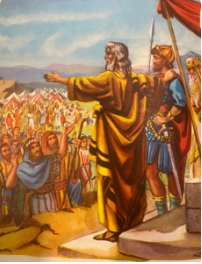



The Pinchas Parasha Sheet
Rabbi Eliot Malomet July 23, 2022 24 Tammuz 5782

<p>יב. עלה אל- הר העברים הזה</p>	<p>Go up to these Mountains of Avarim. The mountain will be specified later (Deut. 32:49) as Mount Nebo. Some explain <i>Avarim</i> as being "across" - the region beyond Israel. Others explain that <i>Avarim</i> refers to two "sides" one facing the Israel the other Moab. It's interesting that at the ultimate boundary moment of his life, Moses would be on a mountain defined by what is before him and what is behind him. The mountain is the geological representation of his personal liminality.</p>
<p>וראה את- הארץ</p>	<p>See the Land. This reminds us of an earlier scene in Abraham's life just after he separates from Lot (Gen. 13:14) with one crucial difference: after "seeing" the land Abraham is then told <i>קום התהלך בארץ לארצה ולרחבה</i> - <i>Arise, walk about through the land in its length and in its breadth.</i> Moses will not get that privilege.</p>
<p>אשר נתתי לבני ישראל</p>	<p>that I am giving to the Children of Israel. And not to you.</p>
<p>וראתה אתה ונאספת אל- עמדי</p>	<p>and you will see it, and you will be gathered to your people. Some translate: <i>When you see it, you will be gathered...</i> God is informing Moses of his death. We don't have the intonation of this verse and so it may sound rather abrupt to us. But pause for a moment and imagine a pause between the two clauses. There is plenty of unspoken information here. And emotion. Moses knows what has to happen. He doesn't want to just "see" the land. And he certainly doesn't want to die.</p>
<p>גם-אתה</p>	<p>even you. A stunning little note. Even you, Moses. You are not immune from death.</p>
<p>כאשר נאסה אהרן אחידי:</p>	<p>as Aharon your brother was gathered. Rashi's beautiful comment: <i>מכאן שנתאנה משה למאן שנאספה משה - למיתתו של אהרן</i> - <i>from this we learn that Moses envied Aharon's death.</i> What was there to envy? Aharon didn't die alone and the entire people mourned him deeply.</p>
<p>(יד) כאשר מריתם פי</p>	<p>(14) since you rebelled against My order. Moses is not allowed in the land because he hit the rock rather than speaking to it at <i>the waters of Merivat Kadesh</i>. It's a harsh penalty. Perhaps too harsh. A perpetual exile for this rebellion. Moses will try to appeal this verdict but will be unsuccessful. He <i>will see the promised land, but he will not get there with them.</i> His life will always have an unfinished element. Like most people.</p>
<p>(טו) ונדבר משה אליה' לאמר:</p>	<p>(15) Then Moshe spoke to God, saying... This is the only time in the Torah that we have this formulation. Every other time it is in the reverse, <i>God spoke (va-yidabber) to Moses.</i> The rabbis have long noted that <i>va-yidabber</i> sounds a little firmer than the usual <i>va-yomer (he said)</i>. Perhaps here it's because Moses has what to say to God. Part <i>I beg your pardon</i> and part protest, and part <i>but You have forgotten one thing, God. Who's going to take care of the people when I'm gone?</i></p>
<p>(טז) יפקד ה'</p>	<p>(16) Let God appoint... also, let God make accountable. Designate this individual as a successor who will be accountable to the people and representative of your abiding care.</p>
<p>אלקי הרוח לכל-בשר</p>	<p>the God of the spirits of all flesh...The only other time Moses uses this expression is when he is beseeching God to spare the community in the Korah rebellion (Num. 16:22). We sense the urgency here and the implied message: the wrong leader is catastrophic.</p>
<p>(יז) ... ולא תהיה עדת ה' כצאן אשר אין-להם רעה:</p>	<p>(17)...so that the community of YHWH will not be like a flock that has no shepherd. Moses was a shepherd. David was a shepherd. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds. The sons of Jacob were shepherds. Rachel was a shepherdess. And the Lord is a Shepherd (Psalm 23). But beyond its metaphorical power, embedded in the shepherd archetype a deep message. The shepherd is a person characterized by "dissent and initiative, (someone) whose aim is to find the good life for man, which is presumed to be God's true will." (Y. Hazony) Moses is looking for someone... a little like him.</p>
<p>(יח) ויאמר ה' אל-משה</p>	<p>(18) God said to Moshe: Take yourself Yehoshua son of Nun. Rashi: — <i>קחנו בדברים - אשך שזכית להנהיג בניו של מקום</i> - <i>take him with words, saying, "Fortunate are you that you</i></p>

