

DON'T TAKE IT TO HEART

by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann

The generosity of Rabbi Chaim of Sanz zt"l, the Sanzer Rav, author of Divrei Chaim, is legendary. R' Chaim, it is said, would never retire at night until he had completely emptied his pockets; every last penny was distributed to the poor and destitute.

Once, in the early morning hours, R' Chaim lay awake in his bed, unable to fall asleep. (R' Chaim, as a rule, slept a mere two hours a night!) This was highly unusual. "Surely," he thought, "I must have some money somewhere which I inadvertently failed to dispense to the poor!" Yet, try as he might, he could not figure out where he had any money.

R' Chaim had one of his gabbaim summoned. "Go check," he said, "if any wayfarers have recently arrived at the local inn. If so, bring them here - and tell them that if they have anything for me, they should bring it along!"

"But it's the middle of the night!" the gabbai objected.

"If I am to get any sleep tonight," said the Divrei Chaim, "you must do as I have said."

The gabbai went to the local inn, and, sure enough, a weary traveller had just recently settled in. He knocked lightly on his door, and was asked in. "Do you perhaps," the gabbai asked, "have anything for my master, Rabbi Chaim of Sanz?"

The traveller was taken aback. "Why yes, I do. An acquaintance of mine is a disciple of your Rebbe. As I was passing through Sanz, he asked if I could deliver a sum of money from him to the Rebbe. I told him I would consider it a privilege."

"You must come right away," said the gabbai, "the Rebbe is waiting for you. And bring the money."

The two tired men set out for the house of R' Chaim. They found him standing at the door, waiting. "Shalom Aleichem!" he said, "May peace be upon you. Now please, give me what you have brought." R' Chaim immediately opened the package, removed the money, and gave it to the beadle, with instructions of how it should be dispensed to the poor. Having done that, R' Chaim promptly returned to his bedroom, and retired for what was left of the night.

Once, it is told, a poor beggar approached R' Chaim. He had, with G-d's help, succeeded in procuring a suitable match for his fine daughter. Now he was in desperate need of funds for the wedding, dowry, and other expenses. R' Chaim gave him generously, but the man was still in need of a substantial sum. "I'll tell you what," R' Chaim said, "in the city of Dinov lives a tzaddik - R' David. I will

write you a letter; take it to him, and I hope he will give you a worthy sum."

The man took the letter, and set off to Dinov. There, he met R' David, a son of the renowned tzaddik R' Hirsch Meilech of Dinov zt"l, author of B'nei Yisasschar. After the customary greetings, he gave him the letter. R' David, who deeply respected the Divrei Chaim, gave the man generously. Along the way, he succeeded in collecting additional funds, and by the time he returned to Sanz, he was satisfied that he would be able to wed his daughter with honor and respect.

He returned to the Rav to thank him for his help. "Tell me," said R' Chaim, "How did you do in Dinov? How much did R' David give you?" The man told him. "Really - " exclaimed R' Chaim, "I would have thought he might have given more generously!"

Somehow, the Sanzer Rav's words were eventually repeated to R' David. Needless to say, he was hurt by his sharp criticism. "The Torah says (Parshas Kedoshim, 19:17):

'Do not hate your brother with your heart,"

R' David said. "This means that one should not criticize and be judgmental of others on the basis of one's own good heart! Everyone has areas in which they excel. Is it my fault that I was not blessed with the generous heart of the Divrei Chaim?!"

R' David's criticism made its way back to the Divrei Chaim. "It's truly a wondrous explanation of the pasuk," R' Chaim remarked, " - but in this case it's not true. I am not naturally generous. To the contrary, I am, by nature, stingy. I grappled with this for many years, until I completely overcame my lack of generosity. All the same, R' David's point is well taken."

Every Jew has areas in which he excels, and others in which he is weaker. Some excel in their Torah studies, others in prayer, while yet others exert tremendous efforts in their performance of chessed (kindness). We must, however, be careful not to use our own strengths as a basis upon which to judge and criticize others. One can not judge his fellow, Chazal say, until he has stood in his place. What may come easy and naturally to you, may be extremely difficult to others. Remind yourself of areas in which you struggle. After all, the last thing we want to do is to turn a good heart - into a weapon!

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