



## A True Leader

### Parsha Pinchas

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

During one of his many visits to Migdal Ohr the Seret-Vizhnitz Grand Rabbi asked me - "Rabbi Grossman, who is the boy sitting the last row?"

Migdal Ohr's students were accustomed to his magnificent visits and relished the love he exhibited towards every child. The Rebbe would sit with the students, test their knowledge and inquire about their welfare.

The Rebbe became aware of the fact that this student was unhappy and intended to leave us.

To answer his question, I shared with the Rebbe the boy's family history and the troubles he was forced to contend with.

The Rebbe was acquainted with the boy's family. "Do you know who his ancestors were?" he asked. He came from a well-rooted and prestigious family.

"For his family's sake, I must try to do my best," he said, and asked to speak to the boy. The Rebbe spent an hour with the boy. An hour later, the boy emerged tearful from the meeting. The change in his behavior was breathtaking.

He became diligent in his studies and changed his ways. Two years later, on the Rebbe's advice, he went to a Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, where he proceeded to progress in the steps of his ancestors.

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The Seret-Vizhnitz Rebbe's leadership was fueled by his incredible compassion. It is of significance that he passed away in a week that we learn about leadership in our weekly parsha.

Before Moshe dies, he asks G-d: "Let the Lord, the G-d of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who will go forth before them and come before them, who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."<sup>1</sup>

Rashi comments: "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."

There is a Hasidic tale about the Gerer Rebbe who was sitting with his "flock" and teaching them our weekly parsha. He asked about the verse's language: why does it repeatedly say "who will go forth before them and come before them, who will lead them out and bring them in?"

He explained: **who will go forth before them** – his soul will go fourth for them. **And come before them** – who will always lead them and show them the way. **Who will lead them out** - of the gates of the profane. **And bring them in** – through the gates of purity.

There are two motions in the worshipping of G-d: abstaining from the negative and pursuing the positive on the path of purity. Moshe was seeking a leader who would do both for the Jewish nation.

When Moshe tells Yehoshua, his eventual successor, "It is neither a voice shouting victory, nor a voice shouting defeat; a voice of blasphemy I hear," he is teaching him that a leader must be attuned to the various voices emanating from the nation. A true leader must be able to discern the different voices. Moshe was able to do so, and sought a similar leader; a leader "who will go forth before them."

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One day the Vizhnitz community was shocked to hear that the Rebbe's wife was in a difficult medical state and required hospitalization.

She was taken to the hospital by ambulance, and the Rebbe rode along with her. The ambulance was ready to drive away to the hospital, but the Rebbe asked them to wait. He asked his sexton to bring him his special Shabbos garments. When asked why he needed them he answered: "tonight I am marrying off one of my sons."

Late at night, after things calmed down, the Rebbe put on his special garb, left the hospital and went to the wedding of the student. Only a few knew of the student's story. While dancing in the middle of circle, he pressed my hand and said: "Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid, I told you, for his ancestors' sake I must try."

<sup>1</sup> Bamidbar 27:16-17.