

“Everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it.” (35:5)

Sincerity is the key word when it comes to contributing to a Torah cause. The amount that one gives is not important. Rather, it is the manner in which one gives: with what attitude, with what sensitivity, with what feeling. Hashem does not need our contributions. What is important to Him is the contributor's inner desire to elevate and coalesce himself with the Almighty. There are people with small hearts who give big checks. The manner in which – and to whom – they give attests to this. There are also those whose checks are much less significant, but they manage to give with a big heart. They will help the “little guy” whose only recognition will be a warm smile, a bowed head and a profound “thank you.” These are the “*nediv lev's*,” who open their hearts as well as their wallets.

I recently came across a meaningful story in *Rabbi Paysach Krohn's* latest publication. The story is compelling, as is Rabbi Krohn's postscript – to which I would like to supplement my own personal comment as well. *Reb* Reuven Mendlowitz, the brother of *Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, z.l.*, had a grocery store in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. While we may call it a grocery store, some of those little stores maintained a standard of *kedushah*, holiness, that would parallel some *yeshivos*. On the day of *Reb* Shraga Feivel's *levayah*, funeral, the streets of Williamsburg were packed, as thousands of people assembled in *Mesivta Torah Vodaath* to pay a last tribute to the man who shaped the map of *Torah* in America. On his way to his brother's funeral, *Reb* Reuven stopped suddenly and entered a small grocery store along the way.

The people accompanying *Reb* Reuven were slightly taken aback at this diversion. What could be so important that would take precedence over the *levayah*? Out of respect for *Reb* Reuven's piety no one said anything. Yet, it continued to bother them. During the *shivah*, seven-day mourning period, one of the people summoned the courage to ask *Reb* Reuven what it was that was so important that day.

Reb Reuven's answer teaches us a lesson in sensitivity and charity. It seems there was a very poor man who came daily to *Reb* Reuven's grocery to “purchase” bread and milk for his family. Knowing that the man had no money, *Reb* Reuven never charged him for those necessities. To preserve his dignity, however, he would mark the amount due in a ledger – which both of them knew would probably never be cleared. It was a silent agreement between them. *Reb* Reuven gave, the impoverished man took, and that was the end of it.

“I realized that during *shivah* my store would be closed,” *Reb* Reuven explained, “and this man will have to go to another grocery to get his daily bread and milk. I wanted to make sure that the grocer would not charge my friend, so I went in to assure him that I would personally cover the cost.” Incredible! Thoughtfulness, sensitivity and *mentlichkeit* all embodied in one person.

Rabbi Krohn adds, “If that is what the grocers of that generation were like, can we imagine what the *gedolei Yisrael*, the Torah leaders, were like?” I would like to add that whatever the grocers

were, they attained such heights because they paralleled their *gedolim*. When the Torah leaders are extraordinary, the common man follows suit.