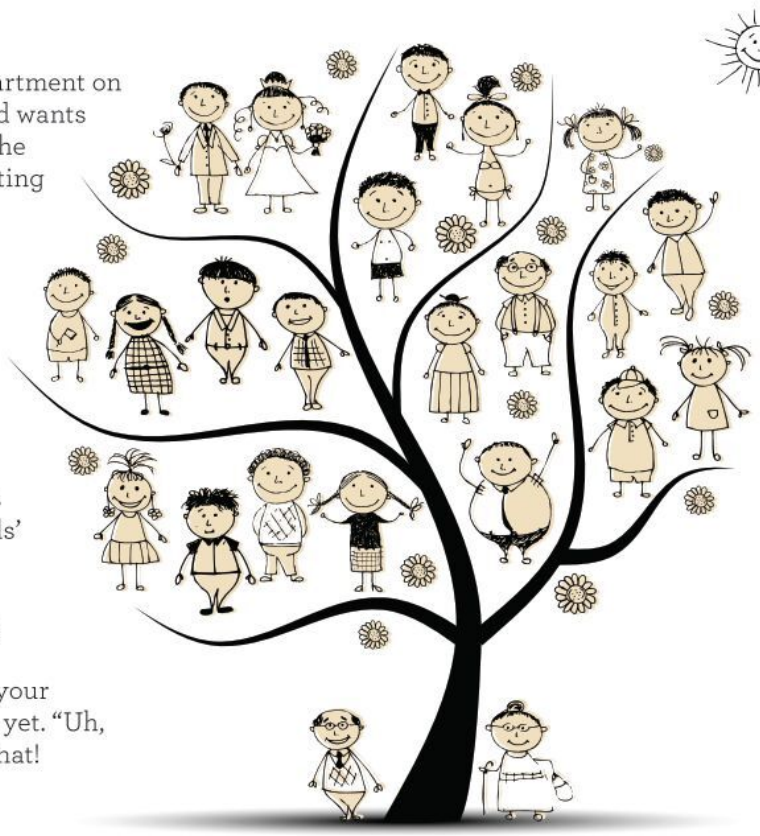
BETWEEN FRIENDS *with* ESTHER

EtiQuette

Join the Revolution!

Dear Esther,
My son's opsherin is approaching and we live in a small apartment on a tight budget. I would love to invite friends but my husband wants to keep it strictly family, and I had to reluctantly agree that he has a point. Now my husband is adamant that if we are inviting strictly family, then we have to be 100 percent consistent. I have a few friends whom I consider to be like family, but my husband says, "We cannot open that Pandora's box." I fear my friends will be stung when they do not receive an invitation, but I know my husband is just being realistic about the limitations we live with. What should I do?

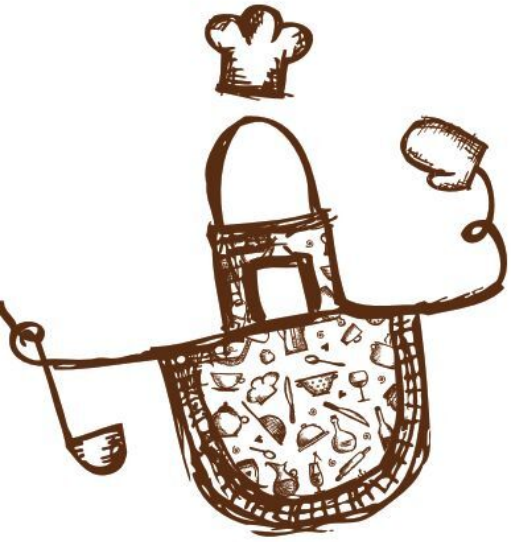
Libby



Dear Libby,
I understand your husband not wanting to make exceptions to the family-only decision and I also know that good friends' feelings are on the line. I recommend calling your good friends well before the invitations go out and explaining to them that you and your husband decided this time to host a party for the family.

You do not want to be placed in the awkward position of your good friend calling to say she hasn't received the invitation yet. "Uh, yes, that's because you weren't invited..." Do try and avoid that!

Esther



Dear Esther,

I open my home to many out-of-town visitors who need a place to sleep, as often as I can. I enjoy hosting them, generally, and when I don't enjoy it I do it anyway because it's the right thing to do. What peeves me is when a guest shows up for weekday breakfast, lunch, dinner and every snack in between but then casually lets me know an hour before Shabbos (as he's feasting on my Erev Shabbos kugel) that he has made plans to eat the Shabbos seudos somewhere else. For the one meal I slave over for my guests and enjoy having them! This happens so often that I feel compelled to write in. Is this gracious behavior for a guest?

Betty's Bed and Breakfast

Dear Betty,

Nope, not gracious. Especially informing you an hour before Shabbos. In your guests' defense, perhaps they feel like they have overused your hospitality by the time Shabbos comes around and wish to ease the burden on you by outsourcing a meal or two. Being that most people aren't inviting guests for breakfast and lunch during the week, or for Friday afternoon snack, Shabbos is their only time to give you a reprieve.

