

He leaned his hands upon him and commanded him. (27:23)

Yehoshua merited becoming Moshe *Rabbeinu's* successor – a designation that eluded the most astute and most brilliant of the nation's leadership. Apparently, Yehoshua possessed qualities which gave him precedence over the others. What was it about Yehoshua that distinguished him so? Indeed, Moshe was great from day one. His birth illuminated the entire house. There is no question that from the time of his entry into this world, Moshe was above everyone. The commentators do not seem to feel this way concerning Yehoshua. Indeed, some even feel that he was not worthy of the appellation, *ben Torah*. His relationship vis-à-vis his *Rebbe*, Moshe, is what made the difference and what catalyzed him into prominence. He never left his *Rebbe's* presence, standing there constantly, being at his beck and call. We do not find the Torah referring to Yehoshua as the *talmid*/student of Moshe; rather, the Torah gives him the title *meshareis* Moshe, servant/attendant of Moshe.

This, of course, does not preclude Yehoshua's scholarship. The *Arizal* writes that only two individuals achieved complete/perfect knowledge of the entire Torah – cover to cover – with every commentary and dialectic: Moshe and Yehoshua. This is why we find in the opening statement of *Pirkei Avos*, Moshe *kibail*, received, the Torah from Sinai and gave it to Yehoshua. Exactly as he received it – completely pristine, perfect; this is how he gave it to Yehoshua. Yehoshua, however, gave it to the collective *Zekeinim*, Elders, who were a considerable group. Not one of them **alone** was able to grasp what Yehoshua alone had received from Moshe.

When Moshe ascended *Har Sinai*, Yehoshua waited patiently for forty days and nights for his *Rebbe's* return. He was unaware that the nation had sinned with the Golden Calf. Despite all of Yehoshua's incredible credentials, Moshe still wanted his sons to be heirs to his mantle of leadership. Hashem did not concur. He preferred Yehoshua.

The *Chasam Sofer* applies this idea in his *p'sak*, ruling, that sons do not necessarily inherit their father's position. Clearly, Moshe understood the criteria for leadership of the nation. The fact that he still wanted his sons to have leadership positions is an indication that he felt them worthy of this distinction. Nevertheless, as worthy as Moshe's sons might have been, Hashem felt that Yehoshua was more acceptable. His consummate devotion to Torah, illuminated by the way in which he arranged the seats in the *bais ha'medrash*, made the difference. Erudition is important; brilliance means a lot, but there is much more to leadership. Yehoshua cared. He saw to it that when the students entered the *bais ha'medrash* in the morning, it was warm and inviting; everything was in its proper place. At the end of the day, he cleaned up and arranged the seats in proper order. He did not just study or teach Torah – he lived it.

Much has been written concerning the *Chasam Sofer's* ruling. Indeed, there are those who feel that the *Midrash* implies that Hashem indicated that the sons of Moshe were not suited for the position. Otherwise, it would have gone to them *m'toras yerusha*, because of the laws of inheritance. In his *Shevet HaLevi*, *Horav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, Shlita*, writes that, the *Chasam Sofer's* ruling

notwithstanding, he contends that the appointment of Yehoshua to succeed Moshe is on an entirely different plane. Yehoshua was designated to teach the nation the Torah, as well as lead them into the Promised Land. Only he had heard the entire Torah from Moshe. Thus, only Yehoshua could have become his successor.

Moreover, Yehoshua became *Klal Yisrael's* leader because he earned this distinction. It was not his by virtue of birth. This serves as a tremendous source of encouragement and hope to all of those waiting for that rare position. One who is worthy of a leadership position will eventually see his dream realized. Patience is not just a virtue; it is an intrinsic part of the process.