

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In our Torah portion this week *Vayeira*, we read about the greatness of the mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim, welcoming guests into our homes. The Torah tells us that Avrohom Avinu "was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." (Bereishis 18:1) Rashi explains that Avrohom was waiting to see if travelers would pass by, so that he could invite them into his home.

When Avrohom saw that three men were approaching, Avrohom ran towards the men in order to offer them hospitality. When the guests arrived, Avrohom was in the middle of receiving the Shechina - the Divine Presence of Hashem. Hashem had come to visit Avrohom who was still recovering from his bris milah which had taken place three days earlier. The Torah quotes Avrohom as saying "*My L-rd, If I find favor in Your eyes, please pass not away from Your servant.*" (Bereishis 18:3) The Talmud explains this verse to mean that Avrohom Avinu asked the Divine Presence to wait for him, so that Avrohom could take care of the guests. Avrohom and Sorah then quickly prepared a large meal for the travelers. (Stone Chumash, p.79 citing Shabbos 127a and Shevuos 35b)

The fact that Avrohom put the needs of his guests over receiving the Divine Presence, shows the greatness of the mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim. (ibid.) As the Sages tell us, "*let your house be open wide*" (Avos 1:5) Bartinurah explains that a Jew's house should be like Avrohom Avinu's home, which had entrances on all four sides in order to make it easy for guests to enter.

Several years ago observant Jews began to attempt to close Meah Shearim Street in Jerusalem to traffic on Shabbos. The observant Jews were offended by the blatant violation of Shabbos which disturbed the holy atmosphere of the neighborhood. In those early years, the locals set up trash bins before Shabbos which blocked the street from traffic. Needless to say, there was anger and indignation all around.

Secular elements from across Israel, formed a committee with the goal of opposing the closure of the street, a move which the secular Jews saw as "religious coercion." This committee against religious coercion used to bus into Jerusalem ruffians from kibbutzim and other places, to attack and beat up the "Ultra Orthodox."

Once such ruffian who went up to Jerusalem to beat up the Ultra Orthodox was named Kobi Levy (not his real name.) One Shabbos, Kobi was in Jerusalem with his own automobile and decided to show those Ultra Orthodox a thing or two. He drove his car down Meah Shearim Street "like a Roman charioteer," as he described it, with pedestrians scattering in panic; pregnant women sprinting from the street, women with baby carriages bouncing across the uneven pavement. All this to show them that they cannot impose their "Shabbos" on him.

One man a local teacher had the presence of mind to memorize the number of his license plate and look him up the next day at the motor vehicle licensing bureau. That way, he eventually tracked down Kobi's telephone number. Then he called up Kobi and invited him home for Shabbos, explaining that he wanted him to see what Shabbos is and "why it means so much to us."

The driver declined, explaining that he would not want to spend the whole of Shabbos. The Meah Shearim resident pleaded with Kobi and said to him "I am inviting you to be my guest, not my prisoner. You are free to leave whenever you want. Just do me the courtesy of parking your car outside the neighborhood."

Kobi could find no honorable way of refusing an invitation which was so reasonably presented, so he agreed to go for Kiddush and the meal Shabbos evening. Kobi enjoyed himself and was intrigued at the beautiful singing, tasty food and inspiring words of Torah. When Kobi left, his host invited him to return for another Shabbos. To reinforce the invitation, the host called Kobi during the week.

Eventually, Kobi came again for Shabbos. And again. And again. Over the next year or so, he became first an occasional Shabbos guest, then a frequent Shabbos guest and finally a regular Shabbos guest. Over period of two to three years, he became a ba'al teshuvah! (From (<http://www.nishmas.org>))

We see from here the power of welcoming guests into our homes. The mitzvah of making others feel comfortable in our homes is a tremendous mitzvah. Let us all seek out guests, especially for Shabbos and Yom Tov meals. By doing so, we will all merit the great spiritual influences which Hashem imparts on those who perform this mitzvah. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**