



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Ha'azinu

HAMELECH

Hoshea or Yehoshua

At the end of Parashat Ha'azinu (32:44), Moshe Rabbeinu's star disciple is called "Hoshea ben Nun." Now, that was his given name, but for several decades already, he has been called by his new name, Yehoshua. So why here, at the end of the Torah, is he called by his previous name?

Rashi clues us in. Yehoshua here is being given the mantle of leadership of the entire Jewish Nation. Rising to power could bring a person to conceit. But not Yehoshua. No sooner is he appointed to this most prestigious position, and he immediately reminds himself of his humble beginnings. The rise to power does not affect him negatively. He is the same humble Hoshea.

And not only Yehoshua. His ancestor Yosef is also referred to in a similar manner. "And Yosef was in Mitzrayim." (Shemot 1:5) This teaches that he was the same Yosef. The same Yosef Hatzaddik as his father's prized son, the same Yosef in the pits, the same Yosef in the dungeons, the same Yosef on the throne of Egypt, the greatest empire of the time. His righteousness did not waver. He adhered to Torah and Mitzvot in all circumstances – grey, black, sky-blue and royal purple. He exercised control over physical urges, withstood temptation in superhuman terms. He

ruled over his own inclinations, proving himself worthy of ruling over all of mankind.

Yosef's reign was truly amazing and unparalleled. It was against the law for a slave to reign. It was unheard of for a foreigner to take a royal position. His young age was also quite uncommon for people who assume such roles. But all that did not matter. He was a ruler. He exercised self-control, and became ruler of Egypt for eighty long years.

Other Great Humble Leaders

Our Sages also stress that David Hamelech remained humble even after becoming King of our people. Thus, of him it is said, "And David was the small one," (Shmuel I 17:14) because he kept a low profile. In his eyes and heart and deeds, he was the same little David as a child, adult, commoner and king.

We also find this idea in reference to Moshe and Aharon. "They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to liberate the Children of Israel from Egypt; that was Moshe and Aharon." (Shemot 6:27) Rashi explains: The same ones who were commanded were the same ones who acted. I.e., they remained humble and unassuming, despite having been given the most lofty mission of being sent to undermine the king of Egypt, the leading world power. Here they are, appointed to positions of such authority,



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becoming the leaders of the most elite nation in the history of the world, and they do not let that get to their head. They keep their focus on following Hashem's command to the best of their ability, not getting sidetracked nor disillusioned by fame and honor. Since Hashem is the One in charge of such (and all) appointments, maintaining focus and exercising self-control are key factors to longevity in holding tenure.

Test of the Midwives

Let us study, for a moment, the verses which speak of the Jewish midwives in Egypt. Pharaoh calls for Shifrah and Puah and orders them to terminate the life of each baby boy the moment he is born. The midwives fear the Almighty. They do not do as Pharaoh decreed. They keep the boys alive. They come up with farfetched excuses to explain their actions. The Almighty rewards them for their courage and has the Jewish People multiply. When the midwives feared the Almighty, He had them become mothers of great households (kehunah and malchut, priesthood and royalty). (Shemot 1:15-21)

As we read these verses, we wonder why their fear of Elokim and their reward are reiterated. It seems reasonable to suggest that their nisayon (challenge) had two stages. At the initial stage, when they first received orders to kill, they were in a dilemma – Catch 22. If they listen to the king, they could have reason to be concerned

that Bnei Yisroel will not tolerate the bloodshed and will retaliate in turn. If they disobey the king, that is punishable by death. Nonetheless, they mustered the Yirat Shomayim necessary to be staunch and disobey the king. This certainly was one level of Yirat Shomayim, because the king was in a much stronger position to harm them.

Now, once Hashem rewarded their efforts and had the Jewish population grow by leaps and bounds, this set the stage for part two of their challenge. Now, with all these tons of babies around, it would almost go unnoticed were they to execute the king's decree on a fraction of the newborns. Had they done that, they would be able, perhaps, to be in a better position to "save their skin" from the wrath of King of Egypt. At least they could say that they tried and succeeded in part. And with all of the babies who would be left alive, perhaps the Jews would also not be so upset with them.

Despite all of these possible considerations, the approach of the midwives was unwavering and uncompromising. Fear of the Almighty was their primary concern, through and through. They did not seek any leniencies or methods to appease flesh-and-blood tyrants. Their one concern was to please Hashem. And that they did. When Hashem saw this even greater display of Yirat Elokim, He then decreed that they be rewarded handsomely, personally producing the most prestigious people of the most noble of nations.



