



## *Parshas Vayelech 2022, the people's leader*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel and Shaul Ben Berta.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of my great uncle, HaRav Sholom Ben HaRav Yakkov, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

This is a special Shabbos called Shabbos Shuvah- the Shabbos of Teshuva. Beginning with Rosh Hashanah, we enter the Aseres Ymey Teshuva - the 10 days of Teshuva which concludes with Yom Kippur.

During Shabbos Shuvah, we read a unique Haftorah from Hoshea. It opens with the words from king Hoshea, *שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך כי כשלת בעונך*, - Return, O Israel to the Lord your G-d, for you have stumbled with your sins.” Traditionally, rabbis across the globe will emphasize the importance of returning to G-d during their speeches this shabbos.

Our Parsha begins on the last day of Moshe Rabbeinu's life. He says to the Jewish people (31:2-3), *בן-מאה ועשרים שנה אנכי היום לא-אוכל עוד לצאת ולבוא, ה' אמר אלי לא, תעבר את-הירדן הוזה ה' אלקיך הוזה ה' - Today I am one hundred and twenty years old and can no longer continue, since G-d has said to me, you shall not cross the Jordan River. ה' אלקיך הוזה ה' - The Lord, your G-d will cross before you; He will destroy these nations so you will inherit them; Yeshuah will cross before you, as G-d has spoken.”*

Moshe calls Yeshua and gives him words of encouragement (31:7-8) *חזק ואמץ כי אתה תבוא את-העם הוזה אל-הארץ אשר נשבע יהוה לאבתם לתת להם ואתה תנחילנה אותם - Be strong*

**and courageous!** For you will go with this nation to the land which G-d swore to our forefathers to give them; you will portion it to them as an inheritance. *ה' הוא ההלך לפניך הוא יהיה עמך לא ירפך ולא יעזובך לא תירא ולא תחת* - G-D is the one who goes before you; He will be with you and will not fail or forsake you. Do not fear, and do not be disheartened."

However, a question comes to mind: When he encourages his successor, Moshe tells Yeshua Ben-Nun, "*Be strong and courageous! For you will go with this nation to the land.*" But Moshe doesn't tell Yeshua that he will "**lead the nation.**" Instead, Moshe says that he will "**go with the nation.**" Why doesn't Moshe tell Yeshua that he will lead the Jewish people into the promised land?!

Rashi (*Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading commentary on the Torah*) gives a simple explanation. He explains that Moshe is hinting to Yeshua to listen and heed the advice of the seventy elders. Although Yeshua will make the final decision, he should ask for guidance from the elders and respect their counsel.

However, the Chizkuni (*Rav Chezekiah ben Manoah, a French Rabbi from the 13th century*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Moshe Rabbeinu was speaking to Yeshua in the presence of the Jewish people, so he respected their holiness. Although Yeshua will lead them into Israel, Moshe says, "*Yeshua will go with them,*" to indicate to the nation how much they are valued and worth.

They are the ones who were chosen by G-d to fulfill a desire He had since the beginning of creation. When they enter Israel, they will complete a part of the covenant G-d made with our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. Therefore, Moshe elevates their "**position**" and tells Yeshua, "*he will go with them.*"

The Chizkuni continues that Moshe is not just demonstrating the Jewish people's value, but hinting to Yeshua the highest leadership level. A true leader guides and rules their people with respect, dignity, and understanding.

As Moshe begged for mercy and fought for the nation in the desert, Yeshua must recognize that he is one with his people. He does as they do; he thrives as they prosper, and he deteriorates when they fail because he is what they are.

The Chizkuni's powerful lesson about Moshe's definition of leadership is ever more relevant as we approach the day of atonement, Yom Kippur. For wherever we are, G-d is with us; He accompanies and follows His people because He is as we are.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that Teshuva does not mean repentance which means we must stop being evil and become good. Because our essence is a G-dly soul and inherently good; therefore, we must **return** and embrace our Creator and Father in Heaven instead of repenting.

In U'nesanah Tokef, a powerful prayer from Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we proclaim **Teshuva, Tefillah, and Tzedakah - Teshuva, Prayer, and Charity avert evil decrees**. During this auspicious time, the Aseres Ymey Teshuva - the 10 days of returning, increase and add in prayer, charity, and Torah study, so we can **Return**.

**“Sometimes we find our life is on the wrong track, not because of a specific sin, but because we have an overall sense of being lost.**

**Teshuvah means returning, coming back home to G-d.”**

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory

*Have a meaningful Shabbos Shuvah,*

*Rabbi Sholom Yemini*