

Joshua 1:10-18

The people, still mourning for Moses, knew Joshua had been successful in the battle against the Amalekites. But could he fill Moses' sandals? There's a midrash story about that:

When Moses first approached God at the burning bush, God told Moses, "Come no closer. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (**Exodus 3:5**).

Joshua had a similar experience. When he encountered the commander of God's army, the Angel of the Lord told him, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you are standing is holy" (**Joshua 5:15**).

It sounds the same, but the difference the rabbis point out is that Joshua was told to remove only one sandal.

Shoes symbolize human involvement and walk in the world.

When Moses stood before God, he took off both his sandals, because Moses lived completely in God's world and the spiritual realm. He stood with both feet in heaven. But God in effect told Joshua, "Leave one sandal on. You're going to need it."

In the wilderness, God provided for His nation directly and supernaturally. The nation needed a Moses with "both sandals off" to lead them. Joshua's kind of leadership was uniquely qualified to bridge God's continued supervision with human efforts at cultivating a real society in the Promised Land.

Further, Rabbenu Bahya (on **Deuteronomy 31:14**) observes that the sun can light up the moon even after it sets. So too, Moses passed on his teachings and continued to inspire Joshua after his death.

Joshua's Humility in Service and Loyalty to Moses

<https://www.thejewishstar.com/stories/why-was-joshua-chosen-as-moses-successor,14186>

In **Proverbs 21:20** we find: "Precious treasure and oil are in the dwelling of the wise man (*chacham*), but man's foolishness (*uchsile*) will swallow it up." The midrash Yalkut Shimoni on this verse presents a startling interpretation, suggesting that *chacham* refers to Moses while *uchsile* refers to Joshua, for Joshua was not a Torah scholar and "therefore, the Jewish people called him a fool!"

So why did God choose Joshua as the next leader of the Jewish people?

The midrash Yalkut Shimoni provides us with the underlying rationale: "Because he [Joshua] was Moses' attendant he merited the appointment as leader of the people

(literally, *zacha l'yerushato*.)” What did he actually do? The midrash teaches us that “he [Joshua] honored him [Moses], and arranged the covers on the benches [so the classes could be held]. Moreover, he sat at his [master’s] feet.”

Rashi says Joshua never left his teacher’s tent of Torah learning.

Joshua was not a greater scholar than Phinehas or Eleazar, but ‘the *service* of Torah [scholars] is greater than its study’ (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 7b). Service does not merely signify physical toil; it also represents a special closeness and friendship between the teacher and disciple, a type of partnership. The chosen disciple not only receives information from his rebbe, but absorbs a way of life, until they are practically identical in their essence. Moses knew that through his student-colleague, the Torah would be faithfully transmitted to future generations.

Like Joshua's loyalty and intimate relationship with Moses, Jesus was "made under the Law" and through His loyalty to its true meaning, He was able to fulfill it.

Joshua's Humility in Being Accessible

Joshua cared for all people and, according to a midrash, "this leader's greatness lay in his willingness to perform any task, even menial tasks, on behalf of the community."

Moses requests that God appoint a leader "who will put up with each and every man according to his particular disposition" (Yalkut, Pinchas 776). Joshua is God's answer to this request.

"He that waiteth on his master shall be honored" (**Proverbs 27:18**) is construed as a reference to Joshua (Numbers Rabbah 12.), as is also the first part of the same verse, "Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof" (Yalk., Joshua 2; Numbers Rabbah 12:21). That "honor shall uphold the humble in spirit" (**Prov. 29:23**) is proved by Joshua's victory over Amalek (Numbers Rabbah 13.).

The Sun and the Moon

Joshua is portrayed as less than Moses in some ways, and sometimes as more.

The midrash Sifrei famously declares: “The face of Moshe was like the face of the sun, and the face of Joshua was like the face of the moon.”

Moses is the sun and Joshua is the moon and, yes, that means that Joshua in some ways is less than Moses. But there is an additional aspect to that comparison.

Moses literally was like the sun. People could not even look at him, so he had to wear a veil (**Exodus 34:29–35**). Moses was privileged to speak with God face to face (**Numbers 12:8**), but the people were unable to speak to Moses face to face!

You can look at the moon, but you can’t look directly at the sun. Joshua was accessible

and relatable to the people in ways that Moses never could be.

