

"To love Hashem your G-d, to walk in His ways, and to cleave/cling unto Him." (22:11)

Chazal explain the concept of walking in Hashem's ways as following in "His footsteps." This means to emulate Hashem. Just as He is merciful, so should we be merciful. Just as He is charitable so should we be charitable. Emulating Hashem should be the governing factor in our performance of *mitzvos*. *Horav Yaakov Neiman z.l.* asserts that to perform a *mitzvah* for Hashem while simultaneously hurting a fellow Jew even indirectly is wrong and diametrically opposed to Hashem's intention concerning *mitzvah* performance. We must remember our responsibility to reflect Hashem's traits of mercy and caring.

In *Parashas Va'eschanan 4:9*, the *pasuk* states, "Only take heed to yourself and guard your soul diligently lest you forget the things which your eyes saw." *Rashi* explains that if we do not forget the *mitzvos* and observe them correctly, we will then be viewed as wise and understanding by the world community. If, however, we perform the *mitzvos* in an inappropriate manner because of forgetfulness, we will be considered fools. *Horav Neiman* finds this statement enigmatic. Why should one who, due to inattentiveness, performs *mitzvos* perversely, be considered a fool? He should be viewed as a *rasha*, wicked!

He cites the *Lomza Mashgiach*, *Horav Moshe Rosenstein z.l.*, who related the interpretation of *Rav Simcha Zissel z.l. M'Kelm* on this *pasuk*. He explained that one who performs a *mitzvah l'shem shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, can not be viewed as a *rasha*, since he has noble intentions. Nonetheless, since his actions are inappropriate, he is deemed a fool. Indeed, *Horav Neiman* asserts a fool is far worse than a *rasha*. A *rasha* knows and understands his wrongdoing. Therefore, one day he can come to his senses or take hold of his desires in order to perform *teshuvah*, repentance. The fool, however, sees nothing wrong with his actions. Instead, he probably "pats himself on the back" and lauds his accomplishments on behalf of Hashem! This is *Rashi's* message: if you are negligent and heedless, you are fools.

Horav Neiman relates that one *Chol Ha'moed Sukkos* a group of serious *Bnei Torah*, young *Torah* scholars, were sitting in a neighborhood *sukkah* singing *zemiros* enthusiastically. The mood was sublime and joyful, replete with a *kedushah*, holiness that was certainly spiritually inspired. An elderly Jew who lived in that apartment complex was having a difficult time falling asleep due to this "sublime" singing. His patience strained, the elderly man could no longer contain himself. He proceeded to pour a bucket of water from his second floor apartment directly into the *sukkah*. One of the young men who was liberally splashed with water exclaimed to him, "How do you pour water into such a *sukkah*? Aren't you aware that the *Shechinah* reposes in such an assemblage?" Upon hearing of this incident and the young man's remark, *Horav Neiman* responded, "People think that the *Shechinah* resides in and confers blessing upon a place where the expression of *simchas ha'regel*, joy of *Yom Tov*, disturbs the sleep of an elderly Jew? This is a *mitzvah* which is performed through the vehicle of *aveirah*, sin. Such *mitzvah* performance is unacceptable and inappropriate.

Those who execute a *mitzvah* in such a manner are fools!"