



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

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“*Shal na'alcha me'al raglecha...*”

As this haftarah closes, we read of an event that should strike a familiar chord to us. An angel tells Yehoshua “Remove your shoe....for the ground upon which you is holy”. It is an event and it uses (almost) the exact same words told to Moshe at the burning bush. Is there any significance to this “coincidence”?

In order to respond to this question and to better understand the beginning of Sefer Yehoshua, (including the haftarah we read), we must understand the state of the Israelite tribes at that time of history. The haftarah describes the very first observance of Korban Pesach in Eretz Yisrael, a simple story that would seemingly require no deep analysis. The story poses no real problems nor does it contradict anything we know about

the ritual itself. But, indeed, there truly is much that the events of that time period teach us and a review of the earlier prakim can open for us a deeper appreciation of Yehoshua and the challenges that he, and the people faced.

Turning to the very beginning of the book we read Hashem's guarantees of Yehoshua's future success, repeating three times the charge “Chazak Ve'ematz” – “Be strong and courageous”. Yehoshua then addresses the three and a half tribes, reminding them of their promise to Moshe to serve in the vanguard of the fighters. And they too tell their new leader “Chazak Ve'ematz”. Interestingly, these same words were addressed to Yehoshua by Moshe (D'varim 31:7; 31: 23), who was encouraged to do so by Hashem Who told him “strengthen him (Yehoshua)” (D'varim 1:38). What was it about Yehoshua that everyone needed to tell him “Chazak Ve'ematz”, words that were never addressed to the greatest leader, Moshe?!

In truth, it was not Yehoshua who required the encouragement...but the nation itself. Israel had known but one leader and knew little of Yehoshua. Certainly, he led them into battle but he was also the student who remained “in the tent” of Moshe. We find that he is involved in only a few episodes in the Torah: twice, he remains silent when we expect him to speak (at first, allowing only Calev to defend Moshe from the accusations of the



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spies and later, saying nothing during Korach's rebellion) and twice, when he does speak up, he has to be corrected (Shmot 32: 17-18 and B"midbar 11: 28-29). Is it any wonder that the people were concerned regarding Yehoshua's fitness to lead?

G-d understood that He had to build the people's confidence in their new leader. Precisely for that reason we read multiple actions of Yehoshua that are parallel to Moshe's deeds. Yehoshua leads the nation out of the desert in the month of Nisan as Moshe led the nation out of Egypt in Nisan; Hashem splits the waters of the Jordan to lead the Israelites into Eretz Yisrael as He splits the waters of Yam Suf for Moshe to lead B'nai Yisra'el into the midbar; and, as our haftarah recounts, he leads the nation in observing Korban Pesach – something only Moshe had done before.

And we now can understand Hashem command to Yehoshua:

"Shal na'alcha me'al raglecha..."

....to perform the exact same act with the exact same words He used when he commanded Moshe to do the same.

By doing these things, Hashem fulfilled the promise he made to Yehoshua some chapters earlier, when He said: "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all of Israel so they might know that, just as I was with Moshe so shall I be with you."

Successful leadership depends on the efforts of the leader, of the people....and the divine blessings from above. ■

*Mazal Tov to
Rami & Debbie Strosberg and family
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son*



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