

עדת אש קודש

Adass Aish Kodesh



The Jumper You Left Behind

Avos 4:8

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

It always happens: you are on holiday and somehow someone has not packed that very important yet easily forgotten article of clothing. Panic sets in and questions of “why didn’t you pack my favorite jumper, the one with the holes?” are thrown about. It would seem that this special shmatta has its own holiness besides those at the elbows. A sense of hurt sets in as if everyone is walking over your deepest felt sensitivities. After all, no one understands how that sweater was so sentimentally important to you.

In truth, it’s amazing how much stuff the average hiemisha family can squeeze into a car. Really now, whenever a Jewish family sets out for a holiday it seems that they don’t want to leave anything behind. “Have you packed all the seforim?” “Don’t forget the blech and Shabbos kettle!” On and on it goes, just one more bit, another toy, some more cans of beans, maybe sun blocker numbers 30 to 75. It’s as if we don’t really plan on coming back. So much baggage and yet more on the way; have we never left home before? Actually we have all done this before, in fact every year, and we know in our heart of hearts that it is madness. We remember that most of what we take never gets used, and that we schlep out of a sense of insecure derangement. In two or three weeks’ time we will be grunting as we repack the car, bringing back some very familiar things that somehow remained untouched throughout the vacation.

No matter what you take there will be something left behind, and that will grate the most. It is very likely that the sulking over the left-behind sweater is speaking of something else altogether.

You see, there is emotional baggage, and in truth that is much heavier than any physical counterpart. We take all the foibles

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and the anger and pack them into the SUV, speeding them along with us wherever we go. In all likelihood in a few weeks we will repack them together with the laundry, but unlike that, these will never see the inside of a washing machine.

In the intimate setting of a vacation spot we can actually do much to rid ourselves of those burdens which weigh on our hearts, using the different environment to greater advantage. The challenge is for us to accept what we are burdened with for what it is; baggage with which we are encumbered. We look into others' souls as if we understand them, when in truth we barely understand our own. We judge, decide, form opinions that are not ours to measure, and in so doing bring considerable harm to ourselves.

This Mishna is short but is well worth putting in your valise:

“Do not act as a judge alone, for none judges alone except One; and do not say, “Accept my view,” for they are permitted to, but not you.”

The *Maggidei HaEmes* brings from the *Ohev Yisroel* a beautiful thought. It seems that once his Rebbetzin was reading aloud this Mishna and misread the Hebrew saying “Only Hashem can judge a Jew”...(Yichidi can be mistaken for Yehudi) When the Rebbe's aide mentioned the mistake to the Rebbe he answered, “The Rebbetzin is correct; no mortals ...only Hashem (Who is One) can truly pass judgement on a Jew.”

We trample on others' souls because we think we know what they are. Permit yourself a moment to think: how can you know what others are, when you can't really explain your own self? It's so easy to throw a disparaging note in someone else's direction, but you should realise that your own weaknesses are also showing. If you point with one finger there are another four directed right back at you!

This Mishna speaks of judging others, but it would be wise to remember that we should ask the same when we judge ourselves. The Jew that lives within your soul has all shades of light and darkness; it's what the human condition is about. Often we become estranged from our true state and decide in our heart issues that are in truth at great variance with reality. We think ourselves extremely righteous and therefore have no compunction when mouthing ridicule about others. Or, we churn out insults because we are so insecure, we feel we can deflect from our shortcomings by bringing others down.

The One True Judge does know, even if you prefer not to, and in the end you will be asked to give accounting for all the anger you may have created.

It's not about the sweater then, with or without the holes, it's about the hole in your heart that you should be filling with Ahavas Yisroel.

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