

New Stories Vayigash 5773

To satisfy Yidden It's worth enduring Gehinnom

The great leaders of prewar yahadus, the revered Chofetz Chaim and the Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter, the Gerrer Rebbe, traveled together by train to the capital city Warsaw for an important mission.

In those days the train would wait some time at each station. Chasidim would pass word to each other along the rebbe's path, and they would throng to the local stations. For many it represented the best chance to catch a glimpse of their rebbe. As the train approached the first stop, the rebbe's gabbai came to tell him that they were almost at the station. The rebbe rose to oblige the people waiting on the platform. The rebbe asked the Chofetz Chaim to join him, but the elderly giant said he was worried that the kovod received from so many people, would affect him. He said he would remain in his seat.

The rebbe said to the Chofetz Chaim that, "For 'yidden's veggen,' to satisfy the sincere, authentic will of Jews to express kovod haTorah, it's worth enduring the heat of Gehinnom..."

Upon hearing that, the Chofetz Chaim linked arms with the rebbe, joining him. To benefit Yidden, he was also prepared to suffer. Together they stepped out at that station, and each subsequent one on the way to their destination.

Now you don't see things the same way

A wealthy man expressed his frustration to the Chofetz Chaim on his inability to donate large amounts of money to tzedakah. He said that when he was a poor yeshiva bochur, he pleaded with Hashem to bless him with wealth so that he could generously help people. But when his prayers were answered and he attained financial success, he found himself unable to dip his hand into his pocket for others.

The Chofetz Chaim responded with a moshol about a man who was walking down a street and saw a drunk rolling in the gutter, covered in filth. The passerby shakes his head in disgust, and said, "Were I to drink, I would never behave that way."

The Chofetz Chaim smiled and explained the fallacy of the man's smug reasoning. "While he is sober, he has control over his thought process, but when he is drunk, he no longer has control. He isn't responsible or aware of how he behaves. A person who is sober does not know how he would behave under the influence of alcohol."

"So too, the poor man has no concept of the pull that money has over its owner, and how much harder it becomes to part with it once he has worked for it. When you were a destitute bochur, you were able to see things clearly, but now, you are controlled by your money, not the clear thoughts of your youth." (www.matzav.com)

Some of us need Yom Kippur Katan

The Chofetz Chaim was taking a trip from Radin to Warsaw. Whenever he took a train ride he looked for a fellow Jew to sit next to on the journey so that he could talk with him in learning. The Chofetz Chaim usually presented himself as a commoner. Before he boarded on this occasion he noticed a Jew, and asked him if he was coming aboard that train. It came out that they were both going from Radin to Warsaw. On the train, the Chofetz Chaim found that the man was not particularly learned, but this was no matter of concern for the Chofetz Chaim. As a rule he spoke little when encountering someone he did not know, because he enjoyed learning about people's lives. "From everyone there is something to be learned," was his motto. As soon as the first stop after Radin came, the man bid the Chofetz Chaim farewell, and made for the exit. The Chofetz Chaim called out to him asking if he did not say that he was going all the way to Warsaw. The man responded that he was an ani (a poor man), and that he didn't have enough money to go all the way to Warsaw in one train ride. He explained that he would get off of the train, try to sell some of his little trinkets, and with the little money he was able to make, he would buy a ticket to the next stop where he would repeat the procedure, until he made it all the way to Warsaw.

When the Chofetz Chaim arrived in Warsaw it was the day before Rosh Chodesh. He began to look for a shul at which he could daven Yom Kippur Katan. He walked into a Shteibel (small Synagogue), and inquired as to whether they davened Yom Kippur Katan

there. It turned out to be a Gerrer shteibel, and the Chassidim responded that no, they don't do so because it is not the Rebbe's custom. And so the Chofetz Chaim told them a story. He told them the story of the man he met on the train on the way to Warsaw, and because of his poverty he was forced to get off at every stop along the way, make a few dollars and refuel in a manner of speaking, and then get back on the train until the next stop, until he made his way all the way to Warsaw. "And so," said the Chofetz Chaim, "the Gerrer Rebbe has the spiritual resources to carry him from one Yom Kippur to the next. But we, the ordinary people, need to make stops along the way. We need to supplicate to Hashem, ask for forgiveness for our sins in the passing month, and do teshuva so that we will gain the resources to make it through the next month unscathed. The stops along the way for this man were necessary for him to regroup and get his bearing, just as the stops at Rosh Chodesh are a time for us to reflect and ascend to a greater spiritual level so that we can make it all the way to our destination, Yom Kippur itself." The Chassidim stood with their mouths gaping, staring at this unknown holy man who had presented himself as an everyman off the street. (<http://rebbestories.blogspot.com>)