

## **May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly... Hashem said... take to yourself Yehoshua bin Nun, a man in whom there is spirit. (27:16,18)**

Moshe *Rabbeinu* chose a special way of addressing Hashem, “God of the spirits of all flesh.” Rather than refer to Hashem’s Omnipresence or wisdom, Moshe chose to speak of Hashem’s knowledge of the intricacies and foibles of the human mind and personality. Every person has his own unique persona and it is crucial for a leader to understand this and to know how to reach out to each person according to his own personal needs and wants. Moshe implied that his successor must embody as much of these Divine characters as humanly possible. In order to accommodate his flock, Moshe’s successor had to first understand what makes each person tick. Apparently, Yehoshua fit the bill; thus, he was Divinely selected to serve as the next leader of *Klal Yisrael*.

The *Midrash* offers an alternative reason for the selection of Yehoshua. *Notzar te’ainah yochal piryah*, “He who tends to the fig tree (through selfless work and devotion) will eat its fruit (*Mishlei* 27:18). Yehoshua served Moshe day and night, never leaving his side. He set up the seats in the study hall... it is only appropriate that he should continue to minister to the needs of the Jewish People.” It thus seems implied that Yehoshua’s selection was predicated upon his selfless devotion to his *Rebbe*.

Simply, we may suggest that the ability of Yehoshua to address the individual needs and issues of every Jew was the result of his total self-abnegation to his revered *Rebbe*. Only one who is the epitome of humility, who is devoted body and soul to his mentor, is able to open his heart and mind to each individual Jew.

Perhaps there is another aspect to Yehoshua’s character that warranted his selection as Moshe’s successor. It is not about humility. On the contrary – it is about the opposite – it is about Yehoshua’s honorability, which is a vital ingredient not only in leadership, but for everyone. In order to establish one’s self-respect and self-confidence, he must maintain self-honor, dignity, or, in the *Yiddish/yeshivish* vernacular, *shtoltz*.

Let me explain.

Every month (except for *Tishrei*), we are *mevarchim ha’chodesh*, bless the upcoming new month. In the *Yehi ratzon*, “May it be Your will” prayer, each Jew supplicates Hashem to grant him life filled with various attributes which unquestionably add to the quality of his life. Included in this prayer is our request for *osher v’chavod*, wealth and honor. Wealth is certainly a wonderful gift, since it enables us to maintain a serene quality of life (or, at least, so we think), so that we may have more time to study Torah and the ability to help others in need. Honor, however, seems to run counter to the requirement for humility. Are not the quest for honor and maintaining humility on two opposing – often antagonistic – sides of the spectrum of human character traits?

The challenge, *nisayon*, of wealth is far from simple. In fact, for some, it is quite possibly more difficult to overcome than the challenge of poverty. If one does not have money, his challenge is to remain committed, despite his hunger. Wealth, on the other hand, poses the challenge of doing the right thing with one's wealth, maintaining a generous spirit, despite the "encouragement" of the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, to hoard the money for a rainy day. *Kavod*, however, is different. A man who is obsessed with honor, will do anything to gain honor. Yet, we pray for honor in our Friday night *Ribon Kol HaOlamim* prayer (recited after *Shalom Aleichem*). We ask Hashem to grant us honor. If it is a negative trait, how can we ask for it?

*Horav Asher Sonenfeld, Shlita* (cited in *Kol HaTorah*), quotes the *Chazon Ish, zl*, who explains that *kavod*, honor/honorability/dignity is essentially a vital character trait, a quality critical to human functionality. The aspect of *kavod* that is wrong is its pursuit. To seek and demand honor runs counter to a Torah-oriented life. A Torah Jew should be honorable, dignified, maintain *shtoltz*, but he should not pursue honor. How then does one achieve honor? *Chazal* teach that when one leaves this world and comes before the Heavenly Tribunal, he will be asked, *Himlachta es chaveircha alecha*, "Did you elevate/lord, your fellow over yourself?" In other words, it is up to us to ennoble our fellow over ourselves. By elevating our fellow man, we achieve honor. We bond with other fellow Jews by promoting them. When we give – we receive. We dignify ourselves and sustain our need for honor by elevating others. Therefore, when we pray for honor, we ask for the honorability and self-respect that is derived from elevating others. We acknowledge the importance of self-honor, and we also realize that, unless it is deserved and received in the appropriate manner, it is nothing more than base arrogance.

