

1. It has become accepted practice for Rabbis to berate, periodically, the "Good Heart" Jew, he who excuses neglect of Torah and departure from all standards of Jewish living with the shabby claim on a GOOD Heart. It is a tendency which truly dangerous. We refer to them as Cardiac Jews, and rightly make every attempt to educate our people to the fact that good intentions are not sufficient.
2. Today, however, I want to make sure that no one is left with the erroneous impression that Judaism deprecates the Good Heart and concentrates on practical deeds to the complete exclusion of any interest in a man's essential goodness of the heart. To maintain that Torah demands just mechanical performance of certain rituals is to do violence to the whole spirit of Judaism.
3. As a matter of fact, the principal attack of Christianity against Judaism is the claim - the false, narrow and spurious claim - that Judaism is nothing but "legalism" and "quibbling" and an insistence on unfeeling motions, devoid of love and mercy and goodness. Of course, that is sheer nonsense. It is the so-called "Jewish Bible" which ordained Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself...thou shalt love the stranger in thy gates.. and so on.
4. And it is precisely this point - the necessity of integrating the good heart with the good deed - that we learn from this morning's Torah Reading. In commanding Moses and Israel and to construct the MISHKAN, G-d says: VEYIKCHU LI TERUMAH ME'EIS KOL ISH ASHER YIDVENU LIBO.... that it be built from the gifts of gold and silver and copper which will be donated from any man whose heart moves him to do so. One Sage commented that really when one donates this TERUMAH, this contribution to G-d, he gives nothing, for does not the Bible tell us KI LI HA'KESSEF VE'LI HA'ZAHAV, NE'UM HA'SHEM....and if so we are merely returning to G-d what is His. What then can man ever give to G-d? How can man express his profound gratitude and give a true TERUMAH? And he answers: ME'EIS KOL ISH ASHER YIDVENU LIBO - the goodness of his heart is exclusively man's own. When he gives that to G-d as part of his contribution, when he gives his financial gift with joy and love and happiness and a good heart, that is the most precious gift that man can offer his Maker.
5. So that NEDIVUS HA'LEIV, goodness of heart is indeed essential in Judaism. Of course, by itself it is meaningless. But when it adorns the physical deed, then it is of utmost significance.
6. On closer analysis, however, this good-heartedness of which Torah speaks is a far cry from the wishy-washy good intentions that most so many of us use as an excuse for wrong action. A tinge of pity or sympathy buried deep in the left ventricle doesn't make one's heart good. Neither does a "krechitz" and a shrug of the shoulders qualify one as a good person. Our Rabbis did offer to describe the good heart. And they dissected it in a passage with which you are no doubt familiar. In the Ethics of the Fathers we read that R.Yochanan ben Zakkai asked his disciples to formulate for him the "ggod life", the DERECH TOVAH to which a man should cleave. Five answers were brought to him: AYIN TOV...SHACHEIN TOV...CHAVER TOV...ROEH ES HA'NOLAD...were the first four. They were good answers, but their teacher was not satisfied. R.Eliezer, however, provided a fifth answer which R.Yochanan promptly accepted because, he said, this was not just one feature of the D RECH TOVAH, but one which included all the others. And that is: LEIV TOV...So that there are four components of the Good Heart, religiously speaking, just as there are four parts to the heart anatomically speaking. And he, therefore, who would boast of a Good Heart must make sure that he has those four noble qualities.
7. The first of these is AYIN TOVAH, or what we would call: Graciousness. Graciousness means not to begrudge another the good fortune which is his. It means, even more important, that when does a good deed, he should do so with his whole heart. The very subject of this Sidra is itself a case in point: how does a man give charity is almost as important as how much he gives.

It is told of the great Hassidic Rebbe, R. Shlomo of Radomsk, that a wealthy man with the reputation for extreme niggardliness came to him and offered a large PIDYON - that is, a very substantial monetary gift. The Rabbi absolutely refused to accept it. When the wealthy visitor left, his family asked him why he turned down the gift at a time when he so needed it. Answered the Rabbi: if you had seen the great and rapturous joy with which he reaccepted the gift which I returned, you would not have asked that question. Certainly, the spirit of GRACIOUSNESS with which a good deed is done is of utmost importance.

I can report to you endless cases from my own experience in soliciting contributions for important causes in our city. Most of the time, people who are approached do respond with this AYIN TOVAH. But so many, on the other hand, lack that quality. They are begrudging, they tell you they are doing ~~enl~~ it only because the Rabbi called, not for the institution in question, they eat a whole portion of the solicitor's heart out before they offer what they were going to give in the first place anyway. This lack of Graciousness is an undeniable symptom of the absence of a Good Heart.

