

PARSHAS LECH LECHA

by Gedalia Litke

Rashi explains (13:3) that on the trip back up to Eretz Yisroel, Avrohom lodged at the same establishments as when he first went down to Mitzrayim, and that this instructs us in proper *derech eretz*: One should not change where he normally lodges when traveling a particular route. Why is this proper *derech eretz* - what is wrong with switching establishments? And if it is proper *derech eretz* why is it limited to lodging - why not extend it to banking or other services?

In a banking relationship, services are provided to 'customers' or 'clients' who have business needs. In a lodging relationship services are provided to 'guests' who have personal needs. That the guest pays for the personal services does not change the fact that the services rendered are for personal needs. A business owner will not demean himself for 'customers', but a business owner readily demeans himself for 'guests'. Cleaning a room and serving food are personal activities reserved for paying guests or those with whom a heightened relationship is enjoyed, such as friends or family members. One would never expect the bank manager to look after his dry cleaning, because he is only a customer, not a guest. In the ordinary course a bank manager would never be expected to do something demeaning for a customer. But if the bank manager did feel an expectation that he was to look after the dry cleaning the manager would feel very demeaned (not because it is not in the job description, but rather because of the personal nature of the service in question).

The recipient of personal guest services has an obligation to ensure that the provider not feel demeaned. The recipient must restore the dignity of the provider. Payment for services rendered is insufficient. (Perhaps this is the instinct involved in tipping those who provide personal services - waiters, barbers, baggage handlers, etc. It is a way of saying 'here is a bit extra to demonstrate that I appreciate what you did'. This takes it beyond the business relationship and shows that it is also personal. Once it is personal then the provider of demeaning services is no longer undignified - I would do anything for my personal friend or family member.) When one receives personal guest services at an establishment and then takes his business elsewhere the recipient is effectively saying that it is all just a business relationship; there is nothing personal there to which I have loyalty as I would to a friend. By going elsewhere the recipient underscores that the relationship was all business, and that the personal services previously provided were, in fact, demeaning to the provider.

[This is based entirely on a shiur by HoRav Yochanan Zweig, Shlita.]

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