



5785 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schrier Parashat Pinchas / פרשת פינחס

## ***Yehoshua's Ascendant Subservience***

As *Moshe Rabbeinu* realized that his life was drawing to a close, he immediately, in his inimitable selfless fashion, thought of *Klal Yisrael*. Who would lead the people after his passing? He asked *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to appoint a leader capable of guiding *Bnei Yisrael* into *Eretz Yisrael*. To his great satisfaction, *Hashem* informs him that his beloved student, *Yehoshua*, was exactly the right person for the role (see *Ha'amek Davar* to *Bamidbar* 27:18).

As he ascends to leadership, *Yehoshua* is granted a stunning degree of authority. Halachically, he is treated as a *melech*, a king who possesses almost unmitigated physical control over the nation (see *Rambam, Hilchot Melachim* 1:3).

In fact, the punishment for *moreid b'malchut* – rebellion against the monarchy – is derived from *Yehoshua* himself. In the opening chapter of *Sefer Yehoshua*, soon after *Moshe's* death, the tribes of *Gad* and *Reuven* reaffirm their commitment to fight alongside their brethren to conquer *Eretz Yisrael* proper. They close with a declaration of loyalty to their new leader, condemning any who would dare defy him to death:

כל איש אשר ימרה את פיך ולא ישמע את דבריך לכל אשר תצוונו **יומת** רק חזק ואמץ against your words and will not listen to your commands in all that you order him **shall be put to death**, only be strong and have courage.

The authority vested in *Yehoshua* is absolute. Yet when commanding *Moshe* to appoint *Yehoshua*, *Hashem* deliberately uses an unusual phrase:

**והעמדת אתו** לפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני כל־העדה וצִוִּיתָה אֹתוֹ לְעִינֵיהֶם - **And you shall stand him** before *Elazar* the *kohen* and before the entire congregation, and you shall command him in their presence.

What does “stand him before” mean? Is this mere ceremony, an expression of pomp and circumstance underscoring *Yehoshua's* newfound authority?

This formulation – of standing a chosen party before the *kohen* – has appeared before. When *Shevet Levi* was designated for sacred service, they too were stood before *Aharon HaKohen*, *Elazar's* father (*Bamidbar* 3:6). And there, this phrase's meaning is explicit:

**וּשְׂרָתוֹ אִתּוֹ** הכהן לפני אהרן הכהן - Bring forth the tribe of *Levi* and stand them before *Aharon* the *kohen*, **that they may serve him**.

Standing before *Elazar* and the congregation, *Yehoshua* was not being elevated – he was becoming *subservient*. Ironically, all of his power and authority were invested in him to serve those over whom he was appointed. Unlike secular monarchs who wield power for their own prestige, the king of Israel is enthroned



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precisely to serve the Divine mission. As *Rabban Gamliel*, descendant of *Dovid HaMelech* and *Nasi* of Israel, taught his students, a position of “authority” is truly a position of servitude (*Horiyot* 10a).

We know that Jerusalem served as the capital city where the king of Israel resided. At first glance, the coincidence of the royal throne and the *Beit HaMikdash* in the same city might appear incidental, perhaps simply a matter of geography.

But the *Netziv* points to a far deeper explanation (*Ha’amek Davar*, *Bamidbar* 27:19-21). The *melech* is appointed to serve the *kohanim* and facilitate their divine service. Upon his inauguration, *Yehoshua* is immediately stood before *Elazar HaKohen* to symbolically accept this role of service. His power exists solely to increase *kavod shamayim* and to support Divine service. There is no clearer way to express this sacred duty than dedicating *Yehoshua* before *Elazar*, just as the *Leviim* were dedicated before *Aharon*. In this moment, *Yehoshua* becomes the ultimate fulfillment of *Moshe’s* final hope: a leader who is not merely a ruler, but a servant of *Hashem* and His people.

The king’s placement in Jerusalem is deliberate. His rule must be centered in the holy city, but his throne is not Jerusalem’s center. The *Mikdash*, with its Divine service, remains the true focal point – and the king’s role is to be its servant. Jerusalem reveals that true leadership lies in the art of rising only by serving, seeing every blessing of success as a renewed opportunity to serve *Hashem* and His nation.

