

EVERY STEP HAS AN IMPACT

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tezaveh

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 319, Conditional Licht Benching. Good Shabbos!

Every Step Has An Impact

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1916-2001) offers two interesting insights regarding the bells that the High Priests wore on the bottom of their robe (me-il), as described in this week's parsha. The Kohain Gadol could be heard whenever he walked. The pasuk [verse] requires [28:35] "...The sound [of the bells] shall be heard when he enters the sanctuary before G-d and when he goes out, so that he not die."

Rav Gifter's first insight is the following: Each time the Kohain Gadol took a step, he knew about his step, and so did everyone else. This sends a very subtle psychological message - every step that I take has an impact. It makes a sound. This teaches that when one is the High Priest, every action - - every step, every motion -- must make a difference. This applies to every leader in the Jewish community. The greater he becomes, the more this is the case. In truth, we should all strive to maximize the effects of our every action.

Knock Before Entering

Rav Gifter's other observation is based on a Gemara in Tractate Pesachim [112a]. The Gemara there says that whenever the Tanna Rabbi Yehoshua would enter a house, he would knock on the door. The Rashbam (1080-1174) cites a Medrash Rabbah, which says that the basis of this practice is the verse in our Parsha regarding the Kohain Gadol always being heard (through the bells) when he walked into the Holy of Holies. Rabbi Yehoshua derived a law of Derech Eretz [proper manners] from

the Kohain Gadol. It is improper to just barge in to someone's abode. Rabbi Yehoshua did not enter a stranger's home or even a friend's home without knocking first. He did not even enter his own home without knocking. Even today we see this practiced by distinguished individuals. They always knock on the door before coming in, so that their arrival is not totally unannounced.

The Yerushalmi in Yoma says that the fact that the Kohen Gadol wears the bells that announce his coming into the Temple, atones for the sin of unintentional murder. Rav Gifter explained that the idea of not coming in unannounced is all about Derech Eretz -- of having the sense and sensitivity not to barge in on someone, catching them off guard. Ultimately, the root of murder stems from the lack of recognition of what a human being is. Someone who comes to kill another person does not view that person as being 'in the Image of G-d'. The foundation of Derech Eretz -- of treating someone with respect -- is that this person is a human being, who was created in the Image of G-d. One can come to kill another human being obviously lacks a grasp of the essence of a human being.

The Kohen Gadol's ringing 'announcement' of his arrival into the Temple was a meticulous demonstration of the attribute of Derech Eretz. Therefore, this sound atoned for acts that are ultimately caused by callousness in Derech Eretz.

Increased Bloodshed Stems From Decreased Civility

If one looks at our society, we see two phenomena, which at first glance are not related. First of all, there is a terrible amount of bloodshed. In the year 1940, there were a total of 43 murders in all 5 boroughs of the City of New York. Today that is not the case. There is a tremendous increase in the amount of bloodshed.

There is a second phenomenon. People have lost their civility. They do not talk and act with each other like they used to. They are not polite. Look at how people drive and how they act when they drive!

There is no civility any more in our society - even in OUR society. There is a lack of Derech Eretz even in our circles. Our society lacks politeness, manners, and civility.

The tremendous murder rates are not unrelated to the lack of civility in our society. When the whole society does not treat each other with dignity -- even amongst the cream of society -- then in the lower levels of society people are already killing each other over a pair of sneakers.

If we do not have awe and reverence for the "Image of G-d" [Bereishis 9:6], then the bitter fruit of that behavior is "the voice of the blood of your brother cries out to me from the field" [Bereishis 4:10]. Conversely, when one is meticulous to even knock on a door when not necessary, to open a door for another person, or to let another person go ahead in line -- that restores society's concept of "Tzelem Elokim," the Image of G-d, and society becomes a much better place for that effort.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Tezaveh are provided below:

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- Tape # 088 - Parshas Zachor and Other Purim Issues
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- Tape # 183 - Candle Lighting on Friday Night
- Tape # 229 - Purim Issues II
- Tape # 273 - Taanis Esther and the Personal Purim
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