May I suggest that in the future when you have guests staying over Shabbos, give them a warm and early invitation to your Shabbos meal so they understand they are wanted and expected at your Shabbos table. Guests are not mind-readers. Clear communication is essential in this and all relationships.

Esther

Dear Esther,

My friend's daughter and my daughter are good friends and the girls spend a lot of time in my house. I have started noticing some odd behavior in my friend's daughter. She barely eats and is constantly complaining about her weight, and she's very thin. Recently, she has been hanging out in the bathroom for extended periods of time. She came for Shabbos recently, and while everyone partook of the Shabbos feast, she sliced an apple and a grapefruit and slowly ate them throughout the evening. I am worried that she is anorexic and I feel I must tell someone what I am seeing. But is it my business? And will I lose a friend by speaking up? Nobody wants to hear bad news about their child.

Ima Witness

Dear Ima,

Telling another mother that you are noticing emotional issues in her child is a risky, yet sometimes necessary, action. I would suggest saying something like this: "Your daughter has been over at my house a lot and I've been hearing her talk about her weight excessively. I've noticed that she barely eats when at my house and she also spends a lot of time in the bathroom. It could be nothing but I just felt I should share what I have noticed as I hope you would feel close enough to tell me if this were my child, and I would appreciate that."

Be careful how you word your concerns. Do not diagnose or use labels. Stick to describing the behavior you are seeing without dramatizing and most importantly without offering any unasked-for advice.

Once you have brought your concerns to the parents, the problem is out of your court. Do not probe the mother or the child on developments or treatments. It is a personal issue and you have done your part as a friend.

Esther

Dear Esther,

I went with my school to spend Yud Tes Kislev in Crown Heights at a national high school convention. There were approximately 14 Lubavitch girls' high schools that joined together to create a wonderful experience. There was one incident, though, that was not wonderful. Sunday morning, as I was washing my hands in a restroom, one of the janitors walked in to empty the trash and clean the floor. As soon as we made eye contact, I gave her a warm good morning and thanked her.

No response. A few moments later, the woman turned to me and asked if I was from New York. I replied that I was not from the area.

She thought for a few moments and said, "Yes. I thought you weren't. They don't wish me good morning around here."

I was taken aback. The Crown Heights girls are our role models! Esther, can you address this important issue?

Smiling Sima



Dear Sima,

I think what you experienced is not unique to Crown Heights, but the way New Yorkers live. There are exceptions, of course, but the general population suffers from the "oblivious/rude epidemic" as I like to call it.

New Yorkers are oblivious to (or have no time for) pleasantries and common niceties. They are rushing here and there to cross things off on their overly long to-do lists and nods, thanks, greetings and courteous gestures sometimes seem to escape their consciousness. Children who never see their parents saying hello in the street, letting a pedestrian cross, or asking a bank clerk how their day is, have no idea that it is appropriate to do so.

This leads to a disregard for people who perform services for them. The community tends to only see them within the context of their jobs, not as human beings. So a janitor is a walking broom and garbage disposal, and quite easy to ignore day in and day out. The same goes for the delivery man, the school cook and many others who don't actually require conversation. For this ill treatment of humanity to end, there needs to be a push to stress manners and civility in our communities and to instill in our youth a sense of awareness and respect toward others. I must add that this type of disregard is not only apparent in the exchanges between servicers and those serviced, but also among people in general. I cannot tell you how many times I've walked past fellow Jewish women on Shabbos and received not even a smile or nod even after I've said "Gut Shabbos" first. They just walk briskly

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by. These are the same wonderful women who I know are cooking meal after meal for the sick, hosting busloads of guests and doing so much chessed!

I have spent time analyzing this curious paradoxical personality (possessed by so many) and have come to a conclusion. Frum people are there when you need them! Someone's sick, we come to the rescue. New baby? Fabulous home-cooked meals are at your door. Someone's knocking at your door for tzedakah? Of course, and please sit down and have a drink. It could be we are so busy with important needs that we overlook the wants. A smile? Who needs a smile? Quite the opposite of some other communities, who are pros at letting another car go first, and doling out soft-toned pleases, thank yous and how-are-yous to the woman behind the cash register, but come to their home and there is a big NO SOLICITING sign on the front door. When asked to cook a meal for a new mother, they are so very sorry, but they have a full schedule of massages, meetings and lunch dates. Needless to say, there are very few guests and those who do make it through the door are not invited to stay long.

This comparison does not excuse rude behavior, especially as this behavior rubs off on our youth who are not busy with anything other than themselves and only ignore pleasantries because they have not been trained to offer them.

LET'S MAKE A CHANGE!

Let's decide right here in the pages of the *N'shei Chabad Newsletter* to make a change. Let's start a revolution! Parents, teach your children by example to be the first to greet people with a smile, to notice and acknowledge the cook, the janitor, the housekeeper, an acquaintance in the street (even if she's not your friend).

There is no excuse for adult rude behavior, not even from the super-busy top tier chessed lady. We are expected to greet everyone with a warm and gracious face, especially as frum Jews who the entire world scrutinizes (as they should— we are the upholders of Hashem's Torah). And the truth is, a kind word or a smile *is* a need.

JOIN THE REVOLUTION!

Esther

