

Meet & Greet



Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

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We are instructed to receive everyone *בסבר פנים יפות*, with a pleasant facial expression (Avos 1:15). An interesting saying reads: "Cheerfulness is contagious, but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier!" Someone once said, "Be helpful. When you see a person without a smile, give him yours."

R' Avraham Grodzinski (1883-1944) spent two years perfecting the attribute of "greeting every individual with a pleasant facial countenance." People would later attest to the extent he instilled this principle into his character. Even in the most horrific times in the Kovno Ghetto during the Holocaust, his pleasant facial expression concealed his internal grief.

When R' Shlomo Hoffman (1922-2013) was young and learning in the Slabodka yeshiva he had a learning session with R' Isaac Sher (1875-1952) in his house. He once entered the house and R' Sher asked him why he was sad. Unaware of how somber his expression was, he responded that he wasn't sad. R' Sher told him, "you must have not looked in a mirror recently because if you did, you would be embarrassed to go out into the street with such an

expression on your face. If you knew how you looked, you wouldn't dare enter my house with such a look on your face." For a long while after that encounter, R' Sher demanded that Shlomo wear a smile on his face whenever he entered his house. R' Sher assigned him several exercises to get him accustomed to smiling. One time he told him, "You are like a pit in the public thoroughfare. You cause damage to everyone around you with that glum expression on your face."

R' Chaim Friedlander, who was the mashgiach of the Ponovezh yeshiva and a student of R' Dessler, would have a particular smile when he would speak on the phone. He was asked why he smiles if the other person can't see him anyway. He answered that although they can't see the smile, they can hear the smile. There is something that they can sense.

The first day Rebbetzin Jungreis arrived at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, her father turned to her and said, "Here you have a great mission." She replied "Here? I'm just a little girl? What can I do here?" Her father answered that here you can give a smile to someone. There is a saying, "No one is too poor to pay

a compliment and no one is so rich that he doesn't need a compliment."

Here are some of the intriguing statements written about a smile:

The value of a smile—it costs nothing, but creates much.

It enriches those who receive, without impoverishing those who give.

It happens in a flash, and the memory of it sometimes lasts forever.

None are so rich that they can get along without it, and none are so poor but are richer for its benefits.

It creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business, and is the hallmark of friends.

It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and nature's best antidote for trouble.

Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something that is no earthly good to anybody until it is given away.

And if in the last-minute rush, we are too tired to give you a smile, may we ask you to leave one of yours?

For nobody needs a smile as much as those who have none left to give!