

ME FIRST

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

There was once a wise man that was approached by concerned parents who requested that he instruct their 7-year-old son to stop eating sweets. The wise man pondered the question and then replied, "Please return in 14 days." The parents did as the wise man instructed and came back to him 2 weeks later and again requested that he tell their 7 year old to stop eating candies. The wise man immediately turned to the boy and gave him the command. The pleased parents were elated but still they felt an urge to ask, "Oh wise one. Our request was very simple and today you did as we asked without delay. With all due respect, could His Excellency explain why we had to go home for two weeks and return?"

"It is quite simple", he replied, "two weeks ago I too was eating too many sweets."

People don't like to change -- themselves, that is. They do, however, expect others to correct all that they lack in order to become perfect. The Gemara takes the opposite approach. "Correct yourself first, then you may correct others" [Baba Mesia 107b]. A wise man -- or woman -- corrects himself or herself BEFORE they ask others to change.

Today, when you are a little critical of someone else -- stop. It only takes a minute to focus on oneself rather than one's colleague. The change in focus will help develop patience for others and to improve oneself day by day.

DID YOU KNOW THAT

The leather used to form the boxes which house the scrolls for tefillin -- the batim -- must be made from the skins of a kosher animal or bird. Our Sages learn this from the verse "So that the Torah of G-d shall be in your mouth -- l' ma-an tiheeyeh Torat Hashem b'feekha" -- Make the batim from something that is permitted to enter "feekha" -- your mouth -- i.e. a kosher animal or bird. The animal or bird, however, does not have to undergo halakhic shehitah -- ritual slaughtering to be used for tefillin. [Source: Halakha Berurah, Siman 32:37]

CONSIDER THIS FOR A MINUTE

The Mussar masters warn against dropping one's guard against the Evil Inclination. If you have

withstood a test don't trust in yourself until the day you die, saying to yourself, that since I did not sin in this great thing, I will never sin regarding this matter. Realize that the Evil Inclination tomorrow is not the same as the one you have beaten today. Therefore, even with regard to the same matter -- you might not be able to resist tomorrow. [Sefer Hasideem, 161]

Raymond J Beyda

www.raymondbeyda.com

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