

One Hundred and Twenty

Vayeilech – 5783/2022

We live in a society where many people do not understand the importance of being, nor do they have the ability to be, self-aware. People who stay too long in jobs, who cannot relinquish control of board rooms, or do not understand the need to step aside from leadership positions. Acknowledging one's moment to take a step back takes self-awareness, courage, and foresight – but it is the only way by which to succeed and allow for long-term continuity.

Moshe, in this week's parasha shows what true leadership looks like. He realises that his age has crept up on him, that he is human, and that there is a need for new leadership¹.

Rashi comments that Moshe's statement relates to his ability to wage war². Moshe reminds the Jewish people that they don't need human leadership to be victorious, God will lead them, but either way, Joshua will be there to guide the Jewish people.

The Seforno takes an emotional explanation, sharing that Moshe states his age to remind the Jewish people that there is no reason to be sad, that he has fulfilled his life, and even though not entering the Land of Israel, has fulfilled his mission³.

I remember speaking to my grandfather prior to his passing, he was very adamant that his time had come, and that he had lived a full and long life. Yes, there were hardships, but looking back on his many years, he was able to see the full picture, and understand his full impact.

The Chassidic work, Mei HaShiloach, understands that in this moment, Moshe reaches his highest level, his truest form of perfection. It notes that we spend many years trying to attain perfection, and that sometimes despite all the journeying, it can come crashing down. Once you realise the end is here, once you have attained that self-realisation, that true form of perfection, you have nothing more to worry about – there is no chance of it coming crashing down.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks notes that the incredible self-awareness of Moshe is the truest model of leadership that there is – acknowledging that one's time is over, and readying those around them for a transference of leadership. As he notes "Being a keeper of the meaning means handing on the values of the past to the future"

What would a world look like with leadership modelled after Moshe – Prime Ministers, family matriarchs or patriarchs, CEOs, Presidents, Chairpeople? What would it look like if all of society was built to value the idea of passing the baton to the next generation in a way that regenerates organisations, communities or societies? What would it look like if leaders could take a step back and watch the next generation serve, providing sage advice, but also following?

I imagine the world would be a very different place.

All citations can be found in **A New Page of Talmud**