

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe Rabinowitz zt"l

פרשת פנחס

Volume 6 Issue # 38

לעילוי נשמת  
הרב משה אליעזר בן  
הרב ישראל זצ"ל  
נתנדב ע"י ידידו ומוקירו

## פרשת פנחס

וַיִּדְבֹר מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' לֵאמֹר: יִפְקֹד ה' אֱלֹקֵי הַרוּחֹת לְכֹל בֶּשָׂר אִישׁ עַל הָעֵדָה: (במדבר כ"ז, י"ד-ט"ו)  
And Moshe spoke to Hashem saying, "Let Hashem G-d of the spirits of all flesh appoint a leader over the congregation."

כ"י: לאמר, אמר לו, השיבני אם אתה ממנה להם פרנס אם לאו

When Moshe Rabbeinu was preparing to leave this world, he was very concerned about the Bnei Yisroel being left without a leader, and he requested of Hashem that a new leader be appointed after him. He was so concerned that Rashi tells us that this was one of the few instances that Moshe actually 'demanded' that Hashem respond to him and inform him whether or not his request would be granted.

We will focus now on two different points regarding how Moshe presented his request to Hashem:

### Like Sheep that Do Not Have a Shepherd

ולא תהיה עדת ה' כצאן אשר אין להם רעה / *Let the Congregation of Hashem not be like sheep which do not have a shepherd for them.* The question we may ask is, we understand that people use *meshalim* and stories when they are speaking to each other. The *mashal* illustrates the point and helps the listener to understand it in a clearer way. Perhaps he may not be that familiar with the subject matter being discussed, and the *mashal* or story will help bring it closer to home. Or sometimes, the story will liven the topic somewhat and draw the listeners' interest. However, in regard to Hashem, we would assume that there is no need for such things. After all, Hashem understands the issue completely without any *mashal*. Why then was it necessary for Moshe to illustrate his point with a comparison to sheep without a shepherd? Why could he not simply say 'Let the Congregation of Hashem not be without a leader'?

### A Shepherd Vs. a Default Leader

Perhaps we can explain that by comparing the situation to sheep without a shepherd, Moshe was adding an extra dimension to his request that would otherwise not have been included in his words.

*Sheep have a tendency to constantly be following after a leader figure. Therefore, there can be two different scenarios that can occur in their behaviors. If there is a shepherd leading them, they will faithfully follow the shepherd's lead and do as he commands them. If, however, there is no shepherd in charge, they will automatically follow the largest sheep of the group. This sheep will assume the mantle of leadership by default.*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> עיין רש"י ב"ק דף נ"ב ע"א ד"ה עיזא דאזלא בריש עדרא, וז"ל יש לבעל העדר עז חריף, ודרך העזים להלך בראש והעדר הולך אחריהם, עכ"ל.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל  
פרשת פנחס

It was this second scenario that Moshe wanted to avoid. Moshe wanted Klal Yisroel to have a leader whose wisdom and Torah knowledge was a complete cut above the common person, and who could thereby direct and instruct them on the proper path with insight and understanding. He did not wish for a situation to arise in which leadership is assumed by default, for absence of a true, qualified leader.

*In a shul or other community setting, the same two scenarios can take place. Either a bona-fide rav is appointed; if not, then usually the loudest or most popular and charismatic individual becomes the leader. He may be well-meaning and do his best to act as leader with his limited knowledge, but if he does not have the wisdom to make him truly qualified, there will inevitably be mistakes made in various areas.*

Moshe davened to Hashem that such should not be the case. Hashem should appoint a leader who is a 'shepherd', a leader with an elevated understanding, as a shepherd is to his flock.

### **Appointing a Rav for a Kehillah**

This is an important lesson for us to follow, even in our times. Each shul and community should see to appoint a qualified *rav*, who can lead the *tzibbur* on the proper paths of Torah and *Avodah*, and who will have the understanding to guide them through all different turns and situations that can arise.

This idea is reflected in our davening on Yom Kippur. We say *כי אנו צאנך ואתה רוענו* / *For we are Your sheep, and You are our Shepherd*. We say to Hashem, 'We recognize that You are completely distinct from us and beyond any connection to our traits. It is not that we are wise, but You are wiser; rather, Your wisdom is a completely different entity than ours. The same holds true for all Hashem's traits that He displays to us. Based on this, we understand that Hashem leads us and takes care of us in a manner that is beyond our understanding and in a higher level than we could live on our own. We daven to Hashem that using this *middah* as our lofty Leader, He should forgive us from our sins and redeem us.

