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The Helpful List

Once there were two brothers who were both Chabad Chassidim and both ran Torah institutions. One lived in Israel and the other in Los Angeles.

It so happened that the one in Israel was in desperate need of funds and, with no other option, he called his brother and told him he was coming to try to solicit donations. He asked him to prepare a list of potential donors in L.A. with a sentence after each name saying what he likes or what he is like, and also to arrange a driver to take him around.

His brother readily agreed and in a week or so the brother from Israel was in L.A., dressed in his best suit, riding through the Jewish neighborhoods to knock on the doors of the people on his brother's list.

At each address the driver would escort him to the door of the home, and when the person would answer the door the driver would return to the car.

Everything went smoothly till they arrived at the home of Mr. Ploni., who as soon as he opened the door and saw a Rabbi, began yelling.

"What, another parasite! Don't you guys have anything better to do? You don't have to work? You just go around and take money from those who do? I worked fifty years for my money--how long do you work? Fifteen minutes? Your mother and father were probably also useless beggars just like you. " Etc. etc.

The driver began pulling at the Rabbi's jacket to urge him to return to the car and leave, but surprisingly, the Rabbi didn't seem to be upset by the curses. Exactly the opposite, in fact. He calmly motioned for the driver to return to the car and wait.

After some ten minutes of cursing, Mr. Ploni. was worn out. He paused for a few seconds, asked the Rabbi what he wanted, and as the Rabbi began explaining, invited him into his home.

Ten minutes later the Rabbi exited Mr. Ploni.'s home, returned to the car and told the driver to proceed to the next place.

The driver was in awe. "Rabbi, you didn't lose your temper at all! Why, I myself wanted to punch him. Rabbi, now I know you are a holy man! Now, tell me please, did he give you any money?"

"Thank G-d," The Rabbi answered, "he gave me this check for one thousand dollars". The driver's eyes widened in amazement.

"But," continued the visitor from Israel, "I'm no holy man. Let me explain why I acted as I did. Just have a look at this."

The Rabbi held out the list his brother had given him and said. "Read what my brother wrote after Mr. Ploni.'s name."

The driver took the list and read aloud. "Mr. Ploni.: he will yell at you for ten minutes; then give you a thousand dollars."

Rabbi Bolton's conclusion:

Don't pay attention to the envelope, but rather to the message it contains.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of his friend and colleague **Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**, who heard it from the uber chasid Rabbi Naftali Estulin of Los Angeles.

*Connections* (2):

1) Weekly Reading of *Re'ey*: "If there will be among you a needy person, from one of your brothers in one of your cities, in your land the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, and you shall not close your hand from your needy brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him, and you shall lend him sufficient for his needs, which he is lacking." (Deut. 15:7-8)

[*It would seem from this story though that it is acceptable to harden your heart as long as at the end you unhardened it and you give!* – YT]

2) *Pirkei Avot* for this Shabbat: "Don't look at the vessel, but rather what it contains." (4:20)