Unlike the sun, which dominates the sky, the moon allows stars and planets to shine.

From the opening of the Book of Joshua, Joshua immediately shared his leadership, turning to the officials of the people (**Joshua 1:10**). When crossing the Jordan Joshua gave the orders, but the tribal delegates, priests, Ark, and officials dominate the narrative. The same is true with the encircling of Jericho and the ceremony at Mount Gerizim-Ebal: Joshua was the leader, but the people had a far more active and prominent role than they had under Moses.

- Sefat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger

The accessibility of Joshua is reflected in Jesus, who took on flesh and became one of us - "Immanuel" - God with us (**Matthew 1:23**).

- **Hebrews 2:11** - "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren"

- **John 1:14** - "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Joshua 1:10-11 - "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it."

Rashi - "And Joshua commanded": on the day that the days of the weeping in the mourning of Moses were ended.

Rashi explained previously that "3,000 laws were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses."

I think the rabbis had a keen insight into grief. Grief can cause us to completely disregard social norms, to fail to be "nice," and to forget the Law, as every other important thing is pushed aside to make room for it. Grief allows no room for any other concerns as long as we are in its grip.

The Question of the Victuals

"victuals" = *tseydah* - food, meat, provisions for a journey

The manna did not cease until several days after they passed the Jordan. So why prepare victuals?

Rashi thought it must mean weapons:

Rashi - He told them to prepare weapons for battle. For, if you say it refers to food and

drink, were they not supplied by the manna which was in their vessels until Nissan 16? For so it is stated: "And the manna ceased on the morrow" (**Joshua 5:12**).

Medieval Rabbi David Kimchi says it must mean food other than bread, again with reference to the manna.

But when there was a difficulty in obtaining other provisions, God gave His people manna.

- **Exodus 12:39** : "They were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual."

They now also had food and supplies obtained from the defeat of Sihon and Og.

Besides, if called to go on any expedition which would take them far from the camp, the manna would not be within reach of all, and the manna could not be saved for later.

The Question of the 'Three Days'

The next chapter recounts the sending of spies to Jericho and their return, which would have taken the better part of three days.

And then in **Joshua 3:2** it says: "After three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, you are to set out from your positions and follow it."

For all these days to fit, the spies would have had to have been sent out previously. So the activities are not related in order.

The order of events was probably the following - 3rd of Nisan, the spies are sent out **Joshua 2:1**; 6th, the spies return **Joshua 2:23**; 7th, the camp is removed from Shittim to the bank of Jordan **Joshua 3:1**, and the command **Joshua 1:11** is issued; 10th, the river is crossed **Joshua 4:19**.

It's worth noting that "three days" is a significant time period in scripture.

- **Hosea 6:2** - "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

- **2 Kings 20:5** - "Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD."

All pointing to Christ's resurrection:

- **Jonah 1:17** - "Now the LORD had appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah

spent three days and three nights in the stomach of the fish."

- **Matthew 12:40** - "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

- **1 Corinthians 15:4** - "He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"

The Promise of Reuben Gad and the Half-tribe of Manasseh

(See **Numbers 32:16-29**)

Joshua 1:12-13 - "And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land."

'God Hath Given You Rest'

Again, the "rest" mentioned here is only a shadow of the true rest in Christ.

"rest" = *mennuwach* - rest, resting place, but also comfort and consolation

This "rest" is only the first stage of several in Israel's history. We find it again in the reign of David (**2 Samuel 7:1**), Solomon (**1 Chronicles 22:9**), Esther (**Esther 9:1-22**), and we must not forget the comment in **Hebrews 4:1-11**, obtained from **Psalms 95**: "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day." "These all received not the promise." "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The last rest is Sabbatical; the rests that precede it are halting-places on the way.
- *Ellicott's Commentary*

- **Matthew 1:28-30** - "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls"

Being in the resting place is being "in Christ," secure and free of fear, where all is peace and *shalom*, and absence of "againstness."

Joshua 1:14-15 - "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them; Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising."

"ye shall pass before your brethren armed" -

"armed" = *chamush* - more like "arrayed for battle" from a root that means the "fifth rib" because troops were arrayed in five sections, the center, the front and rear guard and two wings on right and left.

Because these tribes wanted their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan, they promised not to abandon the other tribes but to be the "vanguard" of the Israelite offensive - the tribe of Judah went first, but Reuben, Gad and half-tribe of Manasseh would advance with them - participating in the war against the Canaanites as long as it lasted.

