

IS IT OK TO LEAVE NOW?

PARSHAS TETZAVEH

One of the eight garments that the Kohain Gadol wore was the Me'il. It was a long blue robe. Attached to the hem were golden bells, interspersed with round, woolen, pomegranate-like balls.

The **Ramban** and **Rabbeinu Bachya** explain the reason why the Me'il had bells. If a person wanted to have an audience with the king, he would first knock on the king's door. If one arrived unannounced in a mortal king's palace, one would incur the death penalty. That is best illustrated in Megillas Esther when King Achasverosh instituted the death penalty on anyone who came to see him unannounced. That, which is customary as a sign of deference to a mortal king, must also be observed when one petitions the King of Kings. As the Kohain Gadol entered Hashem's Sanctuary, it was proper for him to announce his intention to enter. Whenever the Kohain Gadol entered the Mishkan, the bells on the Me'il would make noise. That was considered as if the Kohain Gadol was announcing that he was coming to daven to Hashem or to do the service in the Mishkan.

Rabbeinu Bachya and the **Bekhor Shor**, a 12th century Tosafist, say that **this is a lesson in manners, teaching us how we should act**. One should not enter another person's house suddenly, without announcing his arrival, lest the homeowner is doing or saying something private. One should first knock on the door.

"It [the golden bells and pomegranates on the hem of the Me'il] shall be on Aron when he performs [Divine] service. Its sound shall be heard when he comes into the Sanctuary in the presence of Hashem, and when he comes out, so that he will not die." (Shmos 28:35)

The **Talmud** (Pesachim 112A) quotes a list of instructions that Rabbi Akiva gave his son. One instruction was that one should not even enter his own house suddenly, without first knocking. The **Rashbam** explains that someone inside may be doing someone that is private. Certainly, one should not enter someone else's house unannounced for the same reason.

The Torah illustrates many other examples teaching us derech ertz, the proper way that we should act.

After the plague of locusts, Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this [man] be a menace to us? Send these men out and let them worship their G-D. Did you not yet realize that Egypt is [being] destroyed?" (Shmos10:7) Pharaoh then sent

messengers to bring Moshe and Aharon back to the palace. Pharaoh told them that they had permission to go to worship Hashem. When Moshe told Pharaoh that all the Jews would be going, Pharaoh refused and said that only the adult men could go. Whereupon Pharaoh threw Moshe and Aharon out of the palace. The **Riva** asks why Moshe and Aharon did not leave

immediately as soon as they saw that Pharaoh was starting to get angry. Why did they wait until Pharaoh drove them out of the palace? Especially, as **Rabbi Henach Leibowitz** zt"l points out, it was a disgrace to Hashem that Moshe and Aharon, His representatives, were kicked out of the palace. The **Riva** answers that had they left on their own, that would have shown a lack of derech ertz to the king. Since Pharaoh had sent for Moshe and Aharon to come to the palace, they waited for permission from Pharaoh to leave. **Rav Henach Leibowitz** zt"l explained that waiting WAS the proper derech ertz even though it meant that Moshe and Aharon were thrown out of the palace. It would have been a worse disgrace to Hashem had Moshe and Aharon left before they were thrown out.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz z t”l (Sichas Mussar) brings a similar example of derech erez. After the flood had ended, Noach did not leave the Ark until Hashem, specifically, told Noach to do so (Beraishis 8-15). **Yalkut Shimoni** quotes Rav Yuden who said had he been in the Ark, he would have broken down the door of the Ark and left. Noach had just had an exhausting year in the Ark. He had almost no sleep while constantly caring for the needs of all the animals. Now that the flood was over and the ground was dry, Noach could have left the Ark. He had no need to stay in the Ark any longer. However, Noach said, “Since I entered only by Divine permission, I will only leave with Divine permission.” To leave without permission, would have been a lack of derech erez to Hashem.

In another instance, when Potiphar’s wife accosted Yosef, he ran away, leaving his jacket in her hands. She used the fact that she had his jacket to incriminate Yosef. Why didn’t Yosef just grab the jacket from her before running away? **Ramban** answers that it would have been an affront to her honor and dignity. She was, after all, his master’s wife. Grabbing the jacket would have shown a lack of derech erez.

Furthermore, King Nevuchadnetzar threw Chananya, Mishael, and Azaryah into a burning furnace for refusing to worship his idols. An angel protected them and they remained unharmed as they walked around the furnace. **Midrash Tanchuma** (Noach 10) says that they remained in the furnace until they were told to come out. “We will not leave the flames without the king’s permission. He told us to enter the flames, and we will not leave until he gives us permission to do so.” We see that the obligation to have derech erez, proper conduct, applies not only to our relationship with Hashem. It also applies to everyone, even to wicked people.

Why must we even show derech erez to evil people? Perhaps the following story will illustrate the answer: A cat entered the home of Rabbi Moshe Pizitcher and snatched some food from the table. One of Rabbi Pizitcher’s granddaughters chased the cat out of the house and added some curses for good measure. Rabbi Pizitcher scolded her strongly. She couldn’t understand the rebuke since it was only said to a cat. Rabbi Pizitcher explained, “True, but you have defiled your mouth.” (Love Your Neighbor by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin) We see from this story that we should always act in a way befitting Hashem’s people regardless of who we are dealing with.

Each of us should strive to be an elevated person, always acting with derech erez. It should be inconsequential to us whether or not the recipient is deserving of our noble behavior.

Best wishes for a happy Purim!

Sponsored In Memory of: Mindel Adina bat Natan Zvi; Shmuel ben Eliezer Lipa; Shirley Shaindel Yaffa bat Yehuda Shmuel; Hadassah bas Yaakov; Faiga bat Pinchas; Yaakov ben Yeshayahu; Gershon ben Hillel; Gita bat Gershon; Rav Chaim Dov Weissmandl ben Rav Yoseph; Shraga Fayvel Leb ben Shmuel Abraham; Moshe ben Yitzchok; Sarah Vital bas Avrohom Yitzchok; R’ Yisroel ben R’ Yaakov; Risha Toiba bas R’ Gershon, Zichronam Livracha.

Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

To receive these weekly divrei Torah by email, send a request to jepqueens@gmail.com