

“You shall not take notice of someone’s presence.” (16:19)

Everyone must be treated fairly and equally. This idea does not apply exclusively to a court of law. A sickness prevails in a society in which we favor one person over another. In some cases, it is their pedigree; in others, it is their material wealth, or it is simply what we personally can benefit from them. As a judge should not favor one litigant over another, so, too, should we not treat one Jew differently from another.

Horav David, z.l., m’Lelov was once traveling with the *Yehudi HaKadosh, z.l., m’Peshischa* to raise funds for charity. They came to the home of a wealthy Jew. After ushering them in, the man gave a donation to *Rav David*, whom he recognized, but refused to give anything to the *Yehudi HaKadosh*. In fact, he berated him, saying, “I can tell that you are a charlatan. You are not raising money for charity. You are really seeking funds for yourself. I will give you nothing!”

Hearing this gross insolence, *Rav David* returned his contribution, and they both left the house humiliated. It did not take long for the wealthy man to discover who *Rav David’s* partner was. The man was miserable. He searched all over for the two *tzaddikim*. After awhile, he was able to locate them.

Approaching the *Yehudi HaKadosh*, he begged forgiveness. “I did not know who the *rav* was. I would never have acted so rudely. Please forgive my insolence,” the man pleaded with the *tzaddik*.

The *Yehudi’s* response should send a shudder up the spine of anyone who ever treated a *meshulach*, fundraiser, who came to our door, in a disrespectful manner.

“To forgive you for my *kavod*, honor, is no problem. I know you had no intentions of insulting me. What about the poor man, however, whom you thought was standing in front of you? I have no right to be *mochel*, forgive, his *kavod*. It is not in my power to forgive the hurt and humiliation sustained by another Jew.

“I have only one suggestion for you in order to attain penance for your actions. Whenever a Jew comes to your door for funds – give him gladly, and from each one you should ask *mechilah*, forgiveness, because of the hurtful words that left your mouth.”

Perhaps the next time a poor man stands by our door and he does not measure up to our preconceived standard of qualifications, we should remember this story so that we will treat all Jews with equality.