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I Love You, Says Hashem

In Chullin 89a, Rabbi Yochanan quotes R' Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon as saying the following: Whenever you hear Rabbi Eliezer son of R' Yosi of Gallilee on matters of Aggada, listen closely. [For example, he said the following: The pasuk says (Devarim 7): "Not because you are more numerous than all nations did Hashem desire you etc." The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Yisroel: I love you! For even when I grant you greatness, you minimize yourselves before Me. [For example,] (a) I gave greatness to Avraham, and he said, "I am dust and ashes." (b) to Moshe and Aharon, and they said, "What are we?" (c) to David and he said, "I am a worm, not a man."

Star-worshippers are not like this: (a) I gave greatness to Nimrod. He said, "Let's build a city [to rebel against Hashem]." (b) to Pharaoh and he said, "Who is Hashem that I should hearken to His Voice?" (c) to Sancherev and he said, "Who amongst the deities of all the nations [saved his nation from my hand, that you Jews hope and pray that Hashem will save you]?" (d) to Nevuchadnetzar and he said, "I will ascend upon the high clouds [to fight against Hashem]." (e) to Hiram, King of Zur, and he said, "I sat on a Divine throne in the heart of the sea."

We see that it is distinctly Jewish to humble oneself before Hashem. And it is distinctly un-

Jewish to pursue self-aggrandizement and arrogance.

Who is in Charge?

Medrash Raba (Balak 20:1) teaches: Hashem did not give star worshippers the opportunity to excuse themselves of their misbehavior by claiming, "Well, if only we would have had good leadership – kings, wise men and prophets – we would then have behaved ourselves."

No, Hashem gave us and Hashem gave them. It is all a question of what you do with your gifts. Hashem had Shlomo be king of Israel and king of the world. Same with Nevuchadnetzar. Shlomo built the Beit Hamikdash and sang Hashem's praise. Naughty Nevuchadnetzar destroyed Hashem's Sanctuary and blasphemed.

Hashem gave wealth to David and to Haman. David used his wealth to purchase the place for Hashem's Earthly Abode. Haman used his riches to buy rights of extermination of the Chosen People.

Hashem gave prophecy to Moshe and to Bilaam. What is the difference between a Jewish prophet and a non-Jewish one? Jewish prophets try to help people steer clear of sin. Bilaam, the lowly non-Jewish prophet, sought to make a profit by giving advice on how to act extremely indecent, making a breach of the accepted moral standard even amongst the nations of the world.



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Additionally, Jewish prophets acted compassionately towards Jews and non-Jews alike (see Yirmiya 48 and Ezekiel 27). Bilaam was a cruel man. He made an attempt at genocide of the innocent.

We see here two types of use of authority and power. Yisrael use it to help society. They knew themselves as emissaries of Hashem. Gentile leaders exploit their position for personal prestige and tyranny.

Thinking about the Past

Medrash Bereishit Raba teaches: Hashem made four people great and each minted a coin to remind himself of his lowly beginnings. Avraham made for himself a coin with an old man and old woman on one side, a young man and young woman on the other side (Maharsha – in commemoration of the miracle of how he and his aged wife “returned to their youth” and begot a child). Yehoshua minted a coin with an ox on one side and a re'eim (massive, impressive animal with beautiful horns) on the other. David made a coin which had a shepherd's staff and pouch on one side and a tower on the other. Mordechai made himself a coin which had sackcloth and ashes on one side and a golden crown on the other.

The Medrash is teaching how our great leaders did not forget their humble beginnings. They insisted upon arranging for themselves reminders

of how their grandeur was a Divine bestowal, designated for a distinct purpose. (See Responsa Yabia Omer Vol. 4, Y.D. Siman 22 who explains how Avraham could make an image of a person on a coin... either it was totally flat, or it was not a picture at all; it was just words which succinctly communicated the message.)

In the Home

When young people wed, they are usually at the outset of their careers, not yet in the limelight. Some move on to positions that are lucrative and glamorous. Some become well-known public figures. Sometimes that brings a person to arrogance and conceit. He looks down upon his previous peers and treats them with disdain. Sometimes he or she even acts arrogantly in his/her own home, expecting the spouse to treat them royally. This can certainly generate friction and discontent. Let us learn from our righteous leaders how to act and react to positions of power. Let us view them as missions, not as grants. Let us bend down and shoulder the burden and do our best to carry out the task, humbly and happily.

This way, Hashem will view us as worthy recipients and He will continue to bestow His gifts upon them who are using them for their intended purpose.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Samei'ach

Mordechai Malka