

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



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Vayelech, Sicha 3

The Context:

As Moshe prepared to address the Jewish people towards the end of his life, he told the Levites to gather the people so he could speak to them. “Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, and I will speak these words into their ears, and I will call upon the heaven and the earth as witnesses against them.” (Devarim 31:28)

Normally, the kohanim would blow trumpets to gather the assembly. However, the verse implies that on this occasion, they did not use the trumpets, as the Levites were tasked with gathering the people.

Rashi explains that this was because God had instructed Moshe to make the trumpets for himself, and their use was closely associated with Moshe's leadership.

The Rashi:

Assemble to me — On this day they did not blow the trumpets to assemble the congregation [as they usually did (see

Bamidbar. 10:2-3,7), because the verse says, “Make for yourself [two trumpets of silver... and they will be for you to call the assembly]” (Bamidbar 10:2). [Now, this was a commandment directed personally to Moshe, because “for yourself” and “for you” are both written in the singular form. Hence, Moshe made these trumpets and kept them in his possession,] and he did not give Joshua authority over them during Moshe's lifetime. Moreover, these trumpets were hidden away [by God] even during his [Moshe's] lifetime, prior to the day of his passing, thus affirming the words of the verse, “and there is no ruling on the day of death.”

The Question:

1. Rashi's point is that the trumpets “were hidden away [by God] even during his [Moshe's] lifetime, prior to the day of his passing, thus affirming the words of the verse, “and there is no ruling on the day of death.” What does Yehoshua's access to the trumpets have to do with this explanation?
2. Why does Rashi cite the words “to me” in the introduction to his comment?

Seemingly, Rashi is focusing on how Moshe's directive to "assemble" was accomplished without trumpets. How does the rest of Moshe's directive, "to me," figure in Rashi's commentary?

The Explanation:

Rashi does not usually explicitly write the driving question in his commentary. In this case, the question is obvious: why did Moshe call an assembly to himself at all? Moshe already declared that "I can no longer go out and come in," which Rashi explained as: "Permission has been taken from me and given to Joshua." Considering that there is only "one leader per generation and not two leaders," why was the assembly (which belongs to the leader of the generation) done by Moshe and not by Joshua?

To explain this, Rashi first investigates the difference between Moshe and Yehoshua's authority. Since the authority of the trumpets had not been transferred to Yehoshua, this indicates that certain aspects of leadership, symbolized by the trumpets, never were given to Yehoshua. This explains why Moshe called the assembly and not Yehoshua, because Moshe still held onto certain leadership privileges until the end of his life.

Once that is settled, then Rashi explains why Moshe himself did not use the

trumpets to call the assembly, because they "were hidden away even during his lifetime, prior to the day of his passing... and there is no ruling on the day of death."

The Deeper Dimension:

How could Moses' authority diminish in the final days of his life when he had reached the highest levels of Divine closeness and understanding? The concept of authority, however, implies the existence of a congregation; in his final days, Moshe transcended any relationship with the terrestrial concerns of a nation. It might be thought, then, that he severed his connection with his people. Therefore Moshe calls the people to him, revealing that even when he withdraws within himself, he and his people are still one. That is why trumpets were not used to gather the people, because the use of trumpets implies that it requires effort to bring the people together.

On this final day of Moshe's life, there was no need for this compulsion because it was revealed how Moshe and the Jews are intrinsically one. Similarly, the assembly was not done by the kohanim – who draw down G-dliness upon the people, but by the Levites – who elevate the people toward G-d, because the Jewish people had to be elevated to the level of Moshe in his transcendent state on the day of his death, above leadership and authority.
