

The PINHAS story of our *parsha* this week presents several challenging and provocative narratives that could occupy hours of contemplation, but if you would indulge me I would actually prefer to focus on a slightly less inflammatory but no less interesting episode. Within the *p'sookim* of this *parsha* we have a momentous shift in the leadership structure of the fledgling Jewish people: that of Moses transferring authority and responsibility onto Joshua starting at verse 15. This transference of power coincides with a looming paradigm shift, of leaving the desert dwelling lifestyle and become settled back in Canaan. History and general rabbinic wisdom have analyzed Joshua for his military prowess, his unwavering faith in the word of *Hashem* and for his seeming ability to connect with Israelites up and down the chain of command and influence. His legacy is a strong one.

As I delved into the language of the episode closely I immediately tuned into the use of the word "*ruach*," which if you know me at all, is a quality I constantly strive to bring to Temple Emunah in all the work I do with the community. Verse 16:

יִפְקֹד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַרוּחֹת לְכָל-בָּשָׂר אִישׁ עַל-הָעֵדָה

In this instance Moshe is identifying *Hashem* as the source of “*ruach*” in organic life, human and animal alike. *Ruach* is one of those words that despite any changes in its modern translation and understanding, it’s always something we want to be a part of our zeitgeist. To say that we want to live in a time full of *ruach* is a statement of optimism and hope and vivacity. Only true *ruach* knows *ruach*, or as millennials might say “game recognizes game” and Moshe leaves it to *Hashem* “*elohei haroochof*” to pick out the next leader of *am Yisrael*. Moshe receives his answer from *Hashem* in verse 18:

קַח-לְךָ אֶת-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נֹון אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-רוּחַ בּוֹ

The Etz Hayim translates “*ish asher ruach bo*” as “an inspired man” though a more literal reading of it might sound like “a man that’s got the *ruach* in him”. However you want to judge Joshua for his accomplishments and merits, it cannot be denied that he was chosen to lead the Jews ostensibly for the internal *ruach* with which he lived his life.

For me, *ruach* can mean so many things: Joie de vivre, gusto, breath, spirit and just so much more. It is so multifaceted and deep a term that in normal conversation I will just say “*ruach*” and however a

person decides to define that to themselves more often than not will match up with what I am trying to convey.