

Good Shabbos Everyone. In the days of Reb Yaakov Yitzchok of Lublin (The "Chozeh" or "Seer" of Lublin) there was a very well respected Rabbi in the same town who was not Chassidic. This local Rabbi did not usually seek the advice of the "Chozeh," however, it happened once that the local Rabbi was perplexed and could find no answer to a difficult question. The local Rabbi eventually resorted to making his way to the famous "Chozeh" to ask the question which had tormented him for so long.

"Why, rebbe," he asked, "do so many thousands flock to you from all sides! What do they see in you? Why don't they come to me? For am I not a greater scholar than you are?"

"To tell you the truth," said the Chozeh calmly, "I am as amazed as you are. Because I know that I am not holding on a high spiritual level. Why then should people come to me in search of ways to grow closer to Hashem? In fact, they should go to visit you. For you are a scholar with an unquestioned reputation, a veritable Mount Sinai in Torah knowledge."

"But perhaps here lies the catch," continued the Chozeh. "Because I am surprised that people do come to me, that is why they come to me; and because you are surprised that they do not come to you, that is why, rabbi, they do not come to you..." (A Treasury of Chassidic Tales, Rav Zevin, p.421)

A man once complained to Reb Simcha Bunim of Parshischo, saying "The Talmud (Eruvin 13a) states that when a person runs away from honor, honor will run after him. I run away from honor, but honor does not pursue me." "The reason," explained the Reb Simcha Bunim, "is because you keep looking back, and therefore it hides from you." (Gateway To Happiness, Reb Zelig Pliskin, p.283, citing Simchas Yisroel, p.57)

We read about honor seeking in this week's Torah portion Korach. Korach "had it all," but it was not enough. As Moshe said to Korach, "Is it not enough for you that the G-d of Yisroel has segregated you from the assembly of Yisroel to draw you near to Him [Hashem], to perform [as a Levi] the service of the Mishkan of Hashem, and to stand before the assembly to minister to them? And He drew you near, and all your brethren, the offspring of Levi, with you-- yet you seek priesthood (to be a Kohen) as well?!?" (Bamidbar 16:9-10)

When Korach failed to receive the honor he felt he deserved, Korach attempted to stage a revolt against Moshe. We see how Korach's search for honor eventually caused his own death and the death of many others who supported him. The world literally swallowed up Korach. As the Sages tell us "Jealously, lust and glory-seeking remove a man from this world." (Avos 4:28)

When the "Chozeh" was rebbe in Lublin, the city's rabbinical seat was then occupied by Rabbi Azriel Horovitz, whose Torah knowledge was so incredible that he was nicknamed "the iron-headed." He made it his business to constantly bother the Chozeh with all kinds of questions. Reb Azriel used to especially bother the Chozeh on one issue, namely: The Chozeh himself knew that he was not a Rebbe, yet he nevertheless continued to draw a large following after him and teach them his ways. "But what can I do about it," argued the Chozeh, "if they all make the long journey here without my urging?"

"Simple," said the Reb Azriel. "Next Shabbos announce to your followers that you are not a rebbe, and then they will leave you alone and stop coming to you."

Sure enough, the "Chozeh" faithfully took his advice. The very next Shabbos he stood up meekly before his congregation, and told them in plain, quiet words that he was really a man of very poor worth indeed. The effect, though, was not as expected. His chassidim were so moved by the genuine self-effacement of their rebbe that they made every attempt to learn from his humility, and sought to be even closer to the "Chozeh" than ever before.

When the "Chozeh" next met Reb Azriel, he told him that he had followed the advice, but to no avail. Reb Azriel now had an alternative suggestion: "Your chassidim love humility and run away from arrogance. Tell your followers, therefore, that you are a true tzaddik (a righteous Rabbi). Then they will be sure to go home and leave you in peace."

"I may not be a rebbe," responded the Chozeh, "but I am not a liar either. How, then will I be able to get up and say that I am a true tzaddik?" (A Treasury of Chassidic Tales, Rav Zevin, p.422)

Some honor seekers are so desperate for honor, that if they don't receive honor, they are unhappy. Thus, the happiness of an honor seeker depends on others. Ideally, our happiness in life should come from inside, not outside. Because, if our happiness is dependent on others, we set ourselves up for disappointment. But if our happiness is independent of others, then we will be happier more of the time.

The opposite of honor seeking is humility. Hashem loves the humble heart, as Hashem tells us through the prophet "High and holy do I dwell, and with the oppressed and the humble of spirit." (Orchos Tzadikim, The Gate of Humility, p.71, citing Yeshayahu 57:15) We see that Hashem loves the humble by the fact that Hashem chose the geographically low Mt. Sinai on which to rest his Holy presence, with the giving of the Torah. The Holy One, Blessed be He overlooked all the high mountains and hills and rested his Holy presence instead on the lower Mt. Sinai. Thus, if we avoid honor seeking and we humble ourselves like the lowly Mt. Sinai, we invite Hashem into our lives and the happier we will be. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**