



Parshas Vayelech 2021, the book of legacy

The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of my great uncle, HaRav Sholom Ben HaRav Yakkov, Edward Ben Efraim, and Shlomo Ben Edward. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

The Parsha Perspective in honor of the Refuah Shlema of Shaul Ben Berta, Sasson Bezalel Ben Batia, Chana Bas Esther & Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Tova Basha.

This is a special Shabbos called **Shabbos Shuvah- the Shabbos of repentance**. Beginning with Rosh Hashanah, we enter the **Aseres Ymey Teshuva - the 10 days of repentance** that conclude with Yom Kippur. The Shabbos before Yom Kippur is always labeled Shabbos Shuvah, and we read a unique Haftarah from Hoshea.

It opens with the words from Hoshea *”שׁוּבוּהַ יְשׁוּרָאֵל עַד הַ אֱלֹהֵיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בְּעֵוֹנֶיךָ* –*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), *“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. 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) *“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. G-D is the one who goes before you; He will be with you; He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, and do not be disheartened.”*

He then gives the final two Mitzvahs of the Torah, the Hakhel ceremony, and the writing of a Sefer Torah. The Hakhel ceremony is a gathering of every Jewish person once every seven years. This assembly would occur during Sukkos, and the king would read sections from Devarim to the nation.

However, a question comes to mind: Why is the Hakhel ceremony and writing of a Sefer Torah, the final two commandments that Moshe gave to the Jewish people? What is so unique about these laws that Moshe gave them on the last day of his life ?!

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory gives a deep and profound explanation in his book **Covenant and Conversation**. He writes that Hashem was comforting Moshe, who was sad that he would not enter the land of Israel. So, Hashem told him the Mitzvah of Hakhel to remind him of the cycle of life and its renewal. For the Hakhel gathering took place the year following a Shmita year. Shmita is a seven-year cycle in which we work the land for six and let it rest for the seventh. *(It is important to note this year is Shmita, and there are special laws regarding eating food from Israel during this year. Ask your Rabbi about these laws and how they could possibly impact you.)*

Rabbi Sacks explains that Hashem was telling Moshe that he is mortal since he is a human being, but that does not mean his legacy ends, **quite the contrary**. After each cycle comes a **renewal**, an assembly to rejuvenate and re-inspire them for the new cycle. This is done through a king reading from the Torah, the second Mitzvah, writing a Torah. The Torah is called “**Toras Moshe - the Torah of Moshe,**” so these two Mitzvahs are Moshe’s true legacy. **The renewal of energy and spirit after each cycle with wisdom and holiness that revives us.**

This lesson of renewal and what to rejuvenate ourselves with is ever more important as we begin a new year, a new cycle. We can not let the past cycle hold us back from experiencing success and accomplishing our potential. But we must have a reason to re-inspire ourselves, a set of ideas and values that maintains our commitment and gives us a desire to continue. We should look no further than the Torah, a holy book of lessons with endless G-dly wisdom that creates legacies.

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.”

*Have a meaningful Shabbos Shuvah,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*

