



BE A *MENTSCH*

Rabbi Yitzchok Sanders



Making Friends!

פְּרִשֵׁת בְּרֵאשִׁית

Being a Mentsch means that we need to *make friendships* with other people. This is how a person grows and develops as a person and as a Jew. The pasuk says “לֹא טוֹב הֵיּוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ” - it is not good for a person to be alone. Hashem created the world to be filled with people so that we can learn how to grow from being with other people and being kind to each other as the pasuk says in Yeshaya HaNavi (מה:יח) לֹא תָהוּ בְרֵאשִׁית - לְשִׁבְתַּי יִצְרָה - לֹא תָהוּ בְרֵאשִׁית: The world wasn't created empty; it was formed to have people live in it. Just like Hashem does acts of kindness to others, so must we. Also, the Torah itself is not mastered unless it is learnt in a group, a חֲבֻרָה (בְּרִכּוֹת סג). When a girl is in school, especially in Third Grade, we are learning Torah and we are learning how to make friendships. This is a time to start good habits. This means asking and answering questions in class when a Morah teaches in order to understand and remember. This also means saying words that are gentle and doing behaviors which are also gentle, certainly not hurtful. Some girls will be your best friend and some will not. Even if someone is not your best friend, we can still say pleasant and kind words to them. **Remember**, that we all are different and we have to learn how to live together with respect for each other. The main idea to think of is what you do makes a difference, not only in your life but also in your friend's life!

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein tells the following touching story:

A young girl with special needs once came to me and said, “Rabbi, I want to tell you a story about a moth”:

There was once a grandmother sitting on a porch with her granddaughter. As they were enjoying each other's company, a large number of butterflies began to surround them. But then all of a sudden, amid the many butterflies, a moth landed on the balcony. The granddaughter, noticing the moth and thinking that it was out of place next to the butterflies, took off her shoe to kill it.

Her grandmother stopped her. "My dear child, don't kill the moth."

"Why not?" the little girl asked.

"Let me tell you the story of the moth," the grandmother began.

When Hashem first created the world, He made many butterflies. There were no moths which existed. As Shabbos was drawing near, Hashem then decided that He would create a colorful rainbow to show the world that He would never destroy it. The only problem was that Hashem had used all the colors up; there were none remaining. So He went to the butterflies and said, "Can you give me your colors so I can make a colorful rainbow?"

The butterflies replied, "Hashem, we are not giving You our colors. You gave them to us and we are not giving them back."

However, another group of butterflies approached Hashem.

"Hashem, You are the Creator of the world. If you want to make a rainbow, we will gladly give up our colors for it."

As the grandmother entranced her granddaughter with the story, she pointed to the moth her granddaughter was about to kill. "You see that moth? That was a butterfly that gave up its colors. There is more beauty to it than the butterfly which has all its colors."

Hearing this story from a little girl with special needs, Rabbi Wallerstein understood what she was trying to say. Looking at the girl, he said to her, "I know why you are telling me this story. You are like the moth who gave up its colors. You gave up who you really are to somebody else in this world. This makes you a beautiful friend."

*Everyone in this world is beautiful. Some of us may shine forth like a butterfly and exude magnificent colors, while others may externally seem to be colorless and nothing special. But the truth is that we all shine forth with Divine beauty. Hashem blew into each and every one of us a precious neshama. And in fact, the greatest beauty is when we give of ourselves to others. The one who gives up their beauty is the one who shines forth with the most beauty. If we wish to truly brighten up the world with color, we are to give of our own beauty –our love and care – to our fellow brothers and sisters. And when we do so, the beauty with which we sparkle is breathtaking and we **make lifelong friendships**.*

Have a Great Shabbos!