

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
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Sh'lach

The saga of Yehoshua's spies and their encounter with the resident(s) of Yericho, that is read for this week's haftara, is a well-known story and one whose connection to this week's parasha is obvious. Although the spy story is found in this second perek of Sefer Yehoshua, the Vilna Gaon clarifies that the events found therein, specifically, the sending of the spies and their arrival at the city, actually predated the events found in the first chapter of the book. The GR"A points out that the spies entered Yericho, received their report from Rachav who, subsequently conceals them on her roof from the king's men, and they later escaped to the surrounded hills hiding from their pursuers for three days. Only after that did they cross back to the eastern bank of the Yarden to the Israelite camp and report their findings. Now, the first perek tells of the command given to the Israelites to prepare for their entry into the land IN THREE DAYS -and the spies returned to the camp before the nation crossed into Eretz

Cana'an (Yisrael) - it is clear that the beginning of our haftara speaks of the events that occurred even before the opening of Sefer Yehoshua.

That being true, we have an opportunity to touch upon the remarkable personality of this successor to Moshe Rabeinu (talk about an impossible challenge!).

When we open his book, we had already learned who Yehoshua is and what he had accomplished. It is a fact that explains why the beginning of the sefer does not bother to tell us who he was, who his father was, what tribe he came from, etc. He had already been introduced to us.

But do we really know him well?

We first meet him when he is chosen to lead the battle against Amalek and there he is introduced simply as "Yehosuha" - no more. We are not told from which tribe he came nor who his father was! And, although we do discover that his father was named NUN [Sh'mot 33:11], we hear nothing else of his ancestry anywhere in the Torah or in Sefer Yehoshua! When we DO finally find out of his past [Divrei HaYamim Alef 7:26-27] we are shocked to learn that he was of great yichus! He was the grandson of Elishama ben Amihud, the nasi (head) of the tribe of Efrayim! Yet, no mention of this is

found throughout the Torah or the books of Nevi'im!!

And when he is chosen as the new leader - we are rightly puzzled once more. Although he led Israel into war against Amalek that was the only leadership role he filled in the Torah. He was silent upon hearing to the reports of the 10 spies and responded only after Kaleb led the opposition to them. He remained completely silent when Korach and his cohorts rebelled against Moshe. True, he was the STUDENT of Moshe, the ATTENDANT of Moshe - but when Moshe ascended Har Sinai, he appointed Aharon and Chur as the interim leaders - NOT Yehoshua!

So why was he chosen to succeed Moshe?

The leadership qualities of Yehoshua were not centered in his strength nor in his scholarship nor in his spirituality... although he possessed them all. Yehoshua was chosen as leader because he understood his nation. He knew that this post-Exodus generation was different from the previous one. While Moshe had to convince the newly liberated people to believe in Hashem - in His power, His goodness and His mitzvot - a challenge that often required harsh warnings and punishments, this new generation needed no such convinc-

ing. And perhaps that is why Hashem denied Moshe continued leadership after our greatest leader lost his patience at the new generation and struck the rock in anger.

Consider: throughout Sefer Yehoshua we never find the nation complaining against their leader or rebelling against him. Even when they are defeated in battle they do not blame Yehoshua, turning to and pleading with G-d, instead. Nor do we find any instance when the nation sinned against Hashem (the sin of Achan was that of an individual). This was no longer the "stiff-necked" people with whom Moshe dealt - and Yehoshua understood that.

It is precisely for that reason that he was able to send spies to Yericho and not worry of the possible rebellion that his teacher experienced. The spies report directly to their new leader with full confidence. And the people listened to him without question.

True leadership requires true understanding of those being led. Successfully guiding a nation demands listening to them before speaking to them.

That was Yehoshua.

And that is what we should look for in any leader. 🌟