*Chazal* (*Yoma 47a*) relate that a woman named Kimchis merited to have seven sons, each of whose spiritual level was so lofty that each one served as *Kohen Gadol*. Her merit is attributed to the fact that "the walls of her house never saw her hair uncovered." So great was her commitment to *tzniyus*, moral modesty. *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, explains that certainly there is no prohibition against a woman leaving her hair uncovered in the privacy of her home. If so, what is so unique about her *tzniyus*? It is either appropriate or it is taking the principle to the extreme. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the fact that she acted in this manner even in the privacy of her own home indicated that her level of self-respect was extremely elevated. She simply could not permit herself to act in the privacy of her own home in such a manner that, under other circumstances, would be considered inappropriate. A woman who excels to this degree in her trait of *nichabados*, self-honor and respect, merits to have such fine sons.

Other women followed Kimchis' example, but with different results. Their sons did not become *Kohanim Gedolim*. *Rav Sonnenfeld* explains that it was not in the merit of her *tzniyus* that she had such sons. It was because she demonstrated her exemplary dignity in such a manner that she acted like a child serving a parent – with utmost respect. Is that not what the *Kohen Gadol* does – serve with the greatest respect? It is all about maintaining a sense of dignity and pride that comes with the realization of before Whom one stands.

We have now arrived at the premise that giving is actually receiving. When I honor my fellow Jew, I am receiving and developing my innate needs for honor. The following vignette teaches us a similar idea, that through the act of giving and enabling others, one is personally benefiting:

The *Ponevezer Rav* not only established a *yeshivah* of renown in Bnei Brak, but he also saw to the building and maintenance of an orphanage called *Batei Avos*. The orphanage served those who had been orphaned as a result of World War II, whose physical and spiritual lives were both in danger. The powers that be in *Eretz Yisrael* at the time were largely secular, and raising children in a Torah tradition was furthest from their minds. A particular group of children, the *Yaldei Tehran*, who were originally refugees from Poland and Soviet Russia, had been taken and placed in an Israeli Absorption camp in Atlit (near Haifa). This camp was run by secular Israelis who had a rabid hatred of Torah Judaism. Their goal was to extirpate any vestige of Jewish heritage from the minds of these poor children. They achieved this by subjecting the children to physical and emotional abuse. Finally, after much pressure, the Orthodox community was able to secure the “release” of some of these children. The Nazis, *yemach shemam*, attempted to destroy their bodies. Hashem foiled their diabolical plan. Now it was up to the religious groups to see to it that their *neshamos*, souls, stay intact.

The *Ponevezer Rav* knew that there was no way that he could provide the necessary pillows and blankets needed for the influx of children. He would have to appeal to the already overburdened hearts of the members of the community, who themselves had very little. In order to facilitate this, he called an emergency gathering of the entire community, declaring that he had a vital and important message for them. When the *Ponevezer Rav* called, people responded. Now, all he had to do was convince them to give.

He began by citing the well-known *Chazal*, stating that he who purchases an *eved Ivri*, Hebrew bondsman, actually acquires a master for himself, since he must provide the best for his servant. Indeed, if the master has only one pillow, he must hand it over to his newly-acquired servant. “This does not coincide with the law of *Chayecha kodmin*, ‘Your life comes first!’” the *Rav* asserted. Our Sages teach that one’s life takes precedence over that of his fellow. Why hand over the pillow to your servant? The answer must be that it is *Chayecha kodmin* to give your pillow to your servant, because you would not be able to sleep knowing your servant has no pillow. Since the only way that you will sleep is by giving your pillow to your servant – it is the fulfillment of *Chayecha kodmin*!”

Let it suffice to say that after such a powerful and brilliant presentation, there was no shortage of pillows or blankets for the children. We see how helping a fellow Jew is actually helping oneself.