

Are You Listening?

The Seven Ways: Practical Applications on Chaye Sarah

Milo Taphinn is an impeccably dressed artist who enjoys venturing into the parks and cafes that pepper his city. He often bases his oil paintings and pastel landscapes on the verdant nature and human interactions that he observes during his travels.

While riding on a public bus, Milo sees a hilarious encounter involving a pet ferret and organic groceries. He walks into a local supermarket, seeking out someone to share the story with. He sees his neighbor, Eric, and approaches him.

Milo: Hey, how are you? (excited, smiling wide)

Eric: Fine. (Taken aback by Milo's quick, excited movements.)

Milo: I was on the bus, and this lady had a huge box of organic groceries, and this guy had a pet ferret and...

Eric: (raising his hand to stop Milo). Whoa, whoa, why did you ride the bus? Don't you have a car? And did you say ferret? Aren't they illegal in this state?

Milo: Well, let me finish...um yes they're illegal—I think—I donno...but it was *hilarious!*

Eric: Ok (sounding bored and looking at Milo as if the artist is a part of his mind.) Well, what happened again?

Milo: Never mind (grabs a grocery basket and walks away in a huff.)

Eric: Fine (turns and wonders if he should speak to Milo ever again, or cross to the other side of the street, when the artist is approaching).

This type of dysfunctional interaction happens every day. I know, because I have been consciously observing it for over 4 1/2 years. There are ways to improve upon these situations, and we would do well to study up on how to do so.

So, crystallized, the question is: what went wrong here and what can be done to fix it?

The Cast

Milo and Eric are stars in *The Seven Ways* (which you can order, on-demand right to your door [here](#)). In this book, I take the reader on a journey through their intriguing lives and how they relate to great figures in the Torah. Through this I assist you to better understand the seven different types of styles that people communicate with. A keen understanding of the seven will help you in your family life, at work, or when you bump into people at the supermarket.

The Issue

Milo Taphinn has the *tiferet* personality, which means that he is a fun-loving artist who enjoys sharing stories or interesting ideas. He gets giddy and talkative when he sees something hilarious; he wants to quickly share his version of the events, the same way a journalist or newscaster reports in concise, interesting ways.

However, in contrast, Eric Altman has the *gevurah* personality. He is, by nature, more serious than Milo and gets uncomfortable when people seemingly lose their composure. He likes to get the facts straight before he feels comfortable accepting the information.

(This example was chosen very specifically: when I've worked with organizations and I show a list of *tiferets* to the *gevurahs* and visa versa,

virtually every time the people say something to the effect of, “Oh yeah, I do *not* understand them *at all*.”)

Let’s dissect what went wrong. First of all, there is a flash point between the two in terms of their mannerisms. Eric prefers controlled bodily action and Milo can become very excited and act seemingly impulsive. To ease this flash point, either Eric can take a deep breath and tolerate Milo’s mannerisms or Milo can tone down his excitement so Eric can stomach it. Or both.

Second, Eric made the classic mistake that *gevurahs* make. He assumed that he should give into his natural tendency to want to get the details straight by asking pointed questions (all *gevurahs* have ‘s’ in the Myers’-Briggs system). Milo doesn’t want to hash out details nor does he want any questions this early in the storytelling. Milo just wants someone to listen, smile and laugh with him.

Another

The opposite situation could happen, as well.

Eric: There’s something very interesting I read, in the newspaper this morning. The writer said—and he was an Oxford scholar—that a study was done—

Milo: Oxford, like, (British accent) G-d save the queen? Clinton went there.

Eric: Hey, I wasn’t finished!

The amount we interrupt the people we are speaking to depends on our relationship with them, our culture, and their personal preference. In this situation, it was not wise for Milo to interject with his humorous commentary. Eric, as many *gevurahs*, prefers linear conversations, especially when they are sharing factual information.

Now with a *gevurah* and *yesod*

G: Did you finish the report?

Y: Yes I did.

G: I don't understand; where is the cover page? Where is a pretty binder?

Y: No, no, the main part of the report is done, the rest is formality.

G: (Getting a bit angry). I don't understand, you didn't finish it! Why would you say you're finished?

To a *yesod*, the primary component of an item constitutes its essence. The report is finished, the paper done, the deal closed, even before it has been checked or edited or the details worked out. To improve upon this dialogue, the *yesod* could realize that *yesods* are prone to such thinking and/or the *gevurah* could check in politely with the *yesod* instead of getting upset.

It is extremely important to understand the different communication styles in which people speak and act

The Impetus

This article was inspired by R. F. and the F. family of Seattle, WA, who hosted me many times over the years and supported me in my spiritual journey. The Fs encouraged me to pen more Seven Ways Practical Applications. They are absolutely correct, the more straight-forward practical advice we can read, the better. I hope to compile these articles and reader feedback into a book, *Seven Ways Practical Applications*.

I decided to begin the series this week, because, in this week's Torah portion, Avraham's servant Eliezer changes a story to make it more palatable to the listener. When witnessing a young girl's mannerisms in

order to ascertain if she is Rivka, a woman whom he could bring back to marry Yitzchak, Eliezer quite quickly decides that she is indeed Rivka, giving her precious jewelry even before he has confirmed her identity (24:22-3). However, in v. 47 he tells Rivka's family that he confirmed her identity first. When it is permitted by Jewish Law, we are allowed to change the wording of our sentences, in order to keep peace and not raise suspicion.

In a similar vein, we should change our wording, tone, and mannerisms, even if we believe that we are precisely correct in our approach, in order to make our message more palatable to the listener and his or her communication style.

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