

“This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you.” (9:6)

The adage that the “main thing is to be a Jew in one’s heart” is popular among those who have acculturated themselves to the prevalent gentile culture and society.

According to this approach, *mitzvah* performance and a Torah oriented lifestyle are unnecessary. G-d’s primary objective is that Jews maintain Jewish hearts. This means that one believes in Hashem. In his heart, he is an Orthodox Jew. In practice, however, he is far from the Orthodox perspective. They often quote the Rabbinic dictum, *Rachmana liba ba’i*, “Hashem desires that a Jew have a pure heart.” Also, *machshavah tovah Hakadosh Baruch Hu m’tzarfah l’maaseh*, “Hashem equates good intentions with actions.” Clearly, they are wrong, but how does one explain the error of their ways? The *Ben Ish Chai* suggests the following analogy to evidence the utter fallacy of their arguments:

A man married a woman whose acumen was not her strongest characteristic. She was a nice girl, but not very bright. The day after the wedding, she prepared dinner for her husband. It was a dinner fit for a king: stuffed chicken with seasoned meat and rice. Her husband praised her culinary skills, adding, “I like my food very spicy. Therefore, from today on, do not be cheap on the salt.” The wife, whose intelligence quotient was lacking, figured that if her husband loved salt so much, why bother filling the chicken with meat and rice, and then add salt and spices? It would be far more beneficial to just fill the chicken with salt and spices. The next day, the wife brought out the main course. The husband, expecting something spectacular, almost choked on the dish. The chicken was ruined as a result of excessive salt and spices.

This is the response that we give to those who either act simple, or actually are dimwitted. Clearly, a *machshavah tovah*, virtuous thought, is very significant, and Hashem surely wants a Jew to have a pure, sincere heart. A good heart, however, is like the spice that **flavors** the food. If one executes a *mitzvah*, the good heart and the accompanying virtuous thought add to the spiritual content of the *mitzvah*. To have nothing more than good thoughts and a good heart is like having a chicken filled with nothing but salt and spice. It is inedible.

While thought without action is of no value, thought does, nonetheless, play a critical role in increasing the *kavod Hashem*, honor of Hashem, factor. The reason for this is that action is not necessarily an accurate indication of an individual’s true motivation, goal and objective. Why is he fulfilling the *mitzvah*? For what purpose is he carrying out the good deed? For example, a man who sits in the *succah* on *Succos* does not by his very action indicate the true reason for sitting in the *succah*. It could be the result of peer pressure. If everyone sits in the *succah* while he sits in the house, it is bad for his reputation. He would have a difficult time getting his children into a good school. We cannot conclude from his actions that he is sitting in the *succah* in order to carry out the will of Hashem.

The Almighty, however, looks into the inner recesses of a person's heart and sees the truth. When Hashem sees a heart that is inspired and motivated to honor Him, that constitutes *kavod Shomayim*. Indeed, the *gematria* (numerical equivalent) of *lev*, heart, and *kavod*, honor/glory, is the same. When the heart motivates positive action, the honor of Hashem is increased.