

This week is Camper Shabbat, because we had one bunk and two campers come up and participate in the service in honor of the Parsha's theme of leadership.

As you may remember, we last left off when the Israelites were in the desert, getting ready to move into the land of Israel. This week's parsha is called Pinchas, and it starts out with a census of each of the 12 tribes of Israel, so that the male members of each tribe could be assigned a different territory within Israel to live on and take ownership of. However, what really interests me about this Parsha is that in it, we read two stories about people taking on new leadership roles in preparation for the journey into Israel.

The first is the story of Zelophehad's daughters, who were denied the right to inherit their father's land that had been assigned to him. At the time, Israelite law did not allow daughters to inherit their father's property. Their father, Zelophehad, had died in the desert, and his daughters were worried that they wouldn't have any land to live on when they arrived in Israel. So they went up to Moses and told him that they wanted to inherit the land. Moses agreed with them, and took their case before G-d, so that G-d could change the law. G-d declared that from then on, if an Israelite man died without any sons, his property should go to his daughters. The daughters of Zelophehad were brave in asking for change, and they were deserving of the responsibility over the land. It takes courage to stand up for ourselves and be the first one to make a difference. They had *chutzpah* -- that's a Yiddish word that means audacity, being bold. When we exercise our courage, we can earn new responsibilities. We can be like the daughters of Zelophehad when we ask to be taken seriously, when we show up as advocates for ourselves and others.

The second leadership story that we read described how Joshua, Moses' attendant and second-in-command, is designated as the future leader of the Israelite community. Earlier in the Torah we learned that Joshua had already proven his worth as a capable leader when he told the Israelites that they were strong enough to continue on in their journey into Canaan, despite the fact that the other ten spies thought that the Israelites were too weak to succeed. Joshua has proven himself as a leader through his determination to ensure a future for the Israelites in the

Promised Land. This is why Joshua is described as an “אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־רוּחַ”, a man with spirit. Here at Camp Tawonga, ruach means being enthusiastic during song sessions and showing up with energy and enthusiasm. But it can also mean much more than that. Having spirit, having ruach is about being committed and strong, determined and passionate.

When G-d appointed Joshua to take on the role of Moses' successor and lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, G-d was calling for the next generation of leaders to step up and take charge in the newest phase of the Israelites' journey. In life, as time passes, each generation has the chance to grow into bold, committed, passionate leaders. For example, at Tawonga, we empower campers so that one day they can become counselors and specialists. And in Judaism, we earn new responsibilities when we turn thirteen and become a bar or bat or b-mitzvah.

For those of you who've had a bar or bat or b-mitzvah in the past few years, this is your moment to continue to grow in your leadership journeys. Our bar, bat and b-mitzvahs are just the beginning. They don't have to be the only time in our lives that we read Torah, or lead our communities in prayer, or take on a meaningful project. These moments when we're thirteen are the first time we do these things, and then we keep doing them over the course of our lives, when we're fifteen or twenty-five or forty-five, and we keep getting better at them.

Two campers, Sadie and Townes, and one bunk, G4B, took on leadership roles today in reading Torah and preparing a skit for us -- this is the spirit of camper Shabbat. They were offered a chance to be role models, and they took it. We can all do this in our own way, no matter what age we are, whether we are in Nitzanim or Chalutzim, we can all become leaders with chutzpah like Zelophehad's daughters and with ruach like Joshua.

Camp Tawonga, let's all be leaders.

Shabbat Shalom!