



BE A MENTSCH

Rabbi Yitzchok Sanders



How Should We Talk?

פְּרִשֶׁת חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

“Being a Mensch” means we should always treat other people with respect. This is especially true with the way we talk because it will make them feel special and make us into kinder people! How we talk to people can be broken into 2 parts - the actual words we use and the tone of voice it is delivered in. If we use words like “Please” or “Thank You” in our every-day language with others, it shows our respect for others and their feelings. If we add sarcasm or an angry manner to a comment that can also cause hurt or pain and we should try to avoid them

In this week’s parsha, the Torah describes אֱלִיעֶזֶר as עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם, the servant of Avraham. Yet when רַבְקָה says to him, “שְׂתֵה אֶדְוֶנִי” - Drink my master, the Torah begins to call him הָאִישׁ, “The man”. Not only does she do an act of חֶסֶד for him, but she also speaks respectfully to him. By calling him - “master”, רַבְקָה changes him into a free man. In truth, אֱלִיעֶזֶר was a servant, but he was being treated as if he was an important person.

The Torah is teaching us how a few small words said by a stranger or a child can make such a big difference to another person’s feelings, even an adult. אֱלִיעֶזֶר hadn’t done anything for רַבְקָה, yet she spoke to him with כְּבוֹד and was willing to do so much for him and his camels. Let us learn from רַבְקָה to talk with respect to others. This is a tremendous example of כְּבוֹד; how a person uses their speech wisely in order to show respect to someone else! What better age can there be than third grade to focus on how we speak to each other.

Mrs. Chaya Neuman Aleha Hashalom told the following story:

Both my side of the family as well as my husband's side of the family includes some very accomplished people. My half-brother is in fact a lawyer, a pilot and an NFL official. He used to run up and down the football field and throw flags and blow whistles throughout the game whenever necessary.

As my daughter's wedding approached, I told him that after the *chuppa* I would like him to put on his football gear and dance in front of my future son-in-law. As is customary at Jewish weddings, many people attempt to perform various entertaining and enjoyable short performances to rejoice before the chosson and kallah.

Listening to me, my brother agreed he would do so. But that was not the only favor I would need to ask of him. As the day of the wedding arrived, the chosson's Rosh Yeshiva who was set to be the *mesader kiddushin* (officiate the wedding) was scheduled to arrive from Israel. Being that the family was preoccupied with the wedding preparations, no one was available to drive to the airport and pick up the Rosh Yeshiva. And so I called my brother.

As I requested of him to pick up the Rosh Yeshiva, to which he complied, my mind began to picture what it would be like having a lawyer/pilot/NFL official driving a reputable Rosh Yeshiva. What were they going to talk about for the entire car ride? They come from completely different backgrounds; they will have little to nothing in common to talk about. There will be utter silence for what will seem like a car ride which lasts forever. Putting that thought aside for the moment, I told him to look for a man with a beard, black hat, black pants and white shirt. Baruch Hashem, he was able to locate the Rosh Yeshiva.

Later, as the wedding time was nearing closer, my brother arrived in the wedding hall. He said to me, "The Rosh Yeshiva is a fine man; we had such an interesting conversation." When I heard those words, I let out a sigh of relief and a smile. I was thrilled that it worked out well. Not too long afterwards, the Rosh Yeshiva entered the hall as well. Walking up to me, he asks, "Are you Mrs. Neuman?" Not sure if answering in the affirmative would be to my betterment or detriment, I hesitantly said, "Yes, that is me." "Oh, Mrs. Neuman! Your brother is a Renaissance man –a pilot, a NFL official and a lawyer! What an accomplished individual!" As he continued to praise my brother, I figured that the car ride went well.

As the chuppa came to a conclusion, sometime later the dancing began. While the chosson and his friends danced and enjoyed themselves, out came my brother. He was dressed in full battle regalia. My son-in-law's friends were all taken aback by the show of such a scene, agreeing that this was one of the greatest displays of someone getting dressed up at a wedding. But, as I knew, this was not my brother getting "dressed up;" it was who he really was.

As my brother entered amongst all the men and danced with the chosson, he soon pulled over the Rosh Yeshiva to dance with. But then something happened. As is often the case, the chosson and kallah usually drink some water every so often as they rest and try to catch their breath. But this time, unbeknownst to all those dancing around, there was some water on the floor. With my brother and Rosh Yeshiva dancing with each other, it was not too long before the Rosh Yeshiva slipped and fell to the floor. As this scene unfolded, everyone was unsure what to do. The Rosh Yeshiva appeared to be fine, although he lied on the floor. But, continuing with the Simcha and my brother acting as an NFL official does when a player falls to the floor after being tackled, my brother took out a flag and blew a whistle. It almost looked like he was officiating at a football game after an athlete had fallen to the ground.

And then the Rosh Yeshiva stood up. He himself took hold of the flag and began to twirl it and dance more and more with my brother. It was a beautiful sight to see. And now, every time the Rosh Yeshiva flies to America, he goes out of his way to call my brother and take him out to lunch. I never would have expected that an esteemed Rosh Yeshiva and my brother would become so close, but as Jewish brothers, they united.

This Rosh Yeshiva and lawyer/pilot/football official may seem like two very different Jews from very different backgrounds; the Rosh Yeshiva learns Torah all day and the lawyer works all day, their neshamos and endearing feelings for one another are that of brothers. Similar to Eliezer who was the servant of Avraham Avinu, every member of Klal Yisroel is a servant of Hashem. As part of Klal Yisroel, we are therefore all related. It is so important to treat each other with Derech Eretz!

Have a Great Shabbos!