

July 21, 2019 - FAST OF TAMMUZ - Num. 27:15-23 - Appointment of Joshua
Torah Reading: Numbers 27:15-23 - Appointment of Joshua
Psalm 105:23-38
Haftarah: Joshua 13:7-14 + 14:4-5
Isaiah 40:13

The Appointment of Joshua

Numbers 27:15-17 - "And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

Rashi - When Moses heard that the Omnipresent told him to give Zelophehad's inheritance to his daughters, he said, "It is time to ask for my own needs - that my son should inherit my high position." The Holy One, blessed is He, said to him, That is not My intention, for Joshua deserves to be rewarded for his service, for he "would not depart from the tent" (**Exodus 33:11**). This is what Solomon meant when he said, "He who guards the fig tree eats its fruit" (**Proverbs 27:18**). - [Mid. Tanchuma Pinchas 11]

Moses was the humblest man on earth (**Numbers 12:3**). The conversation Rashi refers to above is to clarify that Moses was not interested in demanding rights for his own children or retaining honor for himself. He obeyed God's decision. His children remained common Levites, serving the priests. Envy and jealousy were not part of his makeup.

"the God of the spirits of all flesh" - Why is this said? He said to Him, "Master of the universe, the character of each person is revealed to you, and no two are alike. Appoint over them a leader who will tolerate each person according to his individual character."- [Mid. Tanchuma Pinchas 10]

Further, God searches each heart and knows who is fit for every service. He can raise up even the lowly and fit them for the highest service or hardest tasks.

This phrase was previously used by Moses to appeal for God after Korah's rebellion to distinguish between men according to their guilt or innocence:

- **Numbers 16:22** - "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You vent Your wrath on the whole congregation?"

"To lead them out and bring them in" - a metaphor for shepherds.

"who will go forth before them" - Not like the kings of the [gentile] nations, who sit at home and send their armies to war, but as I did, for I fought against Sihon and Og, as it says, "Do not fear him" (21:34), and as Joshua did, as it says, "Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us [or for our enemies]?" (Joshua 5:13). Similarly, concerning David it says, "For he went forth and came in before them" (I Samuel 18:16) - he went

out [to battle] at their head and came in before them. — [Sifrei Pinchas 23]

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;"

Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan: "a man in whom is the Spirit of prophecy"

See **Deuteronomy 34:9** - "Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses."

"lay thine hand upon him" - to show to the children of Israel that he was to be in his place, as Aben Ezra notes.

To lay on hands symbolized a blessing - Here it is the handing on of Moses' office to Joshua. In later Jewish times it was employed in admitting a person to the position of Rabbi. And in New Testament times it served as a rite of ordination (**Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3; 1 Timothy 3:14; 2 Timothy 1:6**) showing agreement, acceptance and support from the congregation and elders. All three meanings — blessing, succession to office, and authority to teach are combined here.

Joshua had proved himself suitable - he demonstrated his obedience and humility by faithfully serving Moses all those years. He showed his faith in God in confronting the evil report of the spies and his courage in battling the Amalekites.

Joshua was a Type of Christ

Joshua = Jesus - the same name, one Hebrew: *Yehoshua*, shortened later to *Yeshua*; the other Jesus is the Greek spelling of *Yeshua*, Ἰησοῦς

Joshua led the people into the Promised Land

In the crossing of the Jordan he demonstrated (again like at the Red Sea) baptism and Israel's death on the cross with Christ. In the casting down of the walls of Jericho and the salvation of Rahab through the scarlet thread, the blood of Christ was demonstrated in bringing the Gentiles into the family of faith.

- **Matthew 1:21** - "You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins!"

If Moses represents the Law, then Joshua represents the "law of liberty" in Christ.

- **John 1:17** - "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

- **James 2:12** - "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of

liberty."

"like sheep without a shepherd" - Joshua is a type of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

- **Matthew 9:36** - "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. 36When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

- **Jeremiah 50:6** - "My people are lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray, causing them to roam the mountains. They have wandered from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place."

- **Ezekiel 34:4-5** - "You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bound up the injured, brought back the strays, or searched for the lost. Instead, you have ruled them with violence and cruelty. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and when they were scattered, they became food for all the wild beasts."

- **Zechariah 10:2** - "For idols speak deceit and diviners see illusions; they tell false dreams and offer empty comfort. Therefore the people wander like sheep, oppressed for lack of a shepherd."

Numbers 27:20 - "And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient."

i.e. the honor of civil government and authority; suggesting that Moses should give now him a share in it, and use him not as a minister and servant, as he had been, but as his colleague and partner; and let him have some of the ensigns of power and authority, and some exercise of it; not only to inure him to government, but to make him respectable among the people and prepare for the time when Moses would be gone. - *Gill's Exposition*

Rashi - so that he can expound [halachic discourses] during your lifetime, so they should not say about him that he dared not raise his head in the days of Moses. — [Sifrei Pinchas 23]

Rashi interprets honor as "majesty" - This refers to the radiance of the skin of his face (see Exodus 34:29).

Some majesty, *but not all* - Thus, we learn that the face of Moses was [radiant] like the sun, whereas the face of Joshua was like the moon. — [Sifrei Pinchas 23, b.b. 75a]

Numbers 27:23 - "And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses."

Rashi - generously; over and above what he had been commanded. For the Holy One,

blessed is He, said to him, “and you shall lay your hand upon him” (verse 18), but he did it with both his hands. He fashioned him like a full and overflowing vessel, filling him with wisdom in abundance. — [Sifrei Pinchas 23, Sanh. 105b]

There is more about the appointment on Joshua in **Deuteronomy 31**.