

PINCHAS

THE ROLE OF THE KING

A

God of the Spirits of All Flesh

Hashem told Moshe the sad news that he would not lead Bnei Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael. Moshe immediately responded with a request that Hashem appoint a new leader. Hashem told him to take Yehoshua and make him the next leader. When phrasing his request, Moshe asked, “*Yifkod Hashem Elokei haruchos l’chol basar ish al ha’eida asher yavo lifneihem va’asher yeitzei lifneihem va’asher yotzi’eim va’asher y’vi’eim v’lo sihyeh adas Hashem katzon asher ein lahem ro’eh*. Hashem, the God Who knows the spirits of all flesh, please appoint a man to lead the congregation, who will go in front of them and will return in front of them. He will take them out and bring them back in. Don’t let them be like sheep without a shepherd” (Bamidbar 27:16-17). Hashem responded, “Take Yehoshua bin Nun, for he is person of spirit. Rest your hand upon him and appoint him in a national assembly together with Elazar, the *kohen*. Appoint Yehoshua as the new Jewish leader after you” (ibid. 18-19).

Immediately after this episode, the Torah teaches the commandments to bring sacrifices on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Our Sages are puzzled by the juxtaposition of the discussion of Jewish

leadership and the discussion of the sacrifices for Shabbos and the holidays.

Rashi explains that Hashem told Moshe, “You asked me to take care of My children with a good leader. I am asking you to take care of Me by bringing all of these sacrifices.” This is a strange statement. What is the connection between a leader and the *korbanos tzibbur*, the national sacrifices?

B

Leading Individuals and the Masses

The Shem Mishmuel refers us to Rashi’s explanation of Moshe’s description of the next leader. When Moshe asked Hashem for a Jewish leader, he used the term “*Hashem Elokei haruchos l’chol basar*. The God Who knows the spirits of all flesh.” Why did Moshe use this term; what does it mean? Additionally, Hashem responded to Moshe using similar language, telling him to take Yehoshua because he is a person of spirit. What is the meaning of this emphasis on the spirit?

Rashi explains that a Jewish leader needs the ability to deal with every individual Jew’s unique spirit, which is an enormous challenge. Leaders are in charge of masses of people. The king is in charge of the whole nation, which could be millions of people. In the case of China, for example, the leader of the nation presides over a billion people.

Dealing with a mass of people is already one challenge, but the Torah also places great emphasis on the individuality of every person. Granted, we are a nation, a mass of many people that functions as a national unit. But we are also individuals. My ideas are not your ideas, and we don’t agree about everything. We each have our unique ways of thinking about things. The Torah emphasizes both aspects. A Jew is a unique individual, and he or she is

also part of the mass of the Jewish nation. The Jewish leader must be able to lead both the Jewish nation and each individual Jew.

C

Personal *Mitzvos* and Public *Mitzvos*

Many *mitzvos* in the Torah are for the individual to perform by himself. Each person must eat *matza* on Pesach, put on *tefillin*, honor his or her parents, and return lost items. Other *mitzvos* are for the community to perform together or collectively. The community must appoint a king, build a Beis Hamikdash, conquer Eretz Yisrael, and bring *korbanos* on holidays. We are supposed to perfect ourselves as individuals through our private *mitzvos*, and we are also supposed to perform *mitzvos* and do God's will as a nation.

Some *mitzvos* have a double level. *Tefila*, prayer, for example, consists of two elements, an individual *mitzva* and a public *mitzva*. This is why the Shemoneh Esrei is repeated. The first time, each individual person offers his personal prayer. Then, in *chazaras hashatz*, the leader repeats the prayer out loud and everyone answers *amen*. This is a group prayer, *tefilas hatzibbur*.

D

Responsibility to the Individual

The great challenge for a leader, according to the Shem Mishmuel, is to never lose sight of the individuals while caring for the mass of people. It is quite natural for a leader to think of the mass of people for whom he is responsible. There are too many individuals to care for each person's distinct needs. Interestingly, the Torah does not want the Jewish leader to take that exclusively national perspective. Of course, the Torah wants the Jewish leader to think

nationally, and to think of the good of the nation. But, at the same time, the Torah wants him to lead and care for each individual.

In Sefer Melachim, we learn a wonderful story that illustrates this point. Arguably, the most successful king in Jewish history was Shlomo. He is called *chacham mikol adam*; he was the wisest man alive (see I Melachim 5:11). Hashem gave Shlomo a special gift of wisdom. He even understood the chirping of birds, the neighing of horses, the braying of donkeys, and dolphin whistles. He understood the singing of the trees. He understood the workings of the planets, stars, constellations, and many things that today people consider mysteries.

