

Did Moses Forget the Name?

PARSHA INSIGHTS - HA'AZINU (5758)

FIVE FACETS TO IGNORING A PROMOTION

Today you will be provided with a question and five answers. Digest all of them, or choose the approach that suits you best. *Ailu v'ailu divrai Elokim Chayim* [lit. These and those are words of the living G-d] (*Gittin* 6B) - they are all authentic words of Torah.

As an introduction, let us highlight some of the central themes of the poem *Ha'azinu*. The *Ramban* on 32:40 comments that the song tells of the kindnesses Hashem bestowed upon us from the time He took us to Him as a nation. Its verses recall the *chesed* [kindness] we received in the wilderness and in the conquest of our adversaries' lands. Afterward, our rebellious nature is pointed out, plus the irony that we served idols after Hashem treated us so affectionately. Ultimately, the poem brings tidings of the future, eternal redemption from exile.

Who transmitted the awe-inspiring words of this song to the *Bnai Yisroel* [Children of Israel]? “Moshe came and spoke all the words of this poem in the ears of the nation - he and **Hoshea** Bin Nun” (32:44).

The question is obvious. If Moshe already changed Hoshea's name to **Yehoshua** in *Parshas Shlach*, right before the *meraglim* [spies] were sent into Canaan to bring back a report about it (*Bamidbar* 13:16), why does the Torah again call him **Hoshea** now? Hoshea is his old name, and it technically should not be used anymore! Five answers will now be presented.

Of course, *Rashi* addresses this issue. He is called Hoshea instead of Yehoshua right now to show something about his personality and values. Even though the leadership of the Jewish people was being handed over to him on this last day of Moshe's life, Yehoshua did not become a *ba'al ga'ava* [an arrogant person]. “Despite the fact that greatness was given to him, he lowered himself (to be) as he was in his former state (when he possessed no authority).” *Rashi's* intent must be clarified well. It was way back in the year 2449, by the sending of the *meraglim*, that Hoshea was changed to Yehoshua; now it was about 38 years later. *Rashi* is likely saying that the Torah testifies that Yehoshua STILL viewed himself as someone with much work ahead of him, “Hoshea”, during all those years AND now that nobility was being bestowed upon him. Thus, we are taught a significant lesson. Although Hashem sometimes elevates us to positions of authority, we are to remain humble like before. One must never allow his exalted status to inflate his ego. This is much easier said than done, but we MUST follow Yehoshua's example. We should remember to keep our modest attitude, as in “Hoshea”, even when we are promoted to “Yehoshua”.

A second explanation, found in the *Ibn Ezra*, goes as follows. The *pasuk* [verse] calls him “Hoshea” even now, despite the name change to Yehoshua, because Hoshea is his name which was most known to the Jewish people. “Who knew that Moshe nicknamed him Yehoshua?” *Ibn Ezra* remarks that the only ones who were aware of this name change were the most elite of *Bnai Yisroel*; the common people had no knowledge of it. Apparently, the *Ibn Ezra* learns that *pasuk* in *Shlach* 13:16 to mean that Moshe merely called him Yehoshua as a meaningful nickname (see commentaries there - it was a prayer that he be saved from the evil counsel of the spies). In fact, the verse there simply states that “Moshe called Hoshea Bin Nun...Yehoshua”. It does not say that his name would no longer be Hoshea. Both names are still intact! In short, the name Hoshea was more known to the Jewish people, so the Torah uses it freely.

Let us consult another early commentator for the third solution. The *Chizkuni* suggests that the name change to Yehoshua conformed to the style of kings giving their servants new names when they are appointed. Thus, when Hoshea graduated to the status of Moshe *Rabainu's* [Moses our teacher's] official attendant and disciple, Moshe called him Yehoshua. Another example of this is when Paroh gave Yosef a new title - *Tzofnas Pa'aniach* - when he was appointed viceroy of Egypt (*Beraishis* [Genesis] 41:45). But now that Yehoshua became the supreme sovereign of the Jewish nation, he was no longer a servant of Moshe. Rather, he was a ruler! Consequently, in our *pasuk*, where he is becoming king, he is again called by his original name. The name Yehoshua was only applicable while he was secondary to Moshe; this situation is changing in our *pasuk*. Despite all this, says the *Chizkuni*, he is STILL called Yehoshua throughout the written Torah because it had become customary to call him this. But the bottom line is that his original name Hoshea is fitting for him as a king, and Yehoshua was merely his name while he served Moshe. And now for the fourth approach, found in the *Or*

Hachaim. It is different from the *Chizkuni*, who said that “Yehoshua” was the servant's name, while “Hoshea” was the original name which was to be used when this student of Moshe was no longer a servant but became king. The *Or Hachaim* states that the added letter ' - *yud* on the name Hoshea, creating the new version Yehoshua, was for splendor and greatness. This is hinted to in the above mentioned *pasuk* in *Parshas Shlach*, that MOSHE, the leader of *Klal Yisroel* [the Jewish people], gave Hoshea the royal, special name Yehoshua. In OUR PASUK, the Torah says that “he (Moshe Rabainu) and Hoshea Bin Nun”, together, said the words of *Ha'azinu* in the ears of the nation. Since Hoshea is being mentioned in the same phrase as Moshe *Rabainu*, who is certainly his superior, he is called the name that signifies LESS greatness. This is the name Hoshea, which lacks the extra letter *yud* of prominence.

The *Kli Yakar* provides a fifth answer. Why is he called Hoshea here, even after his name change to Yehoshua? In *Parshas Shlach*, he was only called Yehoshua because of Moshe's prayer on his behalf, “may Hashem (the name of G-d spelled ' - *yud*... [and then] ה - *hey*) deliver you from the counsel of the (evil) spies”. That prayer was hinted to in the added letter *yud*, which changed him from Hoshea to Yehoshua. As long as even one sinful person of that first generation was alive, it was appropriate to call him Yehoshua, with the additional *yud*.

☞ I venture to say that the reason for this was so that he would STILL be protected from the negative influence of those people who rejected the land of Israel and believed the wicked report of the spies.

Since by this time the entire first generation had perished, and the children stood ready to enter the land, there was “no place for this prayer” of Moshe *Rabainu*. Hoshea did not need to be saved from any evil plan of failing to enter the land. As a result, the Torah calls him his original name - Hoshea.

Methods of unearthing the Torah's countless secrets vary from one commentary to another, but they all have valuable information for us. We have simply recorded and briefly analyzed each of just five answers to the question of why the Torah calls Yehoshua by his original name, Hoshea. It is up to you to delve more deeply into these approaches, comparing and contrasting their messages as you deem necessary. May the great *zechus* [merit] of *amailus batorah* [toiling and laboring in Torah study] help us all in these days of judgment and divine compassion.

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