PARENTING: Time to say goodbye

אמרו עליו על ריב״ז שלא הקדימו אדם שלום מעולם ואפילו נכרי בשוק

It was said of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai that no one ever preceded him in a greeting, even a stranger in the marketplace.

It is common sense and *derekh eretz* (politeness) that people would greet each other when they meet, after being away from one another, or when they depart from each other. That is what we do with our coworkers and friends even though we see them everyday.

When we leave home we should always say goodbye to the other members of our family, including very young children. This is beyond a matter of basic respect. For infants and little kids, knowing that mom and dad are home, unless they said “goodbye”, builds trust and reinforce their self esteem. Mom and dad are here unless they let me know that they are leaving. No fear of abandonment.

In the case of older children, if we don’t let them know when we are leaving the house, they might be finding themselves talking to a person that was there, but who has just disappeared. Moreover, if we behave in this way, our children will learn to follow. Perhaps then when our children get independent and drive, they would think that they can just leave without giving notice, especially when they are at the age where they don’t need to ask permission to go to certain places. We must teach them that they need to let us know they are leaving the house and when are they coming back. All this will happen if they learn to say “goodbye”.

Similarly, when we come home to our family, we should let our loved ones know that we are back. And It goes both ways. Those who are at home should acknowledge the presence of the person who just arrived saying: “Hi! Hello! How are you? or How was your day!” This is especially important when parents arrive. Jewish children are commanded to respect their parents. They should stop their activities and come and greet the parent that just arrived. When the kids are young, each parent models this behavior when the other parent arrives. Mom or dad should say: “Everybody come here! Look who has just arrived! Let’s all give dad (or mom) a big hug!!”

In our modern society, where children are connected basically to electronic devices, these gestures of love and respect are more important than eve.

Regaining awareness of what it means to be a family might begin by knowing and showing that it matters a lot if you are home or if you are absent. Don’t abstain from saying “Have a great day! I love you! I missed you!”.

We should learn from Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai to be always the first to greet others. **Showing those we love that their presence does make a difference.**

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