

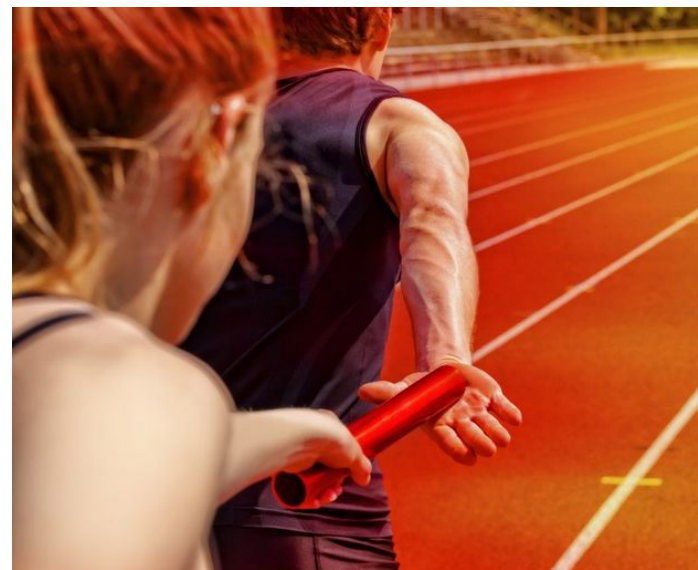
As this week's *parashah*--*Va-Etchanan*--opens up, we see Moshe telling the Israelites his story of pleading with God to cross over into and to see the Promised Land. Although God does allow Moshe to look over into the Promised Land, God continues to keep Moshe from entering.

God tells Moshe to charge Yehoshu'a to take leadership of the Israelites using the words "וַיִּצְוֵהוּ יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר" --strengthen him and make him resolute so that he may cross over the Jordan River ahead of the Israelites and help them inherit the Promised Land.

Moshe continues on to explain to the Israelites that following the teachings God has given them will help them keep their relationships with God strong, live safe lives, and treat each other fairly when they settle in the Promised Land. This week we read the words of the *Sh'ma*--including much of the *v'ahavta*--and a re-telling of the *Aseret Ha-Dibrot* or the "Ten Sayings," which many call the "Ten Commandments."

Towards the end of our *parasha* Moshe reminds the Israelites that there is one God and that we and our children, and our great, great, great, great... grandchildren should trust that God will keep God's promises, saying:

"Know that A-donai your God is the God, the trustworthy God, who keeps the covenant with the thousandth generation of those who love God and with those who keep God's *mitzvot*."



Several weeks ago we read about the Israelites complaining, again, about not having water. Again God told Moshe to take his staff, and—this time—to talk to a rock instead of hitting it with his staff. Then the rock would give forth water. Moshe did not talk to the rock, but instead he hit it—like God told him to do the first time the Israelites complained about not having water. Then he hit it again. The rock gave water, but as a consequence God told Moshe that he could not enter the Promised Land. Do you think that this is a good choice for the Israelites?

After all—Moshe has been their leader for 40 years.

ELIANA: When a leader strengthens someone by helping them be a leader, they increase everyone's learning. They help the new leader to try new things and to learn new things about themselves. When there is a new person leading in a new way, sometimes this can also help others learn new things about themselves, too. Having new teachers every year means that we can learn new things in new ways.

BEN: I agree! New leaders bring new perspectives and new ideas and skills and that's important because groups of people are always facing new challenges. One reason that I think God tells Moshe to make Yehoshu'a the new leader of the Israelites is because Yehoshu'a has seen the Promised Land—when he went ahead to scout it out—and came back with a good report. He must have an idea of how the Israelites can be successful in conquering it. If God had chosen a leader who scouted out the land and came back with a bad report it would be like hiring a teacher who didn't understand what they taught or didn't like it.

BEN: I actually think that this is a bad choice. I believe that being a good leader is about getting people what they need. Moshe may not have gotten them water in exactly the way that God told him to, but he didn't hurt anyone. He just hit a rock—and it worked! Moshe is a good leader and I wonder if things might have even gone better for the Israelites if Moshe had led them into *Eretz Kna'an*.

Moshe led the Israelites out of slavery, led us to Mt. Sinai where we received Torah, and helped us solve problems and move forward for 40 years in the wilderness. Then—early in this week's *parasha*--God gives Moshe the responsibility of making Yehoshu'a a leader to bring the Israelites into the Land of *Kna'an*. Why do you think it might be important for leaders like Moshe to help new people become leaders?

Eliana: God tells Moshe to make Yehoshu'a a leader, which means helping Yehoshu'a be successful in challenges he hasn't yet faced. This is probably really tough for Moshe because he hasn't been to the Promised Land *and* he knows that people might not want to go, since the spies reported that it would be dangerous to go. Moshe probably has to help the Yehoshu'a show he is someone who can be trusted both by the Israelites and by God. Yehoshu'a started to show this when he came back from scouting out the Promised Land and gave a good report of what he saw. Maybe making someone else a leader means giving them trust and helping them see that they can be successful in any new challenges.

What do you think it means to make someone else a leader? How can you help someone else lead?