

# R.S.V.P.???

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

Responding to invitations causes both excitement and anxiety. What if I do not show up? Will it be held against me? Do I have to invite them because they invited me? Will they believe my excuse?

The French writer Jean Cocteau solved the problem with a telegram: "Regret cannot come. Lie to follow."

For the rest of us it is not so easy. Does another person's legitimate expectation create in you a legitimate obligation? Of course she wants you to attend her daughter's wedding; that does not always mean, however, that you are obligated to go.

Responding to requests is a balancing act. Recall the wise words of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter: "Life is a short tablecloth." Whichever way you pull, another part is exposed. Inevitably, someone will be slighted. Attend this person's party, and that one will be hurt. Only the one who lives without friends can meet all possible obligations. To choose wholeheartedly, considerately but firmly — without guilt — is a level few can consistently reach.

When the Talmud advises us to "let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no,'" it is acknowledging the necessity of drawing lines in order to live. So be firm. On the other hand, could it hurt to just stop by?