We might have expected his wisdom to relate specifically and exclusively to the nation. His Beis Hamikdash was, in fact, a glorious edifice for the nation. However, we also are told at length about his wisdom in dealing with individual people. After Hashem gave Shlomo his great gift of wisdom, we are given an example, somewhere that this great wisdom came to the fore. What is the example chosen?

We are told the story of two women who gave birth at the same time. The rabbis tell us the identity of these women. They were prostitutes who gave birth to illegitimate children. This story poignantly illustrates the depth of Shlomo's concern for even the lowest levels of society. The two women came together before Shlomo, bringing with them one living child and one dead child. One woman claimed that she had given birth to the living child, and that the other woman's child had suffered crib death. This first woman accused the second of taking her child and claimed that the living baby belonged to her. The second woman claimed that this was a fabrication, that the baby she was holding was indeed hers!

Shlomo said, "Bring me a sword and the living child." Shlomo then commanded to cut the child in half. All of a sudden, one of the women started screaming, "Don't do it! Don't kill the child!" Shlomo said, "The woman who screamed, 'Don't kill my baby,' is

the true mother.” Apparently, this is the best example of Shlomo’s great wisdom—solving the personal problems of the lowest rungs of society.

E

Common People, Common Problems

This story of Shlomo’s discovery of the true mother is the illustration *par excellence* of his heavenly wisdom. The Navi could have told us a story about how he made an international alliance of a thousand countries. He was a brilliant statesman and political tactician. This would have demonstrated his national stroke of genius. Instead, we are taught that he took care of a prostitute and her illegitimate child. He brought them into his palace and decided himself who the true mother was. He expressed so much concern for a mother to have her baby. He dealt with the lowest class of Jewish society of his time. In that unfortunate and tragic situation, he got involved and made a decision to restore justice.

Our Sages say that Shlomo was following the example of his father Dovid. Dovid took Israel from a small and weak country and made it into a strong regional power. When Chazal discuss Dovid’s greatness, though, they don’t focus on his military prowess. They say he would spend every day answering questions of women about their menstruation (see Brachos 4a). They wanted to know whether or not they were permitted according to *halacha* to be with their husbands. Married couples often have many questions to ask a rabbi in this area. Dovid gave his time to these people and their questions, time that could have been dedicated to the national goals and the agenda of the people at large. He was also the great singer of the psalms and prayers. He had his own personal devotion to Hashem, which was very important. He was also head of the Sanhedrin in Yerushalayim. He was the chief justice, a great *talmid chacham*. Even with all these demanding

responsibilities, he still spent his time getting his hands dirty—literally—with blood, to help Jewish husbands and wives have pure children and a holy family life. The people had access to him. We see that both Dovid and Shlomo helped the poor, rejected, and unhappy people.

F

The Heart of All Israel

A Jewish king is not just a king of the nation of Israel. He is the king, leader, and father of every individual Jew. A Jewish king is commanded to write a second *sefer Torah*. Every Jew has a *mitzva* to write a *sefer Torah* once in his lifetime. The king, however, has to write a second scroll. The Torah says, “*V’haysa imo v’kara bo kol y’mei chayav*. It should be with him, and he should read it all the days of his life” (Devarim 17:19). According to Chazal, the king’s Torah was a tiny scroll, which he would wear on a chain so that it would sit right on his heart, and he would read from it continually.

The Rambam writes (Hilchos Melachim 3:6) that the reason the king must have a *sefer* on his heart is because “the heart of the king is the heart of every Jew,” and the heart of every Jew is connected to the Torah. The king is concerned for every Jew, not just the nation. He must not concern himself solely with the glory and grandeur of being the monarch of the nation. He must serve as the leader for every individual member of the Jewish People. This is a real Jewish leader.

G

The Spirit of Leadership

As we noted, when discussing leaders and leadership, the Torah emphasizes the spirit. Moshe included the spirit in his request.

“Hashem knows that every person has his own individual spirit. Let the leader be a person who knows that, too.” Hashem then told Moshe, “Take Yehoshua, a man who has spirit in him. He has sensitivity to each of his followers and his individual spirit.” A Jewish king needs to relate to each individual, not just to the collective.

This is a great challenge. How can a leader really do that? Shlomo and Dovid succeeded, but is this really possible for all Jewish kings and leaders? The king, after all, is a model for all Jewish leaders. The Gemara applies many of the rules of choosing a king to the process of choosing a Jewish mayor and local police chief. Every public servant has to be modeled after the Jewish king. This includes every commissioner and every tax collector and every policeman, since they must all deal with individuals as unique people. How can a leader maintain this perspective?