### **בו איש אשר רוח בו / An Individual with a Spirit inside Him**

What exactly did Moshe request of Hashem? 'Let Hashem *אלוקי הרוחות לכל בשר* / *G-d of the spirits of all flesh* appoint a leader over the congregation.' Hashem, in turn, answered him, 'Take Yehoshua Bin Nun *איש אשר רוח בו* / *an individual with a spirit inside him*.' What did Hashem and Moshe mean by the word *רוח* / *spirit*? Rashi explains that the intent was a man who can deal with the personality of each individual person. The Ohr Hachaim explains further, that just as in physical features and characteristics, every individual person is distinct from every else, similarly and all the more so, is this true regarding the inner intangible aspects of people. This includes the *seichel*/minds of people, the personalities, the desires, and the inner strengths. It is almost completely impossible for any two people to share the same characteristics in these areas.

For this reason, it will be extremely difficult to find a leader who is suitable to the task of guiding the entire nation. After all, the leader will have his own individual ideas and needs etc., while every other person will want other plans and ideas. In fact, the Ohr Hachaim explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was specifically suited for his task because of the deep concept in *kabbala* that his *neschama* was the root of all the *neschamos* of Klal Yisroel. He was therefore able to relate to each specific person, because his *neschama* actually had a spark of the *neschama* of the other person. However, regarding the succeeding leader, Moshe was concerned about this very real problem. How could there be a leader who could relate and connect to the entire Nation?

### **'Agreeing' with Each Individual**

Moshe therefore davened to Hashem that a leader should be appointed that could, in fact relate to every single individual. In the words of the Ohr Hachaim, the leader should have the quality *שיסכים הוא למה שיאמרו הם ויסכימו הם למה שיאמר הוא להם /that he should agree to what they say, and they should agree to what he says*. Moshe spoke here of what seems to be an amazing quality – that the leader would always be in agreement with everyone in the nation. Such a quality would surely allow for effective leadership, if it could be found. Hashem answered him that indeed, Yehoshua possessed this quality, and Moshe's request would be granted in the figure of Yehoshua.

Let us now try to examine the character of Yehoshua and how it was that he merited this precious quality. When we do study the different actions and behaviors of Yehoshua that are revealed in the Torah, we come across two different traits in which he excelled.

### **Yehoshua Was a מבקש/A Seeker**

The first trait we see in Yehoshua is that he was a מבקש/a seeker. When Moshe went up to Har Sinai, Yehoshua accompanied him to the outskirts of the camp, until the point at which he was permitted to go no further. He did not wish to miss even a second of Moshe Rabbeinu's teachings. Even after Moshe had already gone up the mountain, Yehoshua pitched his own tent in that spot, so that when Moshe would return, he would be able to catch him at the first possible second.

*'But why can't you return to the camp for the next while, and come back here on day 38?'*

*'No! I do not want to risk it. What if something will prevent me from retuning? I am staying right here until Moshe comes back!'*

*However, there was a clear problem that would probably await Yehoshua through this action.*

*'If you don't come to the camp, you're not getting any mann! The mann is sent to Klal Yisroel; you have to be part of it if you want a share!'*

*Yehoshua, however, would not be deterred by this worry. 'I am staying here, come what may!'*

In fact, Yehoshua was rewarded for his determination. The Gemara (יומא ע"ה:) tells us that the *passuk* (תהילים ע"ה כ"ה) *להם אבירים אכל איש /The bread of the mighty, one man ate* refers to Yehoshua, who received *mann* for those 40 days on an individual basis, even as he was separated from the camp. His desire to be as near as possible to his great rebbe made him worthy of receiving his own private falling of mann.

The *middah* that we see here is one of a real desire to hear every possible teaching of Moshe Rabbeinu, and of behaving in accordance with that desire. He was not going to 'sit back' and hope for the best; rather, Yehoshua did whatever was in his power to catch as much of Moshe's teaching as he could.

### **The Humility of Yehoshua**

The second *middah* which stands out in Yehoshua's behavior is his humility. Chazal tell us that Yehoshua was the one who would set up the benches and tables each day in the Beis Medrash for the benefit of all those coming to learn from Moshe Rabbeinu. This was a tremendous act of humbleness on his part, because as Moshe's prime *talmid*, he could certainly have felt above such tasks.

