

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEADERSHIP



PSYCHED FOR TORAH - PARSHAT PINCHAS
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After processing the news that he will not be leading *Bnei Yisrael* into the land of Canaan due to his and Aharon's sin at Mei Meriva, Moshe turns to G-d and asks Him to appoint a successor. In his dialogue with G-d, Moshe addresses Him with a strange appellation – *Elokei HaRuchot*. Two *pesukim* later, G-d tells Moshe to take Yehoshua, a man who has "*ruach*" and appoint him as the leader. The role of *ruach* is clearly essential in the narrative, but it is unclear exactly what it is and why it is so important.

Depending on the context, the term *ruach* can mean several things in Tanach, including wind, breath, spirit, feelings, or will. Rashi understands the term here as a reference to people's general personality. G-d is a G-d of *ruach*, meaning that the personality of every individual is revealed before Him. He should appoint a leader who will be able to tolerate each person based on his or her own inner makeup. Yehoshua is a man who has *ruach*, meaning he can conduct himself in a manner that would correspond to every individual.

Rashi's description of the skills required to lead is striking on two fronts. The first, is the care and concern the leader must have for ALL of his or her followers. Rashi emphasizes the importance of understanding the innumerable differences between each individual and the duty to adapt accordingly. The leader doesn't just make policy for the masses and let some fall through the cracks. He or she needs to tend to everyone.

The second is the seeming parallel to the constructs of social and emotional intelligence. Broadly speaking, emotional intelligence incorporates the ability to read and manage emotions both in the self and others. Social intelligence encompasses verbal and listening skills, a depth of understanding of social situations, and the capacity to insert oneself effectively in those contexts. Rashi's description of *ruach* highlights the need to understand the depths of personality of the other and manage the self and others accordingly. Research in educational psychology as well as in industrial and organizational psychology demonstrates how important these skills are for leaders and educators -- but the question becomes, how does one attain these abilities?

One answer is that having this *ruach* is simply a gift from G-d. I either have it or I don't. All I can do is daven and hope that Hashem grants me these abilities. In fact, we find precedent for such a notion when Hashem took some of Moshe's *ruach* and placed it upon the elders until they absorbed it (*Bemidbar* 11:17). However, the Alshich points out, this is not the same procedure that happens with Yehoshua. Yehoshua apparently already had these traits so he did not need a Divine intervention to provide them. That's why, according to Abarbanel, G-d tells Moshe in reference to Yehoshua: "*kach lecha*" – you take— as if to say, don't turn to me to appoint him and make him ready for leadership. Yehoshua already has the skills because he spent years observing Moshe's behavior and modeling his own behavior accordingly.

Most of us in some form or another, whether at home, work, or school, take on a position of a leader. We learn from this narrative that we need to be a person of *ruach* – to care and tend to everyone we are guiding, and to attempt to understand their inner psychology using our emotional and social intelligence and deal with each one accordingly. The good news is that this is a skill that can be taught and learned, which makes it a worthwhile investment of our time and resources if we want to develop into more effective leaders.

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