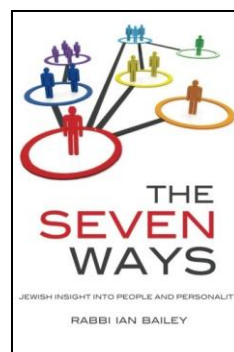


# The #1 Thing on Your To Do List

## Emor: Always Do This First

The end of the Torah portion recounts the brief story of man who pronounces a curse that includes one of G-d's names (24:10-11), which is against Jewish law. One of the reasons given for his act of anger is that, due to his particular ancestry, he is unable to pitch his tent in any specific part of the Israelite camp[1].



By nature we do not like to feel rejected nor do we like to lack a place to call home. We wish to feel like our existence is valid and that our home place is readily available to us. On a relational level, when we share with others, we have a desire to be heard and, initially, validated.

This relates to the *sefirot/middot*, as *chesed* is not simply the first *sefirah*; it is, as a concept, the first step in any process. It represents 'yes' and *gevurah's* 'no'; it means that something exists, while *gevurah* describes any adversity that may encounter that particular something; it validates, where *gevurah* and its companion *din* (judgment) look for reasons to invalidate.



When others share with us, the first thing we do should be to find reason to agree and simply keep listening. Later, if the situation happens presents itself, the proper to do actions of *gevurah* as well as the other *middot* will be apparent.

Immediate dissent ineffectively bounces off the listener like raindrops off of a latex poncho. When someone shares a personal feeling, the response "Well, in my life I..." won't get very far—sharing personal experiences only helps at the right time; comments that essentially express the message "Get over it" aren't likely to foster effective treatment of upset feelings; Changing

the subject is rude and completely invalidates the speaker. Effective and polite communication begins with validation.

Just remember: *chesed then gevurah*. Validate, validate, validate.

IB

[1] Tanchuma 24, Vayikra Rabbah 32:3.