

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
Toiba Chanah *bas* Leib *a”h*
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

Management Styles

PARSHAS PINCHAS 5778

The Chafetz Chayim extracted an essential lesson from a certain historic event that took place at the time of World War I.

Disbanding an Army

Before the outbreak of the war, the city of Memel was subject to a somewhat precarious circumstance. Technically, it was a German city – that is, its inhabitants were German, its language was German, and its culture was German. But it was located right on the Russian border, the government of which exerted official control over that region. And they ruled with an iron fist.

One of the enactments the Russians promulgated was to require the inhabitants of Memel to provide room and board for the local officers of the Russian army. Now these two peoples, of course, were traditional and erstwhile enemies. And so the people of Memel were obviously disenchanted with the prospect of housing the hated Russian officers in their own homes. But as they had little say in the matter, all they could do was long for the day when they could finally rid themselves of the oppressive Russian yoke.

And then World War I broke out. German agents were dispatched to the area of Memel with a directive for its inhabitants: a plan to in fact dislodge their Russian overlords. The townspeople were instructed to provide the Russian officers with an “offer they couldn’t refuse.” Capitalizing on the storied Russian weakness for vodka, each householder was to arrange a feast in honor of his “houseguest” – replete with plenty of drink.

The plan turned out to be a spectacular success. When the Germans mounted their invasion, the Russian army was easily overrun – and for good reason. They were missing all of their officers, who remained stone-drunk in their lodgings. Deprived of their command, panic broke out among the Russian lines, ensuring a swift victory for the German army.

And so, the Chafetz Chayim would utilize this incident to underscore the essential role that is played by the righteous figures, the great sages and leaders of Yisrael. For it is clear what disasters can result in their absence. As we see from this week’s *parshah*, when Moshe pleaded with Hashem on the matter of appointing a successor (*Bamidbar 27:16*): **יִפְקֹד ד' אֱלֹהֵי הָרוּחַת לְכָל־בֶּשֶׂר אִישׁ עַל־הָעֵדָה, אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר יָבֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר יוֹצִיאֵם וְאֲשֶׁר יָבִיאֵם וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֵדוּת ד' פְּצֹאן אֲשֶׁר אֵינְלֵהֶם רֹעֵה** – “May Hashem, G-d of the souls of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation: (one) who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall bring them out and lead them in; **so that the congregation of Hashem should not be as a flock that has no shepherd for them**”. (*cf. Ha'Chafetz Chayim, Chayav U'fa'alav*)

The Contrast

Now, all nations and peoples have their own leaders, of course. But it is instructive to consider the striking differences between their conception of leadership and the Torah's concept of leadership. A case in point is Yehoshua, who in this week's *parshah* is selected to receive the mantle of leadership upon Moshe's passing. Yehoshua had before him a considerable task: it was he who would lead the people into Eretz Yisrael and defeat the hostile nations residing therein. What qualities should such a leader possess? It would seem, first and foremost, that he be knowledgeable in military tactics. And indeed, historians consider Yehoshua to be an example of an excellent and mighty general who engineered brilliant battlefield victories.

And yet, as the *Oznayim LaTorah* points out (*Bamidbar 27:13*), this is not how he is described by the Torah. Rather than focusing on his military prowess, the *pesukim* instead emphasize his dedication to Torah and his *rebbe*, Moshe Rabbeinu. As it states: וּמִשְׁרְתּוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ – “And (Moshe's) attendant, Yehoshua son of Nun, was a ‘lad’; he did not waver from within the tent” (*Shemos 33:11*). And of course, Chazal likewise memorialize Yehoshua not for his glorious conquests, but for his role in preserving the *mesorah*, the chain of Torah transmission throughout the generations. As stated in the classic opening of *Pirkei Avos (1:1)*:

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי, וּמִסָּרָה לְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים...

“Moshe received the Torah from Sinai, and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua (in turn transmitted it) to the Elders...”

This, then, is the true paradigm of a leader in Yisroel.

Another key difference emanates from the *passuk* cited above, in which Moshe requested that Hashem appoint a successor. His concluding plea, at first glance, seems to contain a superfluous term: וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֲדַת ד' כַּצֹּאֵן אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָהֶם רֹעֶה – “Let not the congregation of Hashem be as a flock that has no shepherd **for them.**” What was the purpose of this additional phraseology?

The *Oznayim LaTorah* further explains that this addition was indeed quite purposeful. For Moshe, in fact, was not worried that Yisrael would have no “shepherd” whatsoever; it is only natural for someone to emerge in a vacuum and take over the leadership mantle. But it is also quite common that such a person will not necessarily be doing so for the most pristine reasons. It is quite possible that the aspiring leader will be a person who is really looking to advance his own career or garner personal glory. Such an individual, then, will not always act in the best interests of the people he leads, as he is “in it” more for himself than for them.

This, then, was the real concern of Moshe Rabbeinu. He was not afraid that there would be absolutely no “*ro'eh*” (shepherd). Rather, he was worried lest Yisrael be bereft of a *ro'eh* who was truly invested in their interests – a “*ro'eh 'lahem*” – **for them.**”

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