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OU ISRAEL FACULTY

Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

בס"ד

Lessons in Leadership

At the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, our attention is grabbed by a series of non-sequiturs. Logically, the sefer should have ended in Chapter 24, verse 31, which describes the situation in Israel following the death of Yehoshua and whence the narrative continues in the opening verses of Sefer Shoftim. Surprisingly, the text now records an event that had taken place years earlier - the burial of the bones of Yosef, which had been brought up from Egypt by Moshe Rabbeinu and for which Yehoshua had assumed responsibility following Moshe's death. This information is followed by another unrelated statement, apprising us of the death of Elazar, son of Aharon HaKohen. What is the common denominator between the deaths and burials of Yehoshua, Yosef and Elazar, and why are the latter two appended to the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua?

The Talmud teaches that Yosef was buried in Shechem, as recorded here, because it is from there that he was sold and brought to Mitzrayim, setting in motion the descent of the entire family to Egypt. Thus the story is brought full circle to its conclusion.¹ Perhaps mention of his burial is inserted here, even though it took place many years earlier, as an expression of hope that the divisiveness which led to the sale of Yosef had been laid to rest, and the relationship of the twelve tribes of Israel will now be one of unity as they forge their national life in Eretz Yisrael. This optimistic premise would explain the inclusion of Yosef's burial, but leaves us with an unanswered question regarding the death of Elazar.

Rav Yigal Ariel suggests that the three leaders mentioned here represent three models of leadership, each with a different philosophy towards interacting with the realities and challenges facing the young nation settling within its newly conquered borders. Yehoshua personifies military conquest, Yosef represents diplomacy, and Elazar epitomizes spiritual leadership. While the first two conflict with one another, both derive their effectiveness from the strength of the third.² Thus it would be necessary to record the death of Elazar alongside Yehoshua and Yosef, to clarify that the future success of either of their approaches would be dependent upon the nation's service of Hashem. Elazar's descendants would be the instruments through whom the nation would continue to

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serve Hashem, first in the Mishkan and ultimately in the Mikdash.

Similarly, Mishbetzot Zahav cites the Ramchal, who taught that Elazar is deliberately referred to as “ben Aharon” to indicate that just as Moshe Rabbeinu had transferred his authority to Yehoshua, the authority of Aharon was transmitted to Elazar. The welfare of the nation required that the political and spiritual leadership work together.³

Although Elazar’s leadership was integral to the paradigm of future leadership of the Jewish nation, it is Yehoshua who remains the exemplar of the transmission of leadership from the desert to the Land of Israel. Yehoshua’s leadership was a perfect reflection of his teacher’s legacy. Rav Soloveitchik explains that Moshe Rabbeinu transferred his leadership to Yehoshua by placing two hands on his head rather than just the one mandated by Hashem to demonstrate that “there were two *mesoros* that Moses transferred to Joshua. One is the tradition of Torah learning, of *lomdus*. The second *mesorah*, the *hod*, was experiential. One can know the entire *Maseches Shabbos* and yet still not know what Shabbos is. To truly know what Shabbos is, one has to spend time in a *Yiddishe* home... Joshua not only received the Torah from Moses, but also how to live *Yiddishkeit*. ומשךתו יהושע בן נון נער לא ימיש מתוך. האהל - *His attendant, Joshua, son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from the tent (Ex. 33, 11)*. Joshua never left Moses’ side: He saw how Moses *davened Mincha*, how he ate, how he *bentched*, how he accepted Shabbos, how he said *vidui* on Erev Yom Kippur. He therefore merited both *mesoros*: the *mesorah* of the mind and the *mesorah* of the heart. And although Elazar was a greater *lamdan*, only

3. משבצות זהב ספר יהושע כד:לג

Joshua could transmit Torah to the next generation.”⁴ May we merit to transmit Torah to the next generation in the tradition of Moshe and Yehoshua, and may our leadership be guided by the principles of Torah and Avodat Hashem. ■

4. חומש מסורת הרב במדבר כז:לג

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women’s Initiative Nach Yomi program

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