*Oftentimes, the student who is on a lower level than the group will be the one who helps the rebbe with various tasks. He will get the coffee for the rebbe, give a message to the principal*

*etc. This boy volunteers for these tasks so that he can feel that he, too, is contributing to the shiur. Indeed, his zechus is great, and it will surely stand for him. However, the star talmid in the shiur will not be found arranging the classroom and doing errands for the rebbe. He, after all, discusses the shiur with the rebbe, and is 'above' such 'lowly' tasks.*

Yehoshua did not consider himself above the task of setting up the Beis Medrash. On the contrary, it was a *mitzvah* that needed a volunteer, and Yehoshua was only too happy to grab that extra *zechus* and *chelek* in the learning of the other *lomdim*. Beneath his dignity? That concept had no place in Yehoshua's mind regarding such a *mitzvah*.

In truth, these two traits of Yehoshua were related. Precisely because of his great humility, he was able to push himself to his fullest to hear all Moshe's teachings. He was not inhibited by any misplaced sense of dignity that would make it beneath himself to try so hard. He rather understood that the proper behavior for him in the context was to push himself to his fullest, and no worries of dignity would then stop him.

### **Yehoshua's Humility and Determination Helped Him Understand Each Person**

Perhaps we can understand that it was the combination of these two middos that imbued Yehoshua with the quality of being able to be in agreement with each individual. This does not mean that he did what each person wanted. Rather, he came to an understanding with each individual by speaking that person's specific 'language'. He exerted himself to his fullest to try to understand what it was that was driving that individual, and he actually considered that person's point of view. Perhaps he eventually conceded that the other person was correct, or perhaps he remained firm in his own view. Either way, he had a real 'conversation' with the other person, and the other individual felt that he was understood. He was then able to accept Yehoshua's final ruling.

This leadership quality of Yehoshua to reach an agreement and understanding with each person, was predicated upon his humility which made him realize that the other party has a point to suggest. He was not too haughty to consider the possibility that there may be a point that he did not realize. He then further utilized his trait of exerting himself to try to understand the other person's point to the best of his ability.

### **Understanding the Other Point of View**

This concept is so important for our lives. In almost all instances where there is any sort of association or relationship between people, there will be multiple opinions. Each person sees the story with his own viewpoint according to his own perception. In fact, this is exactly the reason that a judge in a Beis Din is forbidden from hearing one party's viewpoint while the other party is not present. The judge begins to perceive the story based on how it was presented to him, while the other litigant has a completely different version of the story.

*Reuven is absolutely convinced that Shimon owes him \$1,000. Shimon, on the other hand, believes with complete conviction that Reuven should be thanking him for having originally laid out an extra \$1,000 which should have been Reuven's responsibility.*

*The truth is usually somewhere in between.*

We must learn to try to grasp the other person's point of view rather than dismissing it without any thought. The other side will appreciate that we took their side seriously and they will then respect our conclusion. In truth, a point of view only has real value when the other side was given careful consideration.

This concept holds true in all areas:

- *The Chazon Ish used to say that true hatzlacha in learning comes when a chavrusa applies himself to understanding his chavrusa's opposing point of view. Whether he ends up agreeing with his chavrusa or not, his understanding will be clearer and broader through having weighed the two sides. If he simply rejects his chavrusa's words, even if only because his chavrusa truly seems to be totally wrong, he is withholding from himself a different perspective of the sugya.*
- *A good lawyer is one who understands the other side's case thoroughly. He is then able to produce a clear argument against it. If he does not fully understand the other side, he will not be able to debate it properly.*
- *'Doctor A' pronounces that his patient is in need of a surgery. The patient goes for a second opinion, and the second doctor, 'Doctor B', declares that in his opinion, no surgery is necessary. Now is the test on how Doctor A will react. If he wishes, he can simply dismiss the other doctor's verdict and criticize him angrily for having the chutzpah to disagree with him. If this is his choice of action, then Doctor A is an unqualified doctor who puts his own pride before his patients' lives.*

*He may, on the other hand, choose to give the second opinion careful consideration. He will call up Doctor B and respectfully ask him to explain his position. After having heard the other viewpoint, Doctor A will then delve into the question until he reaches his own conclusion. Perhaps he will concede that the other doctor is correct. Or perhaps, he will stick to his own opinion. Regardless of which way he concludes, his opinion is a valuable one, because he thought through both angles of the question.*

### **When the Other Side is Heard, He will Have an Easier Time Retracting His Position**

When we take the other side seriously, we will oftentimes give the other individual an easier time giving in when he may be wrong. This is important for *chinuch* and for other areas.

