

## The Right Package

The Midrash relates that the Roman Caesar once went out for a stroll. In the course of walking, he entered the Jewish neighborhood. It was Shabbos, and the aroma of delicious Shabbos foods permeated the air. The Caesar was enchanted by the essence. He sent for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, a leading sage, and asked, "Why do the Jewish foods have such a savory fragrance to them? I have never smelled anything so delectable." Rabbi Yehoshua replied, "We have a unique spice called Shabbos that creates a sweet aroma in our food."

"Please obtain this spice for me, so that I can also partake and enjoy my food," the Caesar requested.

"I am sorry, my Caesar, but this spice is available only to he who observes the Shabbos. One who does not observe Shabbos does not benefit from its aroma."

I feel this Midrash is conveying a critical lesson regarding mitzvah observance in general. One cannot grasp the profound delight captured through mitzvah observance unless he experiences the observance firsthand. In attempting to reach out to the unaffiliated, one does not succeed by arguing his point, since each individual feels that his is the correct approach. The correct approach is to learn with the individual, to get him actively involved, so that he directly experiences the ideas that we want to transmit. Once he learns, his ability to see what we see is enhanced. He no longer needs explanation; he has his own experiences.

What if this approach does not work? What if he learns, and it does not change him? What if his character remains the same as it had been before? What if the experience has not transformed him? The Dubno Maggid, zl, addresses this question and responds, in his imitable manner, with a parable:

A salesman arrived in a city with his case of samples, which he mistakenly left in the train station. When he checked into the hotel, he asked the bellboy to please arrange to have his suitcase retrieved from the station. The bellboy asked, "How much does it weigh, since if it is heavy, it will cost more to pick it up?"

"It is very light, only about five pounds," the salesman replied.

A few hours later, the bellboy appeared at the salesman's room, exhausted, sweaty and reasonably upset. "You told me the suitcase was light. It must weigh at least sixty pounds! Can you imagine how difficult it has been for me to carry it all the way here?"

The salesman looked at the boy incredulously and asked, "Are you sure that bag weighs sixty pounds and not five pounds?" "I am absolutely certain," the bellboy replied.

"Then, young man, you have brought me the wrong suitcase. My bag weighs no more than five pounds. If you are exhausted, it is because you have the wrong bag!"

A parallel idea applies to Torah study. If after studying Torah, one has not changed, his character remains as deficient as it was before, then there is something very wrong with the manner in which he is learning. It is not the right package. This applies equally to mitzvah observance. If one does not sense a change after he has experienced the mitzvah, then he did not experience it correctly - or his response to experiencing the mitzvah was flawed.