

## To walk in all His ways. (11:22)

How does one “walk” in the ways of Hashem? Furthermore, should it not have said to walk in Hashem’s footsteps? One walks in someone’s footsteps; one follows in his path. Perhaps, we may suggest that “footsteps” and “ways/path” are variants only when one follows in a path that was ready-made by others. When one forges a path, his footsteps are the path. In other words, Hashem makes the path, creates the *derech*. Wherever Hashem “walks,” He is teaching us what should be the standards of living, what should be the *derech* of a *Yid*. Hashem’s *halichah*, walking, creates the *derech*, path, for us to emulate. We walk in His path/ways.

What are Hashem’s ways? **Horav Reuven Grozovsky, zl**, explains that Hashem’s *derachav*, ways, are the constant performance of only good. Unrestricted, unimpeded, unconfined, wholly free acts of *chesed*, kindness – without recompense – every second to every creature. Unstoppable *chesed* – that is Hashem. To follow in His path means always to act kindly to every person, not to rely on being nice every once in a while.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains the word *derech* as referring to nature. The *derech* of a person is the nature of a person. When a person acts a certain way, it means that his nature is to act in this manner. He suggests the word *derech* to be synonymous with the term “nature”, as found in connection with a *shor muad*, an ox that gores regularly. Three times comprises regularly, transforming a “normal” ox into a goring ox, a *muad*. Such an ox is *darko l’haszik*, its nature is to gore. In order for the ox to change its *muad* status, it must allow three opportunities for goring to present themselves – and not gore. This is an indication that its nature has changed.

Applying this idea to *derachav*, His/Hashem’s ways, we are enjoined to incorporate Hashem’s “nature” of kindness and thoughtfulness into our human psyche. Kindness should be natural, without hesitation. Our first and only impulse should be to act kindly all of the time. It should not be “second” nature, but “first” nature. This is the only way we can walk in Hashem’s ways.

For a Jew, *chesed* should be instinctive. **Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl**, was traveling by train. As the door was about to close, prior to the train pulling out of the station, he accidentally dropped his glove. As it fell down to the ground, the door of the car was closing. *Rav* Yeruchem immediately dropped his other glove out the door just before it closed. The train picked up speed and departed from the station. His student watched what took place and was bothered by his revered *Rebbe*’s action. “Why throw out a good glove – just because its ‘mate’ was lost?” he asked. The *Mashgiach*’s reply indicates the meaning of instinctive *chesed* and should inspire each and every one of us. He said, “I thought to myself: I have no use for a single glove. I might as well throw out the second glove, so that when someone finds the first one, he will also find its mate and have a pair of gloves.”

The *Mashgiach* did not think this out. It was an immediate, instinctive reaction to a situation that presented itself.

Sitting at a wedding recently, I heard the following story which I think is appropriately suited to this *dvar Torah*. A fellow who worked at a restaurant once walked home instead of using the bus. His walk took him past a homeless shelter where he had the opportunity to notice how emaciated some of its “residents” were. Whatever food they received was either from scrounging, or donations which were given to the shelter and then parceled out to the residents. This man thought to himself, “We throw out so much food at the restaurant. If I were to bring the food here, it would truly make a difference to these people.”

The next day, he asked his boss if, instead of throwing the leftovers into the garbage, he could have them to give to the shelter. His boss agreed wholeheartedly. After all, it was a win/win situation. He was rid of the leftovers, while simultaneously helping the unprivileged. The man packed up the leftovers and took them to the shelter. The men and women were so excited to finally have “good” food. Everyone ate whatever they could. Everyone – except for one woman, who stood in the back of the room staring at the man, refusing to participate in eating the free food.

This went on for three days. Everyone ate, except this woman, who just stared angrily at the man. Finally, he decided to approach her and ask, “Why do you refuse to take any food?” “I will take nothing from a Jew!” she practically growled. “But I am not a Jew,” the man countered. “I just want to help out. Why do you refuse this simple gesture?”

“You must be a Jew,” she screamed. “Only a Jew would think of such an idea. Only a Jew would want to help others. And I will take nothing from a Jew!”

A frightening attitude, but sadly, very real. There are such sick people in the world whose irrational, nonsensical hatred (which is really self-loathing) prevents them from enjoying Jewish generosity. Our hero, however, was stupefied. How could this lady mistake him for a Jew? A few days later, upon speaking with his mother, he mentioned the incident with the woman, “Can you imagine that this woman’s hatred was so strong that she somehow convinced herself that I was Jewish – simply because Jews are benevolent and kind? So, apparently, I must be a Jew.”

Hearing this, his mother began to cry. He asked her why she was so emotional. She responded, “I never told you the truth about your pedigree. I am Jewish, and I married your father, who was a gentile. You really are Jewish!”

The sudden revelation commenced a process which led this man to religious observance and his eventual relocation to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he lives a completely observant life together with his family. All of this occurred because the *goya* knew that Jews are instinctly kind and benevolent and use their hearts to think of ways to help others. Now, if only the Jews would “buy into” this idea...