

SEEING THE SYMPHONY

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Moshe spoke to HASHEM, saying: "Let HASHEM, the G-d of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of HASHEM not be as sheep which have no shepherd." And HASHEM said unto Moshe: "Take for yourself Yehoshua the son of Nun, a man of spirit, and press your hand upon him; and set him before Elazar the priest, and before all of the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And you shall place your glory honor upon him so that all the congregation of the children of Israel should accept...And Moshe did as HASHEM commanded him; and he took Yehoshua, and set him before Elazar the priest, and before all of the congregation, and he placed his hands upon him, and charged him, as the HASHEM spoke by the hand of Moshe. (Bamidbar 27:16-23)

Why was Yehoshua chosen to replace Moshe? Was he the biggest scholar in the generation? What makes someone worthy of leadership? What was his special merit?

Recently I heard the following story about Reb Elchonon Wasserman ztl. He came to the United States from Europe before the 2nd World War to collect money to support his Yeshiva in Baronovitch. He was staying in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Someone told him about a successful Jewish clothing manufacturer in Manhattan that had many hundreds of workers but refused to give charity. Reb Elchonon took up the challenge of going to visit this businessman.

When he arrived at the workplace he was given a less than warm reception. The boss finally welcomed him into his office and anticipating the request for money, he curtly questioned him about why he had come. Reb Elchonon stood in full stature (he was a tall man) and showed him where a button on his jacket had become loose. The man was stunned and relieved and so immediately he called over one of his workers from the coat manufacturing division and following instructions, they secured all the buttons on the Rabbi's coat. Reb Elchonon graciously thanked them and he left.

A short while later it dawned on this businessman the oddity of that visit. He called for Reb Elchonon and asked him, "Did you really come all the way from Williamsburg just get a few buttons sewn on your jacket?" Reb Elchonon responded frankly, "No! I came from Baronovitch!" "Are you telling me", the manufacturer wondered, "that you came all the way from Europe just to have buttons secured on your coat?" Reb Elchonon answered question firmly, "Are you telling me that your soul made the long journey through the many heavenly layers down to this world, a much longer distance, only to

sew buttons on coats?" The words penetrated the man's heart and sent Reb Elchonon back with a handsome donation.

What happened here? Was it just that Reb Elchonon, in his brilliance, had managed to push the right buttons or maybe there's another explanation as well. The Talmud in Brochos makes the following almost paradoxical statement; "It is greater to service (assist) a Talmud Scholar more than even learning from him!" Why is that so?

Wouldn't it be better to learn the writings of a great scholar rather than to help him with his bags?! The Talmud Scholar is a living symphony of Torah priorities and human sensitivities. Studying a few notes of music Mozart would not be one part as transformational as experiencing the music itself. At the giving of the Torah we are told that "the nation saw the- Kolos" sounds. The one who assists the scholar sees in action what others only hear or understanding intellectually. There is a world to be gained from that proximity that cannot be gotten from scholarship alone.

Reb Aaron Kotler ztl. said that a person needs a "Zechus Torah", a merit of Torah, to be able to give to Torah. Perhaps, even that small action earned the coat manufacturer a "Zechus Torah" and that gave him the merit to participate in supporting Torah.

Our sages tell us that Yehoshua was the one who would set up the tables for the Moshe's lectures. He was the designated helper that put him constant contact with Moshe. He had the ongoing merit of **seeing the symphony**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).