

Parashat Vayelekh: Power Over or Power With?

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Devarim 31:6-7	
<p>חֲזָקוּ וְאַמְצוּ אֶל־תִּירְאוֹ וְאֶל־תַּעֲרָצוֹ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּךְ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבֶךָ: וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְעֵינֵי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲזָק וְאַמְצֵ כִּי אַתָּה תְּבֹא אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לֵאמֹר לְתֶת לָהֶם וְאַתָּה תִּנְחִילֵנָה אוֹתָם:</p>	<p>Be strong and resolute; be not in fear or in dread of them, for it is indeed the ETERNAL your God who marches with you—who will not fail you or forsake you. Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: “Be strong and resolute, for it is you who shall go with this people into the land that GOD swore to their fathers to give them, and it is you who shall apportion it to them.</p>

1. Power Over

Bavli Sanhedrin 8a	
<p>כְּתִיב: “כִּי אַתָּה תְּבֹא”, וְכְתִיב: “כִּי אַתָּה תְּבִיא”. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אָמַר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ: אַתָּה וְהַזְקֵנִים שְׂבִדוֹר עִמָּהֶם. אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: טוֹל מִקָּל וְהָרָה עַל קִדְקֻדָּם. דָּבָר אֶחָד לְדוֹר, וְאֵין שְׁנֵי דְבָרִין לְדוֹר.</p>	<p>It is written: “For you shall go with these people into the land” (Deuteronomy 31:7), and it is written: “For you shall bring the children of Israel into the land” (Deuteronomy 31:23). Rabbi Yoḥanan reconciled the difference between these two charges and said: Moses said to Joshua, in the first verse: You and the elders of the generation will enter into Eretz Yisrael together with the people, i.e., the elders will assist you in the leadership. Subsequently, in the second verse, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Joshua: You yourself must bring the people: Take a rod and strike the people upon their skulls. There must be one clear and authoritative leader for the generation, and there may not be two or more leaders for the generation.</p>

Rashi Devarim 31:6	
<p>לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ. לֹא יִתֵּן לְךָ רִפְיוֹן לְהִיּוֹת נֶעְזֵב מִמֶּנּוּ:</p>	<p>לא ירפך means He will give you no looseness that you should be abandoned by God.</p>

Ha-Emek Davar on Devarim 31:6	
<p>לְעֵינֵי בְּיָ חֲזָק וְאַמְצֵ. יֵשׁ בְּזֶה שְׁתֵּי כּוֹנוֹת כְּדֹרֶךְ מִשְׁנָה תּוֹרָה. א' שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ לְעֵינֵי בְּיָ. ב' שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ שִׁיתְחַזֵּק לְעֵינֵי בְּיָ:</p>	<p>In the eyes of all Israel, be strong and courageous. There are two meanings in this, as is the style of the <i>Mishneh Torah</i> [Devarim]. 1) That he said this in the eyes of the Israelites. 2) That he said to be strong in the eyes of the Israelites.</p>

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

2. Power With

Bavli Sanhedrin 32b	
תורה ומעשים טובים מניין? — שנאמר: "רק חזק ואמץ מאד לשמר ולעשות ככל התורה", "חזק" — בתורה, "ואמץ" — במעשים טובים.	For each of these, a biblical proof is cited: From where is it derived that Torah and good deeds require bolstering? As it is stated in the instruction to Joshua: "Only be strong and be extremely courageous, observe and do all of the Torah that Moses My servant commanded you; do not deviate to the right or to the left, that you may succeed wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7). In this verse, observe refers to Torah study and do refers to good deeds (Maharsha); the apparently repetitive language is not extraneous. The Gemara derives: Be strong in Torah and be courageous in good deeds.
Hizkuni on Devarim 31:7	
כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה לפי שכאן היה מדבר משה עם יהושע לעיני כל ישראל חלק להם לישראל כבוד כלומר תבואו עם העם הזה.	כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה, "for you will come with this people;" seeing that here Moses was speaking with Joshua in the presence of the whole people, he honoured the Jewish people by saying that they would walk alongside them.
Or Ha-Hayyim on Devarim 31:7	
כי אתה תבוא. ולא אמר תביא, כי ה' המביא אותם, כמו שאמר למעלה ה' אלהיך הוא העובר וגו' הוא ישמיד, אלא שהוא יבוא בראשם. והגם שאמרו ז"ל (שם ח.) בפסוק שאמר בסוף הפרשה (להלן פסוק כג) כי אתה תביא, שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא דבר אחד לדור, לפי שמשמעות תבוא סובלת גם כן אחרים עמו, לזה רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא שיפרש דבריו, ולעולם כוונת משה היתה להעיר כי ה' הוא המביא, נמצאת אומר אמר תבוא לקבוע המעשה (בשם) [בה] כי הוא המביא, ואמר תביא לשלול זולתו ממין האנושי:	כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה, "for you will come with this people, etc." Moses did not say תביא, "you will bring this people," seeing it was God who would actually bring the people by destroying their opposition. All Joshua was required to do was to march at the head of the people. While it is true that our sages in <i>Sanhedrin</i> 8 drew our attention to the end of our portion (verse 23) where God tells Joshua "you shall bring the children of Israel to the land I have sworn to them," the reason that God used the expression תביא was to correct the impression Moses' words had left when he said תבוא. According to Rabbi Yochanan Moses meant "you and the elders." God objected by saying that there can only be one authoritative spokesman per generation, i.e.; <i>dabbar echad ledor</i> . To make this point, God said to Joshua "you will bring," instead of "you will come." Now that we have that verse we can interpret the verse in which Moses said "you will come" as a reminder that God would do the actual "bringing."

3. Coercive and Coactive Power

Mary Parker Follett, <i>Creative Experience</i> (1924)
What is the central problem of social relations? It is the question of power; this is the problem of industry, of politics, of international affairs. But our task is not to learn where to place power; it is how to develop power. We frequently hear nowadays of 'transferring' power... But the transference of power has been the whole course of history—power passing to priests or king or barons, to council or soviet. Are we satisfied to continue this puss-in-the-corner game? We shall certainly do so as long as we think that the transference of power is the way of progress. Genuine power can only be grown, it will slip from every arbitrary hand that grasps it, for genuine power is not coercive control, but coactive control. Coercive power is the curse of the universe; coactive power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul.