

## IS THIS THE ULTIMATE?

### PARSHAS YISRO

*There was a very important meeting in the European town to discuss a problem with kashrus. Apparently, there was a real concern about the kosher standards of a particular butcher. As the community meeting was about to start, the butcher walked in and sat down. The Rav noticed him and started talking about something else. After a while, some of the other attendees were getting anxious and wanted to start discussing the issue at hand. They wanted to tell the butcher to leave so that they could begin the meeting. The Rav refused. Only after the butcher left, did the Rav start discussing the pressing issue. This was a very important meeting to discuss a very important topic. Yet, the Rav showed derech erez, sensitivity to another, to the butcher, and did not ask him to leave or discuss the topic in front of him. The Rav's actions were even more special when you consider that it was this very butcher's misdeeds that had prompted them to call this meeting.*

After the Jewish People left Egypt and reached the foot of Har (Mount) Sinai. Hashem sent Moshe with a message to the Jews, asking if they would be willing to accept the Torah. The Jews responded with a resounding, "All that Hashem has spoken, we will do!" (Shmos 19:8)

Moshe returned to tell Hashem what the Jews responded. **Rashi** wonders why Moshe had to tell that to Hashem. Obviously, Hashem who is All-Knowing, knew what the Jews had said. **Rashi** explains that Moshe acted with *derech erez*. He was sent to ask a question and felt that it was appropriate that he return with the answer.

**Rabbi Dovid Leibowitz zt"l** highlights from this **Rashi** how important *derech erez* is. This was the greatest moment in the history of the Jewish People. Hashem was about to reveal His Holiness to them and give them the Torah. Yet, Moshe felt that this small act of *derech erez* should be done. Even at momentous moments, one must still think of the "minute" matters and act with *derech erez*.

*"And Moshe went down to the people and spoke to them. Hashem spoke all these words, saying". (Shmos 19:25; 20:1)*

We learn a similar lesson later in the Parsha. The **Midrash** (Shmos 28:3) says that Hashem was about to open the heavens and show His glory to the Jewish People. Hashem was going to speak directly to them and present them with the 10 Commandments. Moshe was

still standing in Hashem's presence. At this point, Hashem did not want Moshe there. The **Maharzu** explains that Hashem was concerned lest the Jews would wonder who had said, "I am the L-rd your G-d". Was it Hashem who had said it or was it Moshe who had said it while he was hidden in the dark cloud on Har Sinai? Hashem wanted Moshe to leave. Hashem asked Moshe to descend the mountain and instruct the Jews to prepare themselves for this moment. Moshe replied that he had already done so. Moshe did not understand that Hashem wanted him to leave. Therefore, Hashem gave Moshe another instruction asking him to descend and come back up with his brother, Aharon, with each of them ascending to a different point on the mountain. As soon as Moshe descended, Hashem revealed

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Himself the Jewish People and started saying the 10 Commandments (Shmos 20:25, 21:1).

If Hashem did not want Moshe in the heavens when He revealed Himself, why didn't Hashem simply tell Moshe to leave? The **Maharzu** explains that Hashem did not want Moshe to feel bad. **Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz zt"l** highlights the great lesson we learn from Hashem's actions. Hashem wanted to open the heavens to speak directly to the Jewish People. This

would have a tremendous impact on the Jewish People, an impact that would last forever. This was the most important moment in the history of the Jews. This was the crowning achievement. This was the purpose of both the Creation of the world and the Exodus from Egypt. Moshe would have certainly understood if Hashem Himself would have requested that he not be there. Yet, Hashem was concerned that, perhaps on some minimalistic level, Moshe might have felt bad.

**Hashem is teaching us the ultimate *derech erez* that we must have for others. Under all circumstances, even when involved in something of extreme importance, it is mandatory to be sensitive to another person's feelings.**

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