



## The True Champion

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On Monday we celebrated *Rosh Hodesh Av* (the beginning of the month of Av), beginning a period known as the “9 days” and culminating with the fast of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. There are numerous events that occurred in our history that are connected to the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av.

- The day that the spies Moshe sent to scout the land returned with their bad report of the land (10 of the 12 gave a bad report and were believed by the nation)
- The day according to Midrash, that 10,000 Jews died each year during the wandering in the desert
- The destruction of the First and Second Temples
- The final battle of the [Bar Kochba revolt](#)
- The date of the [Spanish Expulsion](#)
- The beginning of World War I, which in turn caused WWII
- The date that deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka began
- The bombing of [AMIA](#) in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1994 that killed 85

These are days of national mourning. We abstain from eating meat and drinking wine on these days to display a sense of mourning for the destruction of the Temple (meat and wine were used in the Temple service). We focus our attention on those days to remember what has happened to the Jewish people and how we have survived. The destruction of the Second Temple is often attributed to the rifts between different sects of Jews, yet through it all, we banded together to survive.

We have survived, through the help of our leaders and through what we have learned from our teachers. By learning about our history, faith and traditions, we learn how to overcome the obstacles that are in our way. It is through our teachers, leaders and persistence that we have survived. It is because as low as we might fall, we rise up.

This week, we begin reading the final book of the Torah, *Devarim*. In *Devarim*, Moshe reminds the Jewish people of their history. He teaches them about Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, how they got to Egypt, were saved by God and witnessed the miracles that God brought forth. Rosh Hodesh Av is the Yartzheit of *Aharon HaKohen*, Aaron the High Priest. We learn a lot from Aaron. He was the first High Priest and it is through his children that the priesthood continued. It was the mantle that he handed down through his inheritance. He made sure that it was something that would be handed down to his children. Moshe was a different type of leader.

In Parshat Pinchas, which we read only a few weeks ago, we learned about the daughters of Zelaphachad who wanted to make sure that they had a place in their deceased

father's inheritance (there were no sons, only daughters). It was at this point that Moshe probably began to wonder who would inherit the leadership from him.

Our Biblical personalities are often given monikers. Avraham is known as *Avraham Avinu*, Abraham our father, Deborah was known as *Deborah the Prophetess*, Aharon is known as *Aharon HaKohen*, Moshe is known as *Moshe Rabbenu*, Moses our teacher.

Moshe knows that he will not lead the Jewish people into the land. Before he dies, he wants to make sure that he knows that the Jewish people will have a leader. He hopes (according to many commentaries) that his leadership will be handed on to his sons. He is told, however, that his student, Joshua will become the next leader.

According to [Rambam](#) (Moses ben Maimon, Maimonides), "With three crowns (*keter*) was Israel crowned – Keter Torah, Keter Kehuna (priesthood) and Keter Malchut (sovereignty). Aaron was given the priesthood, King David was given sovereignty and all of Israel was given Torah.

From the passing of Moshe's leadership from teacher to student we learn that each one of us has the potential to become a leader of our people. Our leadership comes from our ability to learn from our faith. According to [Eliyahu Rabba](#), Barak served Deborah, because God honors those who serve the sages unselfishly. So too, Joshua was always at the feet of Moshe, his teacher, wanting nothing more than to absorb every lesson that Moshe would teach him. Joshua was known as *Mesharet Moshe*, Moshe's attendant.

Do we expect the same from our children?

As parents we want our children to learn from their teachers, to be loyal to those around them and to be thankful for what they receive, knowing that it is only through help of others that they are able to attain it.

When we speak poorly of our children's teachers, what are we really teaching them? Leadership is handed down from teacher to student. It is not something that is inherited (as we learn from Moshe). We must, therefore, support those who are giving the education to our children and act as partners with their teachers.

In Parshat Devarim, Moshe reminds the Jewish people of all of the places in which they have traveled while in the wilderness. Moshe does not come out to tell the people why he mentions each of the places. He gives the people the tools in order to decipher the true meaning (each of the mentioned places, is a location in which the Jews sinned – they are being reminded of their past in order to better live their lives in the future, to pick up the pieces of prior mistakes). As the teacher, Moshe gives his students the tools in order to understand the meaning (he does not come right out and tell them).

As teachers, it is our job to do the same. While different teachers have different styles – fact drilling, provoking questions, etc – what all teachers do is to teach students how to think and learn.

As parents, do we do the same? Do we let our children try? Or do we tell them how to do it? Do we allow our children to fail? Or do we manipulate the situation so that they

always win? Do we allow them to earn C's on their report cards? Or do we call the teachers, make excuses and demand that the grade be changed?

If we do not fall, if we do not fail, we will never truly know success and achievement.

If Moshe's leadership had simply been handed down to his children, no one would strive to become a leader.

If we are not reminded of the tragic events that are connected to the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, and the events that led up to them, we would not understand how to get up from tragedy, how to truly survive.

This past week the people of Cleveland suffered what many think to be a great tragedy in the loss of their "leader," LeBron James. LeBron, the self-titled "King" of Cleveland lacked the type of leadership that we expect.

[Rabbi Jason Miller](#) in his blog this past week described how LeBron lacked two major attributes that we expect out of our leaders, **Ne'emanut (Loyalty)**, and **Anivut (humility)**.

What makes someone loyal and humble? It is through the examples they set.

Cleveland sports fans believe that no one has suffered the way that they have – [The Drive](#). [The Fumble](#). [The Shot](#). [The Decision](#). What will we do to show that we survive? Who will become a true leader?

As much as I hate to say it, I enjoyed reading what my friends posted on their facebook walls this past Thursday evening. My favorite was from a high school friend of mine, Shayna, who simply wrote the word "Quitness" (I later learned that Great Lakes Brewing Company is unveiling a new beer called "[Quitness](#)").

Sports fans can learn from the Jewish people – we pick ourselves up. We mourn our defeats, but we find ourselves stronger. We are loyal and bond together rather than split apart. We show humility. We never quit. We make ourselves into true champions.

Who will be the next champion of our faith?

#### **AS A FAMILY:**

- What do you do to show loyalty (to your family, your school, your faith)?
- What do you do to show humility (towards your parents, teachers, God)?
- Study Torah together, in order to accept your portion of our inheritance.
  - Parents should model this behavior for their children, by studying together as a family and/or attending Adult and Family Education programs.

#### **TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS WEEK'S PARSHA, D'VARIM, TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:**

1. On what date does our Parsha begin?

2. What rules were given to the Judges?
3. Why could Moav and Ammon not be conquered?
4. Which tribes settled in Og and Sihon's territory?
  - a. On which side of the Jordan was this land?
  - b. What conditions were given to these tribes?