

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In general, there are two categories of mitzvahs. The first type is the group of mitzvahs referred to as "ben-odom l'Makom," these are mitzvahs which obligate us to do an act or not to do an act in our relationship with Hashem, such as the mitzvah to put on tefillin or the mitzvah not to eat pork. The second category of mitzvahs "ben-odom l'chaveiroh" involves our relationships with others, such as the mitzvah to give Tzedakah or not to speak bad of others. This week's parsha Kedoshim is jam-packed with mitzvahs "ben-odom l'chaveiroh" - the "interpersonal" mitzvahs.

Once, a prospective convert approached the great Sage Hillel and demanded to be taught the entire Torah while Hillel stood on one foot. Hillel paraphrased, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto others." (Shabbos 31a) Thus, Hillel explained that the essence of the Torah is treating others with respect, etc.

We now find ourselves in the "sefira" days between Pesach and Shavuot; this is a time in the Jewish calendar during which Jews are focused on character development, in memory of the 24,000 students of Rebbe Akiva who died during this time because, as the Talmud explains, "they did not treat each other with respect." (Yevamos 62b) The following is an inspiring true story which illustrates how far we must go to treat others properly.

Learning with his rebbi, Rav Avrohom Genochofsky, a prestigious maggid shiur (lecturer) in the Tchebiner Yeshivah, was a privilege that Shalom cherished. Many of the young men wanted a turn to learn privately with Rav Avrohom; he had agreed to give Shalom the first slot every Friday night after the meal. It was not a very long learning session, but this weekly learning session with his rebbi was the highlight of Shalom's week.

Shalom had a lot of wonderful qualities and was bright and articulate, but one would never know because he always seemed to be down on himself. He refused to accept compliments about the insightful questions he asked or the exceptional answers he suggested when a difficulty arose in the Gemara. He would shrug it all off or bow his head in humility as the rebbi or others praised him for his brilliance.

One Friday night, Shalom was eating his meal far away from his rebbi's home. He was nervous that he would not get there in time for the learning session. Normally, in the winter months they would learn at 8:30 at night; now he realized that he would not make it there until almost 9:30!

Panicking, Shalom rushed through the streets of Yerushalayim as a steady rain fell. As he ran the last 500 yards he hoped that it was not too late; by the time he reached his rebbi's home, he was completely out of breath.

As he stood by the door, he instinctively pressed the doorbell. But the second he did it, he realized that it was Shabbos! How could he have been so careless? Afraid that the door would be opened immediately, Shalom contemplated running away and coming back in another 10 minutes. After all, how would he be able to face the horrible embarrassment?

Fending off his own insecurities, and by now completely flustered, Shalom figured he was late enough and that coming 10 minutes later may be even more embarrassing. Left with no other option, he began to knock. At first he knocked softly. To his disappointment, no one came to the door. But it was not so late; it couldn't have been, not for Rav Avrohom and his family! Shalom knew that boys would often come over to the rebbi's house close to midnight to discuss private matters with him. There was no way he could be sleeping yet! Shalom kept on knocking.

As time passed he knocked louder and harder. Where could the rebbi have been? Shalom thought about the possibility that his rebbi had gone to a shalom zachar (a Friday night celebration prior to a bris), but he had not heard of one that his rebbi was planning on attending.

Nearly five minutes passed. As Shalom was about to leave, he heard the handle of the door turn. He waited there nervously as the door opened. What he saw nearly made him faint. Standing before him was his rebbi. But, shockingly, he was not dressed in his Shabbos clothing. In fact, he was in his pajamas, with a bathrobe over them, Rav Avrohom, who was always the depiction of kavod haTorah (the honor befitting one who learns Torah) and all that it represented, looked like he had just come out of bed. "I am sorry. I hope that you were not waiting long. I could barely hear the knocking. I was just trying to catch a little nap before I started to learn."

Shalom was shocked. He knew that his rebbi did not "catch a little nap" on a Friday night. There had to be some other reason for him to have come to the door in his bathrobe. And then, the true reason dawned on Shalom. Later he would confirm with someone who was in the house at the time that this is what had transpired:

When Shalom had rung the doorbell, Rav Avrohom and the other household members had heard it quite clearly. One of the rebbi's children had been prepared to answer the door, but Rav Avrohom had motioned that neither he nor anyone else should answer it. He had then gone upstairs and come back down five minutes later in his pajamas. He had instructed the others to go into rooms where they could not be seen.

But why? The answer, Shalom realized, was that his loving rebbi was afraid that if he would answer the door immediately, Shalom would be terribly embarrassed. He would suffer yet another blow to his fragile ego. Fearing that this might hurt his student's feelings, Rav Avrohom decided to arrange this entire charade: pretending not to hear, then running upstairs, and then humiliating himself by answering the door in his pajamas. (P. 90 A Touch of Warmth, Rabbi Yechiel Spero.) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**