
IS IT THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS?

Learning Goals

1. NCSYers will understand that action is vital in Judaism, but intention is necessary and sometimes essential.
2. NCSYers will recognize that good intentions still require actions.
3. NCSYers will consider the significance of action/intention in our relationship with HaShem and with other people.

Advisor Toolbox:

ACTIVITIES/HOOKS

- The Mixed Emotions Game

VIDEOS/ARTICLES

- Keeping Mitzvot Without Believing (page 202)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can I be rewarded or punished for *thinking* about doing something?
- Are outcomes the only thing that matter?

Activities/Hooks

- The Mixed Emotions Game
 - **Takeaway:** it is difficult to show one emotion and express another. Try to express one emotion on your face and say something different. Some examples:
 - Smile and yell
 - Frown and say “good morning!”
 - Compliment with an angry face

A Little Explanation

1. The article at the beginning is catchy and exciting. It should raise the question of : Is my thought important, do intentions count? Spend some time considering these questions with the group but make sure to move along... it is very easy to get caught here.
2. The contradiction in the Gemaras in Pesachim and Berachot: Reconciled by **Tosfot**.
 - **Pesachim** (also in the “Taste” Session, but used differently) introduces us to the concept of **לשמה** ask the teens if they have ever experienced this themselves.
 - **Berachot** contradicts and says that actions should always have intentions.
3. Examples in Tanach of **עבירה לשמה** (Nazir 23b) are:
 - a. Aharon making the Golden Calf – in making it he stopped them sinning further and took the responsibility on himself rather than letting them sin further.
 - b. Esther sleeping with Achashverosh to save the Jewish people and make the request to save them.This suggests that intentions are more important.
4. Consider that the main message is that BOTH are important.
 - a. With relationships with PEOPLE – actions are more important – a person who is sick in hospital wants a visitor not someone who intended to visit.
 - b. God on the other hand, can see into our souls, into our hearts and for Him, action without thought is pointless. For Him, the intention is the key.