Points to Ponder

Vayeilech 5783

**בֶּן־מֵאָה֩ וְעֶשְׂרִ֨ים שָׁנָ֤ה אָֽנֹכִי֙ הַיּ֔וֹם לֹֽא־אוּכַ֥ל ע֖וֹד לָצֵ֣את וְלָב֑וֹא I am now 120 years old and can no longer go and come (31:2) – Rashi** notes that Moshe did not have Hashem’s permission to go into the land of Israel. The question became what was he supposed to do at that point? **Rav Lord Jonathan Sacks** explained that this is a challenge that affects many who have already achieved their goals in life. Like Moshe, who had already achieved states of human spirituality that were unmatched and after took on the role of teacher to prepare the next generation, we too, can plan a “second mountain” to climb with a potential to be the greatest legacy we pass on.

**לֹ֥א יַרְפְּךָ֖ וְלֹ֥א יַֽעַזְבֶֽךָּ:He will not fail you or make you falter (31:6) – Rashi** explains that he will not give you weakness. What is the difference between Lo Yarpcha and Lo Ya’azveka? **Rav Wolbe** explained that the reason why people falter is that they think Hashem is not with them. When a person does not let go of Hashem, it is impossible that Hashem will forget him or her.

**חֲזַ֣ק וֶֽאֱמָץ֒ Chazak V’ematz (31:7)** – In Sefer Yehoshua he tells the people to be strong “Meod” (very strong). Why does he add the word “Meod”? **Rav Elyashiv** explains that in order to capture the land of Israel you need the help of Hashem. However in regard to the study of Torah (which is the subject under discussion in Sefer Yehoshua) one needs to hunker down and find his own strength to rise to the occasion.

**הַקְהֵ֣ל אֶת־הָעָ֗ם הָֽאֲנָשִׁ֤ים וְהַנָּשִׁים֙ וְהַטַּ֔ף Gather the nation, men, women and children (31:12)** – The gemara (Chagigah 3a) notes that Rav Elazar ben Azariah explained that if the men and the women came – the men to learn and the women to hear, why did they bring their children? He answered that it was to bring reward for the ones who bring them. Rabbi Yehoshua was so blown away from the comment that he noted that there is no orphan in a generation that has Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah in it. Was his idea so profound? **Rav Moshe Feinstein** explains that often people think that the reason we need to educate our kids is so that they will know how to act all the time. Sometimes this leads to a problem insofar as parents will sometimes look at their children and estimate their abilities and decide that the child needs to suffice with what s/he gets. In fact, sometimes the parents decide that they won’t even keep that which they learn so why bother learning it? Rav Elazar Ben Azariah taught us that we need to teach our children no matter what the return rate will be. Our job is to give them the education, (& lead by example) and not exempt ourselves in the process.

**הִנְּךָ֥ שֹׁכֵ֖ב עִם־אֲבֹתֶ֑יךָ  Behold you will lie with your forefathers (31:16) – Rav Eli Munk** notes that the word “Hein” consists of 2 letters “Heh” and Nun” each of which needs another to be pronounced (nun needs another nun and heh needs another Heh to be pronounced). Moshe used this word to praise Hashem while Hashem used the same in reply. In essence Hashem was highlighting to Moshe that his use of this world and the next one were directly linked and inseparable.

**וְעַתָּ֗ה כִּתְב֤וּ לָכֶם֙ אֶת־הַשִּׁירָ֣ה הַזֹּ֔את Write this song (31:19)** - Parashas Vayelech teaches the mitzvah of writing a sefer Torah. The Gemara, Sanhedrin, 21b, states that even if one inherits a sefer Torah from his father, he has to write one himself. **Ksav Sofer** says that there are two messages here: 1) that the Torah shouldn’t be observed by rote, just following what we have done in previous generations. We have to accept it as if we received it ourselves at Har Sinai. 2) We all have to make a personal contribution to Torah learning.

**וְעַתָּ֗ה כִּתְב֤וּ לָכֶם֙ אֶת־הַשִּׁירָ֣ה הַזֹּ֔את So now write this song for yourselves and teach it to Bnei Yisrael place it into their mouth (31:19**) – Why is the Torah called a song? **Rav Moshe Swift** suggests that music gives meaning and harmony to life. It transforms a sorrowful event into one of hope and joy. Torah works the same way.

**Haftara**

**שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל Shuva Yisrael (14:2)** – The midrash comments that Reuven was the first to open with Teshuva and thus his descendant Hoshea would also be the first – instructing Bnei Yisrael to return to Hashem. The only thing is both Reuven and Hoshea were not the first to engage in their jobs. Why are they so credited? The **Meshech Chochma** explains that Reuven was the first to realize that embedded in his need to ask for Teshuva from his father is the need to ask from Hashem whose relationship with you is clearly strained as indicated by the ability to sin. Reuven saw this and worked on his Teshuva. Hosea highlighted the message within Teshuva – they were the first to make these links clear.