*A bachur in a yeshiva of which I was the menahel, was missing shacharis quite frequently. His rebbe finally decided that he has no choice but to keep him out of shiur as a penalty. The bachur, though, was none too happy about this arrangement. He felt that he was being treated unfairly for no good reason. The rebbe met me in the hallway and apprised me of the problem. I told the rebbe to send the bachur to me.*

*When the bachur came to me, I patiently asked him if he really wants to continue missing Shacharis the way he has been. He responded that he certainly wants to make it to davening; it is just difficult for him. I then gently explained that the hanhalla of the yeshiva had realized that the only way that he could be helped in this endeavor was by making his coming to shiur contingent upon it. When faced with the facts in this fashion, the bachur had no choice but to agree that it may actually have been fair to bar him from coming to shiur as a means of getting him to come to Shacharis. He only asked if he could just be given one more chance. I granted him his request, and he began coming to Shacharis on time.*

The difference between what originally happened to this boy and what happened to him in the end, is exactly what we are discussing. Originally, this boy was simply presented with the plain fact: 'You cannot come to shiur.' That ruling was one with which he did not agree, and he made that be known. When I spoke to him however, it was on his own terms, reasoning with him about what would be the best strategy to help him begin coming to Shacharis. At this, he suddenly found himself agreeing that it was actually the proper course of action, given his behavior. His only response was that he would try to improve, which he did.

*There was a chasunah in Toronto, where the kallah came down with a severe case of 'cold feet'. Just as she was to walk down the aisle, she just could not go! The plate had been broken at the Tenaim, the chassan had walked down the aisle, and now the kallah would not go on with the show! The parents of the kallah were completely frantic. They had no idea what they should do. The kallah's teacher was called in to speak to her, then her high school principal, then the family's rav – many different figures came, but to no avail. She would not budge. After a few tense minutes had passed, the caterer caught wind of the delay. He inquired about what was going on and he was told that the kallah got nervous.*

*"I'll take care of this," he declared confidently.*

*He walked over to the kallah and said to her, "Are you a little nervous? It's ok, every kallah feels that way at her chuppah. The feeling lasts a minute or two and then you push forward. Don't worry, this is how every kallah goes to her chuppah!"*

*When the kallah heard that, she was able to walk down the aisle.*

How had the caterer succeeded where everyone else could not? The answer is that everyone else simply began explaining to her why she must move forward. She, however, was nervous, and no explanation would take that away. No one was talking 'her language'. Finally, the caterer came and acknowledged that she was nervous! He did not try to tell her not to be nervous; he simply told her that she could continue despite her nervousness! When someone addressed her point of view, that is what spoke to her.

### **True Empathy**

*When I was learning in the Mir yeshiva in Yerushalayim, a youngerman in the yeshiva tragically passed away with no children, leaving behind a devastated young almanah. As she sat shiva for her husband, many people came in to be menachem avel. Included among the menachamim was the rosh yeshiva, Rav Chaim Shmulevitz. He came in and sat in front of her crying softly. He continued sitting there for some time, just crying, without saying a word. After about half an hour, he got up, said HaMakom Yinacheim, and left.*

*A few weeks later, the woman related the following. "Many people came to try to comfort me and I appreciate each person. However, there was only one person whom I feel really understood me. That was Rav Shmulevitz."*

When other people had come to this woman, they tried telling her all sorts of reasons and *cheshbonos* why she should not be so upset. Her husband was in a better place, Hashem was with her, etc. All of these things may have been true, but they would not erase her pain. Rav Chaim did nothing of the sort. He simply came in and acknowledged her pain. Her pain was such that there was nothing really that could be said. So Rav Chaim came in and said nothing! He dealt with her perspective rather than offering one of his own, and that is what spoke to her.

We must practice this concept when we speak with our children, with our parents, our spouse, our chaverim or co-workers. We need to try to understand the other individual's perspective and address it. Rather than being defensive about and protecting our own point of view, let us be open to hear the other side. We will only gain in the process. By doing this, we will have productive discussions and healthy relationships, and indeed, our point of view will be taken into consideration to a far greater degree.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל  
פרשת פנחס

**In Review**

Let us remember the two points we learned from Moshe Rabbeinu's *tefillah* concerning the appointment of a new leader.

- Let us realize that a true leader is a shepherd, above the level of the *tzibbur*, who has a deep understanding of Torah and the *ratzon Hashem*. Each *kehillah* must see to find such a *rav* who can lead them on the proper *derech*.
- And let us remember the humility that we must have, so that we can allow ourselves – and exert ourselves – to hear and understand a point of view that is different than our own.

Bez"V we should be *zoche* to fulfill these concepts and reap the benefits which accompany them.

© All rights reserved

*To subscribe to the weekly shmuess by email,  
or for audio recordings of the shmuessen,  
Call / Text 848-299-7212  
or email: ohrpneimoshe@gmail.com*

*A sampling of the audio shmuessen can also be obtained at  
<https://www.shasilluminated.org/rabbi-moshe-rabinowitz>*