BETWEEN FRIENDS with ESTHER EtiQuette



Dear Esther,

My husband and I work regular 9-5 jobs for a living. We are both on fixed incomes. We are constantly bombarded with phone calls, Charidy campaigns, and email/mail solicitations with requests for donations. I used to give freely and happily, but lately I have found myself turning cynical and although I still write checks and fill out paypal forms online, I am getting fed up. These solicitations are starting to feel intrusive, even rude, to me, due to the sheer number of them coming at me every day. How many Charidy campaigns should we have to deal with, how many email and text reminders do I need to delete? Enough is enough. Shluchim need to understand that working Lubavitchers are overwhelmed with tzedakah requests from the institutions in our own cities and we cannot support every cause. They need to stop making us feel guilty with their sob stories and flooding our social (emphasis on social) media with requests. It is becoming tiresome and I say, ad kahn! Esther, do you agree?

Signed,
Really Weary Rosie

Dear Rosie,

How do you feel about Gap, Target and Amazon ads popping up on your Facebook feeds and bombarding you with hundreds of pictures of items you "can't miss"? And what about all the email requests from various retailers to check out their websites and purchase "must haves" for summer, winter, fall, spring, back to school week, your July 4th BBQ, your living room do-over and your new exercise regimen? You must get the better wireless cable, lower interest credit card and "free vacation" calls too. Isn't it rude and intrusive for these companies to be sending you multiple emails, flooding your social media feeds and clogging your phone lines with blatant requests to spend your hard-earned money on their unnecessary garbage? Or does this not cause you to feel the same outrage you feel towards the Shluchim?

Non-profit organizations are marketing just like their for-profit counterparts and the fact that you feel guiltier ignoring their emails than, say, Gap's, is much to your credit. You feel for them; you respect them; you know that they are real people trying to do holy work and survive at the same time, not businesses only out for a profit. The fact that you may be tired of hearing from them is not their problem. In fact it is a sign that they are doing a good job of getting donors to look twice at their stuff. But just as it is your choice to choose whether or not to buy the new headphones Amazon is flaunting on your screen, it is also your choice to choose whether to give to the organization flaunting its altruistic mission on your screen. Perhaps you could start looking at it this way: You are being marketed to in the form of *mitzvos*. "Must-have *Mitzvah* of the Day": Partner in Building a Mikvah, Create a Scholarship Fund, Help an Orphaned Family, Bury a Jew Who Died With No Family; Sponsor a Seder for Ten Jews.

Of course the bulk of your tzedakah will go to your local institutions (as *halachah* dictates), but give what you can (even if it's a few dollars) and be grateful that your email box and feeds (and your money) are elevated spiritually by these opportunities. They have become more than just social media; they have become vehicles for *kedushah* and for bringing Moshiach much closer.

Also: Treat each visiting or calling Shliach as you would like your son or son-in-law to be treated when he is yet again ringing people's doorbells, —people who understand and value his cause, he hopes.

Happy Giving,
Esther



...just because something isn't intended to be hurtful doesn't mean it isn't.

Dear Esther,

I'm one of those people who seems to constantly offend. I go about my merry way each morning with my list of things to do and systematically get them done. When I return home, I often have a complaint waiting for me in my text messages, email box or voicemail with a pouty friend or family member complaining of how I've hurt them. It could be rushing past someone in the street without talking to them as long as they would have wanted, foregoing a get-together (because I have things to do!) or as silly as forgetting to make a birthday call (seriously?? call me and I'll wish you happy birthday!). Is everyone around me very immature? I never intend to hurt anyone so why are people always getting bruised by me?

Signed,

Hurried and Harried AND Harrassed by Half-Grown Adults

Dear Hurried,

People often get offended over things that were not intended as slights; however, just because something isn't intended to be hurtful doesn't mean it isn't.

My uncle always says, "you think X woke up this morning and said I'm out to get Esther today?"

No, but if X does hurt Esther, chances are it's because she was thinking about X and not Esther.

I find people are hurt by the lack of space they take up in another (significant) person's life that allows for disregard.

Too often I hear the excuse of "I didn't mean to hurt you." It translates as "I don't really think about you." And that is the most hurtful thing of all.

Perhaps you are too overly focused on your to-do list and lose sight of the wants and needs of the people around you. Having meaningful relationships requires setting aside what you want (getting your to-do list done as fast as possible) for what another person wants (an extra two minutes of your real undivided attention). I'm sure there have been times when you too have been hurt by a friend or family member and if you would think about it you might realize that the person had no intention of hurting you at all but rather did not take your feelings into consideration. Try to tune in to the feelings of others and you will find your emails, text messages and voicemails harrassment-free.

Signed,

Esther

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