



# דרכים בפרשה

פנחס



יפקד ה' אלקי הרוחת לכל בשר איש על העדה. אשר יצא לפניהם ואשר יבא לפניהם ואשר יוציאם ואשר יביאם ולא תהיה עדת ה' כצאן אשר אין להם רעה

*Let HaShem, the God 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 HaShem will not be like sheep without a shepherd. (27:16-17)*

What was Moshe Rabbeinu trying to bring out with this comparison of Klal Yisroel to a flock of sheep? The Kesav Sofer beautifully explains that in a standard case of a shepherd, the objective of the job is to earn a living. As much as the shepherd may love animals, and as *ibber g'gaiben* as he may be, his purpose is still not for the animals, but rather for his own benefit, increasing his own wealth. The result is that the sheep do not actually have a shepherd, because the shepherd is doing it for himself and looking after his own interests. The proof is that if there will come a time of a dangerous attack, where he must choose between the sheep and himself, he will certainly run the other way to save his own life. But this is not the way of a **רועה** - a true *Yiddishe manhig*/leader. A leader's entire objective must be for the benefit of Klal Yisroel, without bearing in mind personal gain. For this reason, Moshe mentioned **ואשר יבא לפניהם** - *that will come in front of them*. The typical "Joe Shepherd" walks behind the sheep so that if they are ever attacked from the front, he can quickly make his escape. The few dollars he earns are not worth his own life. Not so the leader of Klal Yisroel! He will walk in front of them and lead them especially during times of danger, for that is his only objective. For

this reason, the *possuk* states, **כצאן אשר** **אין להם רעה** - the words **אין להם** means not *for them*. Of course there is a shepherd, but whose interests does he have in mind?

This brings to mind a well-known explanation of the gemara at the end of Masechta Sota (49b), which relates from Rabbi Yehuda, regarding the days of Moshiach's imminent arrival. **פני הדור כפני הכלב** - *the face of the (leaders of the) generation is like the face of a dog*. This is explained as follows: The time before Moshiach arrives, which we know **בעקבות משיחא הוצפא יסגא** - there will be an increase of chutzpah; there will be those that will try and lead in the manner of dogs. Instead of the dog-owner walking in front, the dog goes ahead and turns back his head to see where his owner is going. The dog may be in front but he is not leading. Woe to a generation that has leaders that turn back to the people for directions instead of actually leading.

Moshe was asking HaShem to give Klal Yisroel the true leader that would be there for them, and actually leading. When we think of our true *Gedolim*, we must look at them with new respects, and appreciate that they only have our interests in mind, while constantly leading Klal Yisroel from the front and

not from behind, never taking instructions but actually giving them.

On this idea of the *manhig* going in front of the people, and not behind, there is another thought amongst the *meforshim*: The *manhig*'s role is to uplift the people. He must raise them up to his level and not vice versa, *chas veshalom*, allowing the people to drag him down to theirs. The Chidushei HaRim explains the double language in our possuk, **וְאִשֶּׁר יוֹצִיאֵם וְאִשֶּׁר יְבִיאֵם** - *who will lead them out and bring them in*- he must be able to take them out of their shortcomings, and bring them to a height of *kedusha*.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l once went to visit the Yeshiva of South Shore. He noticed that the mezuzas were hanging very low on the doorposts of the classrooms of the younger grades to enable the smaller children to give a kiss as well. Rav Yaakov protested for two reasons. Firstly, he felt that halachically speaking it was below the upper third of the door post which is a problem. Secondly, he reasoned that instead of bringing the mezuzah down to the children, a better option would be to place a stepping stool in order to lift them up to the mezuzah.

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995, I had the *zechus* of pushing my Rosh Hayeshiva, Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l in his wheelchair. It was in the evening and the fireworks from the nearby Coulby Park were flying through the air. Although the Rosh Yeshiva was already not feeling well, his spirit was great and the conversation was very clear. I took advantage of the

moment and asked a question based on a gemara that we were learning that summer. The gemara in Masechta Chagiga (5b) relates that Rabbi (Rav Yehuda Hanasi) and Rav Chiya were travelling. They came upon a town and Rabbi asked Rav Chiya if there was a young *talmid chacham* there that they can pay a visit to. Rav Chiya answered that there was indeed one, but he was blind. "Therefore, you sit here, **לֹא תִזְלַל בְּנֹשְׂיָאוֹתָךְ** - do not demean your dignified status as Nasi to visit someone beneath your stature. I will go and greet him." Nevertheless, Rabbi pushed on and went anyway, resulting in a wonderful bracha given back to Rabbi: You greeted one who is seen and does not see; may you be worthy to greet the One Who sees and is not seen. Rabbi then said said to Rav Chiya: "Now, if I had listened to you and not gone to greet him, you would have prevented me from receiving this bracha."

I asked the Rosh Yeshiva, "If Rav Chiya was correct that it truly was demeaning for Rabbi, what right did Rabbi have to go anyway?" Rav Gifter looked at me and proclaimed, "The job of a *manhig* is to lift people up. Sometimes he must go into a *matzav* (situation) that seems beneath him to give the person "*an oomph*". This does not mean stooping to the lower level, but rather, going in to pull them out and lift them up."

**Good Shabbos, מְרַדְכֵי אֶפְפֵּעַל**



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