<p>קח־לֶךָ אֶת־ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון</p>	<p>לך - אֶת־ שְׂבֻדוֹק לָךְ, אֶת־ שְׂאֵתָהּ מִכִּיר " <i>have merited to lead the children of the Omnipresent!</i>" Take to you - take one who has been examined by you, the one with whom you are familiar. Every time the word לָךְ appears next to a command as in לָךְ-לָךְ it's hard not to think that there is something personal going on here. In Abraham's case, it was his personal odyssey both at the beginning of his journey to Canaan and at the Akedah. Here, there is something very personal to Moses about designating Joshua. Joshua has been Moses' steward from the beginning. He has been privy to almost all the important moments of Moses' life. He has watched, observed, learned, advised, supported, and presumably also disagreed with Moses. It's interesting here that Moses never even considers either of his own sons as a successor. He, like the first American President three millennia later, resists the dynastic impulse.</p>
<p>אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־ רוּחַ בּוֹ</p>	<p>a man in whom the spirit is. Rashi: בוֹ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ בּוֹ . כל . שְׂיוֹכֵל לְהִלָּךְ כְּנֶגֶד רוּחוֹ שֶׁל כָּל . אָקֵד וְאָקֵד . <i>As you requested; someone able to deal with the character of each one.</i> An interesting insight on leadership. The leader's temperament is flexible enough to respond to each individual with the appropriate attention corresponding to their character and needs. Arguably, it is the rarest, and most important characteristic of a leader.</p>
<p>בּוֹ וְסִמְכָתָּ אֶת־יָדֶיךָ עָלָיו:</p>	<p>and lean your hand upon him. Ibn Ezra: וּסִמְכָתָּ אֶת יָדְךָ . <i>To show Israel that he was in Moses' place and that he was the one on whom Moses had placed his hands.</i> The leaning is a public act of designation. But it's hard not to sense the element of transfer and even blessing here.</p>
<p>(יט) וְהִעֲמַדְתָּ אֹתוֹ לְפָנַי אֲלֵעֶזֶר הַכֹּהֵן וּלְפָנַי כָּל־ הָעֵדָה וּצְוִיתָהּ אֹתוֹ לְעֵינֵיהֶם:</p>	<p> (19) You are to have him stand before El'azar the priest and before the entire community, and you are to commission him before their eyes. Why before El'azar? El'azar represents the priesthood, the Sanctuary, and El'azar wears the names of the tribes on his heart, and more importantly, is the "connector" to God. This non-sacrificial rite has, in the end, a sacrificial element to it because El'azar is akin to a walking altar. Why before the entire community? To give Joshua the maximum public affirmation. This is not a private matter.</p>
<p>(כ) וְנָתַתָּה מִהוֹדֶךָ עָלָיו לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>(20) You are to put some of your majesty upon him, in order that they may hearken, the entire community of the Children of Israel. The moment of transition of power is the most delicate moment. For it to go right, it requires the affirmation of all participants, including the previous leader. In all areas of life, art, business, culture, politics, and religion, successful transition depends on wisdom, dexterity, creativity, and blessing.</p>
<p>(כב) וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֹתוֹ</p>	<p>(22) Moshe did as God had commanded him; the expression occurs many dozens of times in the Torah. It conveys not only obedience but reverence and also the sense that this delicate procedure, in order for it to go well, needed to follow the prescribed set of instructions. But not without some of Moses' own creativity because in the next verse it says...</p>
<p>(כג) וַיִּסְמְךָ אֶת־יָדָיו עָלָיו</p>	<p>(23) And he leaned his hands upon him... God had told him to put one hand on Joshua, and Moses placed both hands on Joshua. Rashi: וַיִּסְמְךָ אֶת יָדָיו . וְהוּא עָשָׂה בְּשִׁפְתֵי שְׂנֵצְצוֹנָה, שֶׁהִקְבִּ"ה אָמַר לוֹ "וְסִמְכָתָּ אֶת יָדְךָ", וְהוּא עָשָׂה בְּשִׁפְתֵי יָדָיו, וַעֲשָׂאוֹ כְּכֹלֵי מְלָא וְגִדּוּשׁ, וּמִלְאֹו חִקְמָתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו יָפָה . <i>Generously (in full measure), even more than he had been commanded, for the Holy One, blessed be He, had said, "Lay your hand", but he did this with his two hands and so made of him a full and heaped up vessel and filled him generously with his own wisdom.</i> In other words, he gave him an extra personal measure of glory, a tremendous gift of legitimacy and validation. SHABBAT SHALOM!</p> <p></p> <p><small>Moses giving the charge to Joshua, from Die Bibel in Bildern, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1860.</small></p>