



Parshat Pinchas: Qualifications of Leadership

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Avishai David

In this week's parsha, Hashem tells Moshe to appoint Yehoshua to become his successor. The Rambam in Mishne Torah asks why specifically Yehoshua merited to be selected. There were other more qualified candidates, like Elazar and Pinchas, who surpassed him in their intellectual acuity. The Rambam answers that although Yehoshua, Pinchasi, and Elazar were all students of Moshe, Yehoshua was the *talmid neeman*, most faithful disciple. He ministered to Moshe, followed him everywhere and scrutinized his every action. Of him the Chazal say, *gedola shimusha shel Torah yoxer m'lemuda*. Personally attending a Torah scholar is greater than studying the Torah itself. This is why Yehoshua merited to inherit the mantle of leadership from Moshe.

The midrash comments, "Notzer t'eina yochel piryah. The one who guards the fig tree will merit to eat its fruit." Often we think that the

greatest scholars, the ones with the sharpest minds and broadest knowledge, are worthy to become leaders. Yehoshua was an outstanding *talmid chacham*, but he did not become Moshe's successor by virtue of his superior learning, but because he served Moshe faithfully.

The Ramban writes that when Moshe descended the mountain after *cheit haegel* and sensed the unrest in the Jewish camp, Yehoshua said there must be a war going on. Moshe countered that he was mistaken and that the Jews were involved in blasphemous conduct. How did Moshe know the truth, while Yehoshua did not? Moshe had led the Jews for so many years that he was able to discern correctly what was happening. Yehoshua was still a novice. By serving Moshe and observing his ways, he eventually acquired the ability to sense the nation.

The Baal Shem Tov had many students who were great Torah scholars, prominent among them, Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye. However, the Mezhreticher Magid merited to assume leadership of the Chassidic movement after the Baal Shem Tov's passing. This was because he, of all of the Baal Shem Tov's students, was most familiar with the Baal Shem Tov's ways and conduct, having served him faithfully for so many years.

The ability to serve a great Torah giant, to study his behavior and responses to various stimuli, is crucial for a potential leader's training. Many people can acquire knowledge. Torah can be studied through many different venues. But *shimush*, serving a Torah leader, is the critical factor in the making of a future leader in klal Yisrael.

Valuable Vision- The Three Weeks

Based on a shiur by Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Kolpowitz-Stein

The Jewish People does not only celebrate holidays of joy and grandeur. We also devote time to focusing on our communal failures and tragedies. In fact, we remember the time of our greatest loss, the destruction of our Holy Temple, for a full three week period, from the seventeenth of Tamuz to the ninth of Av.

Such a long focus on our tragedy would appear to be depressing. However, it all depends on one's perspective. If we focus on ourselves, on our failings and subsequent suffering, commemorating the tragedy for so long is self-defeating. But if we concentrate on Hakodosh Boruch Hu, understand whatever happens to us is through His Divine guidance and Providence, then we can accept our tribulations with an element of joy, knowing that these, too, are a manifestation of God's love for us. We can understand that Hashem, our Father, has raised us, but we have rebelled against Him. Nevertheless, although He is forced to reprimand us and punish us, He does so out of love, so that we will correct our ways and grow properly, as any parent raising his child would do. Can we recognize God's love in difficult

times, when His mercy seems hidden from us? We must not give up hope during times of trial. Rather, we must pursue Him, beseeching Him to lovingly show us His face.

This is the concept that lies at the heart of Shabbat chazon, the Shabbat of vision, the last of the three haftorot of tragedy before Tisha b'Av, one for each of the three weeks. The designation comes from the first word of this week's Haftorah, "The vision of Isaiah..." The visions of these haftorot seem full of impending doom, for they foretell the quickly approaching hordes that will overrun Israel and destroy the Holy Temple. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, one can discern the glimmer of hope even in these foreboding prophecies.

How does Jeremiah, in the first Haftorah, envision this prophecy? He sees a rod of an almond tree. Within this image lies the hope that will turn despair into future joy. Right now, this rod is a mere stick, barren of any leaves, buds or fruit. But in twenty-one days, the almond tree will blossom and bear fruit. So, too, in the twenty-one days from the 17th of Tamuz to the ninth of Av, the days

that seem darkest and most empty for our nation, the potential for growth and rejuvenation is implanted within us. This desolation was necessary so that new spiritual life would spring forth, much as the gardener prunes the trees to allow the sunlight in so that the new growth will be vibrant and healthy.

The greater vision of this time is to internalize Hashem's love for us, in good times and bad, and to open our hearts to His Presence, to know Him each day, and to return Him to our hearts, the seat of our emotions and passions.

At the end of Tisha b'Av, we bless the new moon, the symbol of new hope. It will reach its fullness on the fifteenth of Av, traditionally a day of great joy and dancing.

Hashem supports us, Hashem loves us, in the days of our joy, and especially in the days of our tribulation and exile. We must look beyond the barren rod to its potential. The almond branch will bear fruit, and our term of exile will help perfect us so that we may merit the final redemption speedily, in our days.



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

תורת אמן WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 16 Number 21

Brought to you by Naaleh.com

Parsha Journeys: Parshat Pinchas

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

Pinchas was a grandson of Aharon HaKohen. His zealous act of killing Kozbi and Zimri stopped the plague. Yet people were upset at him for killing a prince of Israel. They called him by the derogatory name Pinchat. They said, "You are not a descendant of Israel, but of Yisro, who worshipped every form of idolatry and this proves you didn't have proper intentions. You are just an idol worshipper yourself." But they didn't know that he had asked Moshe who forgot the law and advised him to act on his zealous instincts. They were taken aback when Hashem announced He would give Pinchas His covenant of peace. Hashem said, "You call him Ben Putiel referring to idolatry, but I say this is a badge of

honor hinting to Yosef who was able to fight against his *yetzer*."

Peace isn't about passivity. One has to be proactively involved in it and even fight for it. The Chofetz Chaim gives some pointers how to do this. If you have an argument and your right and the other person is wrong give in. Tell Hashem the problem and he'll take care of it. There's a prohibition in the Torah that one may not hate an Egyptian because we were once strangers in their land. So if you are not allowed to hate an Egyptian although they caused us so much suffering, how much more so are we not allowed to hate a neighbor or a friend, who doesn't do us a favor. But the fact is he doesn't owe you anything. Instead of

thinking of the bad, think about the good. How many times did he say yes to your requests. The Chofetz Chaim says it's a wise idea to set up a peace fund. So many arguments can be avoided through money set aside for peace. The most important thing of all is to give the benefit of the doubt and to judge favorably.

Pinchas was worthy of being a priest not only because he was descended of one, but because he was like Aharon Hakohen. Like his grandfather, he was able to turn back the anger of Hashem and achieve atonement for the entire Jewish people.