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When a Torah giant is *niftar*, passes away, it leaves a void which cannot be filled. The next *tzaddik*, righteous person, will establish his own position, approach and following. He will not replace his predecessor. Each Torah giant is on his own individual spiritual plane and has his own unique impact on his followers. Moshe *Rabbeinu* took leave of his beloved nation. The void that the *Bnei Yisrael* felt was immediately filled by Yehoshua, Hashem's hand-picked successor to Moshe. While Yehoshua was a capable leader who navigated the nation throughout their war with the seven nations and the apportioning of *Eretz Yisrael*, he was not Moshe. Yehoshua was Yehoshua – Moshe was Moshe, and it is the scenario whenever we become bereft of one leader and another one assumes the helm of leadership.

Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, observes that, when one leader is *niftar*, we are to move on in support of the next leader. We do not dwell upon the past, but move on to the present. *Va'yitmu eivel b'chi Moshe. ViYehoshua bin Nun malei b'ruach chochmah*, "The days of tearful mourning for Moshe ended. Yehoshua bin Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom." This teaches that the nation was not absorbed in painful mourning; the weeping had ended. Now was the time to raise up the banner of *Klal Yisrael*, to confirm its new leader, Yehoshua. Indeed, the mere fact that Moshe left over a *talmid*, student, who could seamlessly move into his position of leadership was, in and of itself, an indication that Moshe was still "alive," his presence felt throughout the nation.

Rav Shternbuch explains that this idea was the basis of the contrast between Yaakov *Avinu* and Rachel *Imeinu* in understanding the name to be given to their youngest child, Binyamin. Rachel named him *Ben Oni*, literally, son of my mourning, while Yaakov named him Binyamin, son of the right/power. Rachel focused on the pain she had endured in his birth, coupled with the awareness that that she would not live to raise him. Yaakov preserved part of the name, but added *yemin*, right, which would then transform *Oni*, "My mourning," into *Oni*, "My strength." Rachel wanted everyone to remember the tragedy that had accompanied his birth. Yaakov did not want to perpetuate the painful memories. He understood that, to serve Hashem properly, one must emphasize the positive. We pray; we have faith; we hope for Hashem's salvation. The past is gone. We must glean and incorporate its lessons into the present, so that we can hope for a stronger and brighter future.

Horav David Moshe, zl, fifth son of the saintly *Ruzhiner Rebbe, zl*, was founder of *Chortkover chassidus*. He was a saintly individual who spent his days in seclusion, serving Hashem on an elevated esoteric level. His son and successor, *Horav Yisrael, zl*, concretized the *chassidus* into one of the largest *chassidic* groups in Europe in the early twentieth century.

One year prior to *Rav David Moshe's petirah*, he called in his son and instructed him, "Sit in my chair and assume my position (as *Rebbe*)."
Rav Yisrael cried out, "*Tatte*, what are you saying?" He

refused to sit in his father's seat. Even after his father had reiterated his request, he relented only to sit and immediately get up. It was after the third request that he acquiesced and remained seated. His father told him, "You shall be *Rebbe*, and all the *berachos* which you will confer on *Klal Yisrael* will be as if I had blessed them." The *Rebbe* then asked his son to reply, "*Amen*," to which *Rav Yisrael* replied, "*Amen*, together with you." He later said that his father's dying *brachah* to him was not fulfilled, because he had not responded *amen* the way his father had instructed him; rather, he had said, "*Amen*, together with you." Subsequently, prior to breathing his last, *Rav Duvid Moshe* crowned *Rav Yisrael Rebbe*.

Fifteen years prior to the *Alter Chortkover's* (*Rav Duvid Moshe*) *petirah*, he suddenly, without warning, stopped saying *divrei Torah* at his *Tisch*. (In *Yiddish*, *tisch* means table, which in this case refers to the tradition of *chassidim* sitting at their *Rebbe's* table and receiving *shirayim*, small portions of food from the *Rebbe*, singing together, and listening to the *Rebbe's* innovative Torah thoughts. The *tisch* is the defining ritual of a *chassidic* master/*Rebbe* at public functions.) The *chassidim* were understandably upset. After they persistently requested that the *Rebbe* retract his decision, he instructed them to go to his son, *Rav Yisrael*, and ask him to say Torah for them. This became the accepted norm, with *Rav Yisrael* sitting next to his father presenting *divrei Torah*. Apparently, the *Alter Rebbe* was grooming his son for the day in which he would assume the helm of the *Rebbisva*, leadership of *Chortkover chassidus*.

While *Rav Yisrael* acted as his father's right-hand man, in no way did this diminish the esteem and awe that he manifested for his father. He never entered his father's room without first requesting permission. He would never speak to his father unless he had first been addressed. This respect continued on even after the passing of the *Alter Rebbe*, always acknowledging that he felt himself to be a far cry from his father in every way. Nonetheless, when the moment came for *Rav Yisrael* to assume leadership of *Chortkover chassidus*, he did so with dignity and authority, indicating his ability to navigate and lead the *chassidus* to its next plateau.

In other *Chassidic* courts, the son does not play an active role during his father's lifetime. *Chortkov* was different, because the *Rebbe* wanted it this way. It was almost as if the *Alter Rebbe* was preparing his *chassidim* for that moment in which they would have to accept his son as their leader. He wanted them to know that it was his decision that *Rav Yisrael* fill his shoes.

When the *Alter Rebbe* was *niftar*, the *chassidim* were heartbroken, feeling that the era of *Rav Duvid Moshe* was over and a new king was ascending the throne. The tears flowed freely until one of the *chassidim* arose and addressed his colleagues. "Why are you sobbing like lost sheep? We have a new *Rebbe* who is fully capable of filling his father's shoes. He has distinguished himself in all areas of Torah and is able to lead us in the same way as his father did."

Another *chassid* intervened and explained why the *chassidim* were so shaken up, "We do not in any way underestimate the new *Rebbe*. Until now, however, we had the good fortune of being led by two revered *Rebbes*. Until now, when a *Yid* found it difficult to approach the *Alter Rebbe*, he

would go to his son and ask for his guidance in how to present his petition. Furthermore, the *Alter Rebbe's* replies were often brief and terse, his answers short and very concise, which left the *chassid* wondering about its true meaning. We would go to *Rav Yisrael* who clarified his father's response. Yes, until now we had two *Rebbes* – we now have only one.”

Moshe *Rabbeinu's talmid muvhak*, primary disciple, Yehoshua, never left his side. He understood his *Rebbe* and, when he did not, he asked. He was eminently prepared for the position of leadership. *Klal Yisrael* had heretofore benefitted from the leadership of Moshe and the knowledge that Yehoshua, his trusted *talmid*, was being groomed to eventually lead the nation. While Yehoshua was not a replacement for the *Rabban Shel Yisrael*, he was the hand-picked successor. It was now time to move on with the new leadership.