8. The second quality, HA'RO'EH ES HA'NOLAD, is usually translated, he who can foresee the consequences. If it were only that, literally, then it would be a quality of a soothsayer or shrewdness or prophecy, not the GOOD HEART. What it does mean is someone who ways his every motion carefully so that, as a consequence, no one else is ever hurt in any way. It is, therefore, SENSITIVITY TO THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. Certainly this is an essential feature of the Good Heart. It is told of a great Lithuanian Rabbi, a leading personality of the RUSSAR MOVEMENT, R. Simchah Zissel, that when he was on his death-bed and in extreme, excruciating pain, he would never sigh or in any way give any indication of the agony that possessed him. He was ROEH ES HANOLAD. He knew that those who loved him would suffer if they heard his justified complaints. Here was a good heart - sensitive to the feelings of others. Of the same saintly Rabbi it is told that on Friday nights when returning from shul, he would stop at the threshold of his home, as he opened the door, and stand there for 4 or 5 minutes just looking about the interior of his home. When asked why he followed this practice, he explained that he wanted to absorb the appearance of the beautiful spread on the table, the aroma of the delicious foods....which his wife had toiled to prepare all for him, so that he might be able better to appreciate his wife's efforts and not be ungrateful to her. He was sensitive to his wife's feelings. He truly had a Good Heart, Jewish-style.
9. Third is the quality of GENUINE CONCERN FOR OTHERS, which our Rabbis called SHACHEIN TOV, the good neighbor, for that indeed is the mark of genuine neighborliness. It means more than sensitivity - it means the deeper quality of real concern. On the very first page of your telephone directories you will find the statement: If you want to make a long distance telephone call and it is not very important, make it station to station; but if you want to make a long distance call which is very important, make it person to person. So, if we want to express this good-heartedness, we must establish a person-to-person relationship with others, we must bridge the long distance that separates two individuals with different problems and needs and longings with a genuine concern by one person for those of another human being, another person. Thus, it is told of the mother of R. Simchah Zissel, whom we have just mentioned, that her favorite mitzvah was the collection of charity for the poor at every sad occasion, at every funeral. Once a great tragedy befell her, her only beloved daughter died. And at the funeral, there she was, with a collection-box, collecting for the poor and the hungry. When asked why she did this at this occasion of personal tragedy, she said: and because I am in mourning and in grief, is that any reason why the poor should go hungry?
10. Finally, and most important and most difficult to attain, is that which our Sages called CHAVER TOV - a good friend. That term, for Jews, meant infinitely more than a community of interests and circle of friends. It implied an identity of souls, an intertwining of the fate and destiny of two people who were profoundly attached to each other. This is more than just sympathy. The word for it is EMPATHY - a feeling of complete identification with the other person. More than concern for the other person's welfare, it means being completely able to place yourself in his position and hence share his loves and pains and longings.

There is no greater and nobler feature of the Good Heart than this empathy. And the attainment of this attribute is a most heroic achievement.

It is in this connection that I want to make mention of the memoirs, recently published, of ex-President Harry Truman, friend of the Jews....love in history....OHIV YISROEL.... contributed immeasurably successful realization of our most sacred dreams...writes: annoyed by and could not understand "extreme Zionists" and their hysteria, their fanatic insistence on their point of view. I submit that Mr. Truman....has fully achieved the first three qualities of which we have spoken. But he has not quite attained that of EMPATHY. Had he done so, he never would have made such remarks. Had he been able to identify himself completely with the Jewish people of early 1948, and the fateful days that preceded and followed it, he would have known that we were still under the pall of that ghastly Number, which will survive to plague the Western world as long as it exists: the number 6 million. Empathy would have required of him to share in the horror and the terror which every feeling Jew experienced then and does even today - forever, in fact. Empathy would have given him too the sense of extreme urgency that made us strive for the establishment of Israel as the sole assurance of a future for a people which had been decimated by one third. This is not said in ingratitude about Mr. Truman. Would that our present State Dept. and administration showed one half the friendship and zeal that he did. But it is said in sadness and regret that he did not achieve the full measure of the Jewish conception of the LEIV TOV.

11. These four qualities of the Good Heart which we have mentioned give the lie forever to the preposterous charge of Christianity, repeated even by so-called liberal Christians when they speak hostilely of the Pharisees, that Judaism knows no inwardness, no emotion of love, and does not value the feeling of goodness per se.

But it is as well a far cry indeed from the shallow and superficial claim of Good Heart which so many of our fellow-Jews use as an apology for no-goo-behavior. This kind of good-heartedness is expressed through and not divorced from right and proper action.

VE'YIKCHU LI TERUMAH ME'EIS KOL ISH ASHER YIDVENU LIBO, let them take to me an offering, from every man whose heart makes him willing. When NEDIVUS HA'LEIV, good-heartedness, accompanies the offering of honorable action, then that is not merely "giving" something to G-d; it is VE'YIKCHU LI, the taking and bringing of the essence of our very selves as a precious gift to the G-d of goodness.

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