H

The Armed Forces

The Shem Mishmuel illustrates this idea with an analogy. Imagine a general in the armed forces. He holds responsibility for the air force, navy, foot soldiers, tanks, and artillery. How does he deal with all the different parts of the army? Every part of the armed forces shares something in common with every other branch, but they also have differences. All the branches are united in the shared goal of victory. They all want to defeat the enemy. Every sailor, pilot, and foot soldier shares this goal. On the other hand, each branch of the armed forces has its unique mission. The tanks have their mission, and the planes have theirs. The commander carries a dual responsibility. He needs to develop both aspects. He needs to ensure that all the soldiers actually do share that same goal, and he also has to ensure that each branch of the armed forces makes its distinct contribution towards achieving the shared goal of defeating the enemy.

For example, the commander might have the following plan. Artillery is the first part of a military campaign. After that, commandos from the navy attack. Then comes the air force bombardment. Then come the tanks, and then the foot soldiers. Each branch coordinates its actions with the other branches with the goal of fighting a successful campaign. The tanks, for example, need to coordinate with the submarines, planes, and commandos. They share a common goal, to defeat the enemy. This common goal fosters the motivation that creates unity for a coordinated attack. The commander's job is to create the common motivation and to coordinate their distinct maneuvers.

This is the secret of Jewish leadership. How does a Jewish leader deal with all the different individual Jews? He must start by encouraging all the Jews to have the same goal of serving Hashem. We must all be united with one fundamental, common agenda. We are servants of Hashem, and we are bound by the Torah. This is our common mission, our constitution and goal.

Now, individuals Jews or groups of Jews contribute towards this goal in their own way. Some Jews are rabbis. Some are businessmen. Some Jews are workers. Some live in the Galil, while others live in Tel Aviv or in Jerusalem. Each individual or group of people has its unique contribution towards serving Hashem. *Eilu v'eilu divrei Elokim chayim*. Hillel and Shamai, Rava and Abayei, the Vilna Gaon and the Baal Shem Tov—each had different approaches to Torah. Different individuals have their different ways of serving Hashem. They must share the common goal of serving Hashem and advancing *kiddush Hashem* in this world. They must make honor for God Who chose this holy people, who are producing holiness in this world. And they are helping the world to achieve the goal of the messianic era and to redeem the world from its sins and failings. This is our national agenda. We pursue it through individual and separate contributions.

This is why the king has to know the powers of each individual soul and to put them together as Klal Yisrael, as *ish echad b'lev*

echad. A person has a heart and eyes. Sometimes, the heart is full of energy, and at other times, it feels lethargic. The king unites all the different aspects in his heart, unites all the different types and sub-communities among his people. Each one makes its own contribution towards the goal of *kiddush Hashem*. The king has to unite them all while activating each of them in their own special ways. This is what Moshe wanted and Yehoshua bin Nun was able to accomplish.

I

Unity and Difference in *Korbanos*

We now return to our original question. Why does the Torah tell us this episode of the appointment of Yehoshua bin Nun before it teaches us about the sacrifices of the *tamid* and *musafim*?

The *korban tamid*, the daily sacrifice, and the sacrifices of the Jewish holidays represent unity.

The Jewish People must be united in order to bring these sacrifices. These sacrifices are funded by the half-*shekel* collected every year from every individual Jew. Through these *korbanos*, all the Jews subscribe to the common agenda of *kiddush Hashem*. This is the purpose of the Jewish leader and king, to develop *kiddush Hashem*.

Even as a united nation, each community has its own way of contributing. The daily sacrifice is not the same as the Shabbos sacrifice, which is not the same as that of Rosh Chodesh, Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, or Shemini Atzeret. Each day has a different sacrifice. These sacrifices show the variety within the common purpose.

This is the goal of the king of Israel. He has to promote the common purpose of *kiddush Hashem* by developing the variations within the individual subgroups and individual people. This

combination of *tzibbur* and *yachid* is the key to *kiddush Hashem* and the *korbanos* in the Beis Hamikdash.

Let us hope and pray that we will be privileged to participate in this goal of serving Hashem as a nation together with our individual expressions and variations.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the statement that Yehoshua had a spirit within him?
2. What was unique about Dovid and Shlomo's kingship?
3. List five individual *mitzvos* and five national *mitzvos*.

EXERCISE

1. For a week, try to combine activities that help the Jewish people with actions that help individuals.

