



Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul

SAFETY ROAD MAP FOR INTERPERSONAL TRAVEL

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Let us begin by using a 21st Century (moshal) example of travel that "journeys" into the "highways" of our hearts and "byways" of our minds in order to enhance our relationships with others. Possibly one of the (Torah's) Five Books of Moses intentions for recording for all posterity each of the "driving" and "parking" violations, in the course of our Nations journeys and encampments during the forty years in the (midbar) desert, was to serve as a "sign post" for future "motorists" pointing out "road hazards" in order to help them avoid potential "pitfalls" while "traveling" through life's (galus) exile. This "driver's education course" that teaches the "rules of the road" maximizes our safety, in addition to helping us maintain a clean "traffic record". Passing life's "driving tests", especially in interpersonal relationships during these three weeks when the "road conditions" are less than optimal is a great opportunity remove some of the perceived "road blocks" and "pot holes" that can arise in relationships between people.

It is human nature, especially in relationships with others, to become impatient and frustrated when things don't "move along" according to our plans and timing. We live in a generation of maps, scales and watches where every inch, ounce and second is measured, therefore we sometimes find ourselves tested by the idiosyncrasies of others which seem to be at variance with our opinions or attitudes. When one is "behind the wheel", the first rule when there is a potential problem is to put on the "brakes" - "slowing down" enough or "stopping" a moment to ask ourselves if we our "traveling" the best "route" of communication.

Another cause of excessive "tire wear" is when a relationship with another feels like "riding" on a rollercoaster. Since this person - whether friend, relative or stranger - was sent into our lives, it behooves us to ask ourselves whether these emotional "ups and downs" at this "intersection" of our "journey" might be preventable by building "bridges" between us that will smooth out" the "road conditions" and "distance" between us.

If we appreciate the fact that a road that ascends a very steep hill must, of necessity, have various twists and turns in order to facilitate a safe, gentle journey, then we might also validate the opinions and emotions of others, which may at times differ from our own prospective.

In order to make our journey safe and enjoyable, we would do well to follow the (derech erez) etiquette manual that is located in the heart of every driver. Before "traveling" to meet or interact with other people, obtain a "traffic and weather" report of their attitudes and moods. Are any of their "lanes blocked" or is there a "storm" brewing around them?

Another invaluable tip is to learn how to "change lanes" in conversations that lead to "dead ends" and if necessary to find "alternative routes" of communication.

Even in ones very own home, one is constantly being asked to "journey" and then "encamp" at new levels of relationships. How so? Each telephone call or door bell represents a potential "obstacle" placed in our "path" schedule. Interactions with family and friends constitute an ongoing "up hill ascent" that can sometimes make us as if we can't reach an agreeable "meeting ground". If anyone "stalls" or "drives recklessly", the ensuing "personality crash" may can cause a further "traffic jam" "slowing us down" from reaching the next "plateau" of mutual agreement.

Let us look at some of the many components that will prove invaluable as a part of our (Chaverim) friendly - helpful "travel guide kit". The first and foremost advice for "motorists" is to learn how to maneuver the steering wheel, so that in our conversations with others, we may "steer clear" of any "pot holes or barriers" that can might impede the smooth "flow" of "traffic" - ie. communication. The "rear view mirror" serves as an excellent tool for observing past mistakes in order to avoid wrong turns" in the future. The "brakes" help us to "stop short" of saying or doing anything that "crashes into"



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another person's feelings. It is valuable always to have our "booster cables" at hand in order to "boost the mood" of others who may be having a hard time of getting started.

Also, an extra supply of "fuel" - ie. an encouraging word - is reenergizing for those who have run out of "gas". A tire jack can be an excellent tool to help "lift up the mood" of someone whose life seems without much (ruach) air - ie. "flat"; while a flashlight is always valuable in offering a "ray of hope" at a "dark" moment. Last but certainly not least, always have a "road map" - an inspiring Torah thought to help point out the best direction in life.

By faithfully following these (bain adom bi-chavero) between man and his fellow "rules of the road" we will thereby merit to reach our "destination" safely together at the (Har HaKodesh) holy Temple sight in Jerusalem soon in our days.

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