ben Kenaz restored these teachings through his Talmudic analysis.

Temurah 16a

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל:
שלשת אלפים הלכות נשתכחו
בימי אבלו של משה. אמרו לו
ליהושע: שאל. אמר להם: "לא
בשמים היא" (דברים ל':יב').
אמרו לו לשמואל: שאל. אמר
להם: "אלה המצוות" (במדבר
ל':יג'). שאין הנביא רשאי
לחדש דבר מעתה. אמר רבי
יצחק נפחא: אף חטאת שמתו
בעליה נשתכחה בימי אבלו של
משה. אמרו לפנחס: שאל. אמר
להם: "לא בשמים היא" (דברים
ל':יב'). אמרו לו לאלעזר: שאל.
אמר להם: "אלה המצוות"
(במדבר ל':יג') שאין נביא
רשאי לחדש דבר מעתה... תשש
כחו של יהושע, ונשתכחו ממנו
שלש מאות הלכות, ונולדו לו
שבע מאות ספיקות. ועמדו כל
ישראל להרגו. אמר לו הקדוש
ברוך הוא: לומר לך אי אפשר.
לך וטורדן במלחמה, שנאמר
(יהושע א':ב'): "ויהי אחרי
מות משה עבד ה' ויאמר ה'
(... קום עבור את הירדן)". אמר
רבי אבהו: אף על פי כן החזירן
עתניאל בן קנז מתוך פלפולו.
תמורה טז.

An additional challenge to living according to a more natural lifestyle is expressed by Yehoshua in verse 8: "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיד, והגית בו יומם ולילה", *this book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth; you shall meditate therein day and night*. While B'nai Yisrael are about to live a life according to nature, thereby increasing their workload and responsibilities, they are still expected to always be *osek b'Torah*, studying Torah. The nation will have to learn to balance learning with working. This involves taking Torah precepts and values into the workplace and into the field. One must incorporate *kedushah*, holiness, into one's life of *teva*, nature. So *chazak v'amatz* is encouragement for balancing Torah and *teva*, nature. The difficulties B'nai Yisrael had to endure in transitioning from life under Moshe's leadership, to life under Yehoshua's are still very much a part of our reality and existence. Every day we struggle to make a *parnassah* (living), be able to put food on the table, have our security and with all this keep Torah at the forefront. The challenges of the first national *aliyah* are similar to those who move to Eretz Yisrael nowadays.

Our Rabbis value *Sefer Yehoshua* tremendously. The Gemara in *Nedarim* on 22b states:

Had Israel not sinned, they would have been given only the Five Books of the Torah and the Book of Joshua, because it is the record of the arrangement of the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael.

אלמלא חטאו ישראל לא ניתן להם
אלא חמשה חומשי תורה וספר יהושע
בלבד, שערכה של ארץ ישראל הוא

Rashi explains that all the other *Sifrei Nac"h* were required to rebuke B'nai Yisrael for their transgressions. Had they not sinned, the rebuke would not have been necessary. [The question begs to be asked: What about David HaMelech, Shlomo HaMelech, and the building of the Beis Hamikdash, would all that not have been recorded? The *Mussar HaNeviim* answers that all of the above was rooted in sin - asking for a king, not relying on Hashem, and the many kings that led B'nai Yisrael astray. Had we been on a higher level we would not have needed one place for Hashem to reside, we could have had Hashem in our respective dwellings due to our own righteousness. However, because of our sins, beginning with the *Egel HaZahav*, Hashem mandated a single designated place. (See the *Seforno* on Vayikra 26:11,12)]

Hopefully, from studying this small portion of *Sefer Yehoshua*, the "*archah shel Eretz Yisrael*", Israel's value, will increase for each of us. Eretz Yisrael is a precious gift that must be held onto, it is not "*l'sha'ah*", temporary, rather "*l'dorot*", enduring for all generations. May our love for Eretz Yisrael grow with this portion of learning *Sefer Yehoshua*.