Joshua did not take them all, only a select company of strong and valiant men for, out of an hundred thirty thousand, only forty thousand went with him (**Joshua 4:13**).

They would ultimately not return for good to their families for the seven years it took to subdue the Canaanites, and then the seven more years it took to distribute the inheritance among the tribes.

Spiritually, this arrangement shows that we are not lone ranger individuals, but all part of Israel. We can't be satisfied with our own spiritual inheritance when we see our brethren who lack theirs. Paul's description of the body of Christ as different members who need one another is a good reflection of this (**1 Corinthians 12:12-31**). As a body, like a caravan or wagon train, we can only travel as fast as the slowest wagon.

Joshua 1:16-17 - "And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses."

According to Rabbi David Kimchi, the true sense and meaning is more positive: "for the Lord thy God will be with thee, as he was with Moses."

Joshua 1:18 - "Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage."

Joshua is recognized as supreme commander under God, and in time of war disobedience is treason and subject to the death penalty.

But although Joshua is now their leader, the tribal elders of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh encourage Joshua to "be strong and of good courage."

The rabbis have many stories in the midrash to explain why Joshua needed to be told this:

Joshua's Failures

<https://www.umjc.org/commentary/2019/7/24/joshua-the-making-of-a-hero>

Moses knew Joshua needed a name change to fulfill his destiny.

The midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 47:1) indicates that Moses effected the change of Joshua's name by transferring the letter *yud* from Sarah's former name (*Sara*) to Joshua's.

The Talmud states that God created this world with the letter *hei* and the next world with the letter *yud*. The *yud* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and it is the only letter whose lowest point doesn't reach the bottom of the line. Thus, the *yud* represents an elevated, spiritual existence where one is involved in one's own special relationship with God. That is the nature of the World to Come.

This world, however, is represented by the letter *hei*, which has within it both a *yud* and a *daled*. The *daled*, which has a numerical value of four, corresponds to the physical world - the four corners of the earth, north, south, east and west. Our job in this world is to bring the *yud*, representing Godliness and spirituality, into the *daled* of our lives, and the physical, mundane world. This fusion of *daled* and *yud* forms the *hei*, which reflects the nature and ultimate purpose of this world.

“Moses added the letter *yud* so Joshua would attain the sense of separation and withdrawal that was taken from Sarah [when she became “the matriarch of a family of nations”]... Moses changed Joshua's name so that he would have the strength to separate himself from...[the] collective entity [of the spies], enabling him to take a principled stand against the prevailing sentiment.”

The explanation of the name, *Yehoshua*, is: ‘The Lord should save you’ ... as if it actually said, ‘And he [Moses] prayed regarding Hoshea that the Lord should save you, that the Lord, may He be blessed, should save you from the advice of the spies.’

- **Numbers 27:18** - “And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him”

Regarding this, the rabbis said Joshua was "a man who would have the capacity to stand up to the spirit of each and every one" (Sifra Zuta, Pinchas 16).

Moses' prayer consisted of but one small letter added to Hoshea's name, yet, in this instance, it changed Jewish history for all time. In the same way, one individual praying and acting in faith can have momentous effect.

Furthermore, if you take Joshua as a type of Christ, Jesus in His humility was the ideal “bridge” between the natural world and the heavenly realm, bringing the *yud* and the *daled* together in the *hei*.

But this was tested in Joshua in practical terms.

The first time Joshua is quoted in the Torah, he spoke in error; Moses had to correct him.

- **Exodus 32:17-18** - "When Joshua heard the sound of the people in its boisterousness, he said to Moses, 'There is a cry of war in the camp.' But he answered, 'It is not the sound of the tune of triumph, or the sound of the tune of defeat; it is the sound of song that I hear!'"

Moses said, "Joshua, who will one day lead 600,000 people, is unable to distinguish between different types of voices!" (Ecc. Rabbah 9:11)

The second time he speaks, he has to be corrected again:

- **Numbers 11:26-30** - "But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested on them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out to the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said to him, Envy you for my sake? Would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!"

When the spies bring an evil report, Caleb speaks up, but Joshua is silent at first. The Ramban speculates that Joshua was initially silent because he wasn't sure whose side he was on. Eventually he also encourages the people to enter the land, but by then it's too late.

