

The Torah tells us that people contributed to the building of the Tabernacle and refers to 2 different categories of donors: נדבבו רוחו and נשאבו לבו. What is the difference between them? The Rav explained that נדבבו רוחו is one who reacts based on an intellectual, rational approach. Many in Bnay Yisrael analyzed their ability to donate relative to the needs of the Tabernacle and arrived at a figure to donate. Their approach was perfectly acceptable and legitimate. However, the נשאבו לבו reacted on a more instinctive level. They were overcome with the desire to build the Tabernacle as an expression of their emotional attachment to Hashem. Such people went well above and beyond what was required of them, לפנים משות הדן. They truly followed their hearts in their desire to build the Tabernacle.

The difference between the intellectual and emotional approach to a Mitzvah is most noticeable when analyzing the different approaches to giving charity. Man can readily understand and accept the intellectual rationale behind giving charity to the poor. It is perfectly rational for one who has the means, to support and provide for those that are in need. The amount that such a person will donate will be based on his calculation of the need relative to his resources. When man acts in such a proper, rational way, he is performing an act of צדקה.

Man can also perform charity from an emotional basis. When one is so affected by a situation to the point that it becomes etched in his mind, so that he sees it constantly in front of him wherever he goes and whatever he does, he will act out of an emotional impulse. Such emotional impulses cannot be suppressed by intellectual reason, nor can they be swayed by additional analysis and examination. When one acts on such an impulse, it is characterized as an act of חסד.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 104b) says that there was once a neighbor of Rabban Gamliel who would cry inconsolably each night for her son who was murdered by the Romans during the destruction of the second Temple. Rabban Gamliel would cry along with her each night and feel her pain. It is perfectly logical for one to feel the pain of a widow who lost her only son for 1 night, 1 week, maybe a month. But Rabban Gamliel felt this pain constantly, every night he felt the same level of agony that he felt the first night he heard her cries in the night. The נדבבו רוחו would have eventually grown deaf to her cries. But Rabban Gamliel, like Gedolei Yisrael

throughout the ages, was a נשאו לבו, he continued to grieve with her as if it was his own tragedy.

The distinction between the intellectual and emotional approaches can also be seen in ספור יציאת מצרים, on the night of Pesach when we retell the story of the Exodus. We are commanded to reenact the events that took place at the time of the exodus, to make them come alive for us. We must not view them from a detached perspective as events that took place thousands of years ago. We involve the children in the telling of the story because we need to capture the emotions and feelings of a child in order to make the story real. An adult will tell a story from an intellectual, analytical viewpoint which will not inspire emotion. When a child tells a story, he feels the events that he is retelling, each time he tells the story he relives the emotional experiences that he is telling about. On the night of Pesach we want to feel like we are walking out of Egypt this very minute. We must tell the story as a child who characterizes נשאו לבו and not as an adult who is an intellectual נדבו רוחו.

Copyright 1996, 2022, Rabbi Joshua Rapps. All rights reserved. Permission granted to print for individual use. Inclusion in and/or distribution via printed or electronic media is prohibited without permission of the author.