

From every man whose heart motivates him. (25:2)

The *Chasam Sofer* explains the significance of *nedivus ha'lev*, generosity of the heart/generosity of the spirit, in that it is truly the only thing that a person can give. Whether we accept it or not (we certainly do not act it), everything belongs to Hashem. He shares it with us for the purpose of our sharing it with others. Thus, whatever material assets we contribute and share with our fellow man – we are not giving our money. We are making use of Hashem's money for our purposes.

Therefore, the barometer of devotion is *nedivus halev* – which is the generosity of the spirit that motivates their giving and the attitude that accompanies it. The size of the check that one gives means much to the beneficiary. After all is said and done, however, the benefactor is no more than a *gabbai tzedakah*, a charity treasurer, who doles out other people's money. Moshe Rabbeinu was to take funds only from those who manifested *nedivus halev*. The *Mishkan* had no plaques; all donors were the same. What distinguished the donor base was not how much they gave, but the manner in which they gave.

The requirement was that the money contributed to the *Mishkan* come from a free-will source and be given with generosity of spirit. Otherwise, it did not belong in the *Mishkan*, which was to be the centerpiece of *kedushah*, holiness. Only if the donation was given with *nedivus halev*, would it become holy. If someone gave for ulterior motives or was compelled to give out of shame, it did not belong in the *Mishkan*, because it would flaw the holiness that would emanate from this edifice.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, asserts that the barometer for measuring the amount of *kedushah* imbued in a *mitzvah* is determined by how much *nedivus halev*, free-willed enthusiasm and joy, one invests in the *mitzvah*. If we do not demonstrate our appreciation of the *mitzvah*, how can it achieve *kedushah*? The vibrance that is invested into *mitzvah* performance defines its spiritual trajectory.

In the secular mindset, charity is the voluntary act of giving to those in need, generosity and assistance toward the needy and suffering. *Tzedakah*, the Hebrew counterpart of charity, is derived from the word *tzedek*, righteousness, justness. *Tzedakah* is not an act of goodwill and compassion; rather, it is a moral obligation, a Divine mandate to do what is right and proper. As such, *tzedakah* is defined by halachic guidelines which define to whom one should give, in what sequence, and how to give. *Tzedakah* is structured, intelligent giving – not an act of pity. We believe that what we have is not ours only for our personal use. We understand that one who has should share with those who do not have, because what we have, by right, should be given to them. We are only stewards of our largesse. If we fail in our stewardship, we lose our assets. As *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, remarks, "*Tzedakah* is the justice which grants to every creature that which G-d allots to it." What could be a loftier mission than being Hashem's agent? Furthermore, *Chazal* teach, "Whoever turns his eyes away (ignores) from a *tzedakah* 'opportunity' is considered as if he worshipped idols" (*Kesubos* 68a). We must realize that every request for assistance is directed to us in Hashem's Name. To ignore such a request is equivalent to denying Hashem and idolizing money.

Ignoring the poor man is not as egregious as putting him down, claiming that he is really not poor.

Shlomo Hamelech says (*Mishlei 22:22*), *Al tigzol dal ki dal hu*, “Do not rob the destitute, because he is destitute.” Regarding this *pasuk*, *Horav Zev Wolf, zl, m'Strikov* commented, “If you refuse to give assistance to the destitute – do not give. Do not, however, steal the poverty from the poor man. Do not assert that he is not poor and not really deserving of assistance.”

Conversely, these were Torah giants who wholly devoted themselves to *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness, and did so with complete empathy, making sure that the benefactor received the best ethical returns on this investment, and that the beneficiary was treated royally. The *Ponovezher Rav, zl*, devoted his twilight years towards rebuilding his *yeshivah* and many others. His fundraising efforts and concomitant success were legendary. He also undertook the responsibility to build *Batei Avos*, homes for children orphaned by the war and its many consequences. He was father and mother to these children.

A distinguished *Rav* visited the *Chazon Ish, zl*. The giant of Torah told the *Rav*, “You must go meet an extraordinary Jew. The *Ponovezher Rav* will intrigue you.” The *Rav* went to the *yeshivah* expecting to find the *Ponovezher Rav* in the *bais hamedrash* learning, preparing a *shiur*. Instead, he was directed to *Bais Avos* where the *Rav* was busy laying down on a mattress. A selection of mattresses had arrived, and the *Rav* was laying down on each one – going from one to the next. The visiting *Rav* was flabbergasted, “What is his honor doing?” The *Ponovezher* explained, “These mattresses will be used by the children in *Batei Avos*. They are orphans who have lost so much. I am testing to see which is the most comfortable mattress for them to sleep on.” When the *Rav* returned to the *Chazon Ish* and related what he had seen, the *Chazon Ish* replied, *Azoi darf zein*; “This is the way it should be.” If we are going to do good – we should do it properly and correctly. After all, we are executing Hashem’s Will.”

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, was walking through Geulah (neighborhood) with *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, when they passed the post office. *Rav Elya*, who was no longer a young man, stopped, leaned on his cane, and turned to *Rav Sholom*. “Do you know the difference between one who gives *tzedakah* and one who causes others to give (fundraiser)?” he asked *Rav Sholom*. “One who gives *tzedakah* also does for himself (he receives satisfaction from his deed). One who causes others to give also does for others. One who gives receives honor and accolades. One who causes others to give hardly receives honor and usually is the target of *bizyonos*, humiliation. One who gives – gives money. One who fundraises, gives his time – and time is life.” One who raises money for others gives up his life for them!