

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Torah tells us this week, "...you shall observe them (the mitzvahs) and perform them with all your heart and all your soul." (Devorim – Deuteronomy 26:16) The verse is hinting to a foundation of Jewish belief: **We must serve Hashem with an intense feeling in our hearts.** As the mystical Zohar teaches us "*Hashem wants the heart.*" (Parshas Ki-Seitzei, part 3, page 281b) Practically speaking, when we do mitzvahs, we should always do them with a feeling and a knowledge that we are fulfilling Hashem's will. The following interesting story illustrates one Jew's dedication to doing mitzvahs with the right *kavonah* – intention.

Rebbe Reb Zisha of Anipoli (d. 1800) was a happy man who never worried, because he felt that he had no problems. Though he was burdened with ailments, beset by such extreme poverty that he never knew from where his next meal would come, he lived with the credo that everything that happened was ordained by G-d. Therefore, he accepted his lot in life with unbounded happiness. As the Torah tells us in this week's portion Ki-Savo "*You shall rejoice with all the good that the Almighty has given you.*" (Devorim – Deuteronomy 26:11) This is a mitzvah; we are obligated to feel joy with what Hashem has given us. As it says in Psalms, "*Serve Hashem in happiness.*" (Tehillim 100) Reb Zisha's rebbe was the Maggid of Mezritch (1704-1772), whom he would often visit. One day, as Reb Zisha was about to travel to his rebbe, his wife reminded him, "*You know that we have a daughter to marry off. I've asked you many times to get a blessing and some advice from the Maggid concerning our daughter, but you always forget. Please remember this time.*"

"*I'll try to remember,*" he said as he left the house. Reb Zisha went to the Maggid and expressed concern for all problems except his own -and once again he forgot to mention his daughter. As he was about to leave, the Mezritcher Maggid said to him, "*Zisha, don't you have a daughter to marry off?*" "*Oh, yes, yes. I forgot to mention it,*" said Reb Zisha. "*Here are three hundred rubles,*" said the Maggid, "*and may you have hatzlachah (success).*" "*Thank you, thank you!*" said Reb Zisha, as he left for home. On the way, he passed an inn and saw that it was full of people. Curious, he went inside to investigate. There was a wedding in progress, but although the people on the outskirts of the crowd were celebrating, the people in the main hall were in a different mood. There was no joy, only unhappiness, frustration, and confusion. Reb Zisha learned that the mother of the bride had promised the groom three hundred rubles as dowry and somehow had lost the money. She was frantically trying to figure out where the money could have gone. In the meanwhile, while everyone was giving her advice on where to look for the money, the family of the groom was becoming very impatient.

Reb Zisha stepped into the middle of the banquet hall and asked for quiet. "*I understand,*" he began, "*that there is a problem of some lost money. It just so happens that I found some money today.*" He was interrupted by bursts of joyful clapping as everyone cheered the news. "*Wait!*" said Reb Zisha, "*I need the mother of the bride to tell me exactly how much money there was and in what denominations.*" The woman came forward and gave, to the best of her recollection, the number of tens, twenties and fifties that she had had in the packet. Reb Zisha announced that he would have to go back to his room and check whether the money he had found fit her description. Some people began dancing as joy returned to the scene, while others stood around waiting with apprehension for him to return.

Reb Zisha went to a moneychanger, changed the Maggid's three hundred rubles into the denominations that the woman had described, and came back triumphantly to the inn. He walked in with a broad smile, went straight to the middle of the hall and announced, "*Yes, the money that I have is exactly the way the woman described it!*" The guests cheered in relief and happiness, but once again Reb Zisha called for quiet. He held up his hand and said, "*It's true the money goes to the mother of the bride, but I feel that I deserve some reward for my efforts.*" Stunned, the people stood numbly, not knowing how to react. They couldn't believe the audacity of the man. It was obviously the woman's money, and now, on the night of her daughter's wedding, how could he be so cruel? The guests started shoving and pushing as they made their way to have a word or two with this impudent stranger. A family member called for quiet and said to Reb Zisha, for all to hear, "*Nu, nu, tell us already how much you want for your efforts?*" The people waited as Reb Zisha thought for a moment. Then he answered, "*Twenty-five rubles!*"

"*Twenty-five rubles!*" the crowd shouted in unison. "*It's unfair, it's absurd!*" They pushed forward and started to beat him, dragging him out of the hall. Pandemonium reigned, with everyone screaming at once, as Reb Zisha held tightly onto the money. Every few moments he reeled from another shove or punch. He held up his hands and shouted, "*There is a rav in this town, let's go to him and get his ruling.*" The crowd muttered its consent and Reb Zisha was led out with the strong grip of several of the guests on his arms, preventing his escape. A crowd followed as they made their way to the rav's house. The rav listened carefully to both sides, first to the hysterical mother and then to the chassid who claimed that he was a chassid of the Mezritcher Maggid. As the story began to unfold the rav became infuriated at the lack of sensitivity of this Zisha, and ordered that he give the entire sum to the woman.

Reb Zisha did so and left the city as people showered him with ridicule and abuse. A few months later, the Mezritcher Maggid happened to be passing through this town. He stopped to visit with the local rav, unaware that his chassid Reb Zisha had had a confrontation with him. As the two spoke, the rav related the incident, and expressed his surprise that a chassid of the Maggid's should have acted in a way so unbecoming of any Jew, especially a chassid. The Maggid smiled and assured the rav that he would look into the matter. He knew that if anyone was concerned for others it was Reb Zisha. There had to be an explanation.

When the Maggid returned home he sent for Reb Zisha. When Reb Zisha stood before him, the Maggid said, "*I can understand why you wanted to give away the money in the first place. But when you returned to the inn a second time, why did you make such a ridiculous demand?*" R' Zisha, somewhat embarrassed that his ploy had been discovered, smiled sheepishly and explained his feelings. "*When I went to the moneychanger, my yetzer hara said to me, 'Zisha, you are a tzaddik! No one but you would do such a thing! This mitzvah is the best thing you have ever done.' He was trying to trap me to succumb to haughtiness. I realized that if I fell into his snare and began to feel conceited, the mitzvah would be tarnished and incomplete. Thus I decided on a plan which would earn me abuse and insult and would assure me that I couldn't possibly feel important, even to myself. As a result, I hope the mitzvah was a true one, undiminished by any unworthy thoughts on my part.*" (From The Maggid Speaks Rabbi P. Krohn, p.96) Let us be inspired by this story to serve Hashem with our hearts. One of the best ways to be able to serve Hashem with better *kavonah* – more wholeheartedly, is by learning more Torah. By learning about the details of the mitzvahs, we will better understand the spiritual power which every mitzvah contains. When we do mitzvahs, we should always do them with a feeling and a knowledge that we are fulfilling Hashem's will. And then we will be able to give Hashem what he wants: our hearts. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."

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