With this track record, we can understand why Moses and God, and finally the people (the leaders of the eastern tribes - **Joshua 1:18**) all encouraged Joshua to be strong and of good courage!

"Joshua son of Nun, who attends you, he shall enter it. Imbue him with strength, for he shall allot it to Israel." (**Deuteronomy 1:38**)

But later, Joshua himself was terrified after the loss at Ai, and his fear resurfaces:

"Ah, Lord God!" cried Joshua. "Why did You lead this people across the Jordan only to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to be destroyed by them? If only we had been content to remain on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say after Israel has turned tail before its enemies? When the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land hear of this, they will turn upon us and wipe out our very name from the earth. And what will You do about Your great name?" (**Joshua 7:7-9**)

At the same time, Joshua made an appeal similar to that of Moses, that God should be concerned with His reputation among the nations of the world (**Numbers 14:13-16**).

Like Gideon later, God sees a "mighty man of valor" in someone where circumstances perhaps indicate the opposite.

In the end, Joshua's weaknesses were transformed into strength through exercising faith during trying times.

We should never shirk from praying for and exhorting our brethren and leaders to be strong and courageous, nor should we ever resist hearing it. We all need to be reminded as we face life's sometimes terrible and foreboding challenges.

Moses yields to Joshua; The Law yields to Jesus

- from Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Vaetchanan

Moses had resisted God's determination that he would die and not enter the Promised Land.

The Holy One said: This is the way of the world, each generation has its teachers, each generation has its maintainers, each generation has its leaders. Until now it was your turn to serve, and now it is Joshua, your student's turn. Moses said, "Sovereign of the universe, if it is because of Joshua I must die, I'll go and be his student."

God said, "If this is what you wish, go ahead and try!" Moses awakened early and hurried to the doorway of Joshua, and Joshua was sitting and teaching. Moses stood stooped over, and placed his hand over his mouth, and Joshua was not aware of his presence and ignored him so that Moses would feel bad and reconcile himself to his fate.

The people of Israel went to Moses' tent but then found Moses at Joshua's tent, with Joshua sitting and Moses standing. They called out, "What is this, that Moses stands while you sit there and teach?" When Joshua tore his eyes away and saw Moses, he tore his clothes, and wailed, crying, "Rebbe, Rebbe, Father, Father, Master!!

The whole of Israel said to Moses, "Moses our Rebbe, teach us Torah. He said to them, "I don't have permission." They said to him, "We will not leave you." A heavenly voice called out, and said, "Learn from Joshua!" So, they accepted the voice and sat and learned from Joshua.

Joshua sat at the head, Moses was on the right and Elazar and Itamar (priestly sons of Aaron) were on the left, and Joshua taught the multitudes in front of Moses.

Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: When Joshua began with the words, "Blessed be the One who chose the righteous and their teachings..." The tradition of wisdom was removed from Moses and given to Joshua, and Moses no longer understood what Joshua was teaching.

After awhile the whole of Israel arose and said to Moses, "Summarize the teaching for us!" Moses said, "I don't know what to tell you." Moses stumbled and fell, and at that moment, he said, "Until now I have wished for life, and now my soul is offered up to you."

This description of wisdom being transferred from Moses to Joshua is exactly what happened when Jesus arrived to fulfill the Law and bring grace and truth in the Gospel.

Be Strong and of Good Courage

Joshua 1:18 - "...only be strong and of a good courage."

"strong" = *chazaq* - from a root "to fasten upon;" hence, to seize, bind, be strong, persist, undaunted

- **2 Chronicles 31:4** - "Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged (*chazaq*) in the law of the LORD.

"of good courage" = *'amats* - from a root that means to be alert physically or mentally; nimble, ready to spring into action (in a bad sense it can mean be obstinate, harden your heart)

Joshua 1:7 - "Only be thou strong and very courageous, (*'amats*) that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law"

In the New Testament it means don't faint, or give up, or give out

- **Galatians 6:9** - "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

- **1 Thessalonians 5:14** - "...encourage the fainthearted"

- **Luke 18:1** - "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint"

The spiritual application of "Be strong and of good courage" is to persist in holding on tightly to the truth, to God's word and His promises, to the cross. Be alert to deception within and without by ignoring your own self interest. Leave yourself behind, pick up the cross and follow Him.