

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.

The following amazing story sheds light on the greatness of welcoming guests.

In 1955 Lazer Marilus, a 16-year-old boy from Zurich, Switzerland, came to Eretz Yisroel to learn in the great Ponevezh Yeshivah in Bnei Brak. To his chagrin, he was told the yeshivah already had an enrollment of 1,000, and new applicants were not being accepted for that z'man (semester.) To Lazer it was clear that there was very little difference between 1,000 and 1,001 students in the study hall. Surely the reason for his rejection was that his learning abilities were not up to par with those who had a stronger background.

Understandably, Torah study in Swiss yeshivos was not as intense as in the Torah centers of Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. Undeterred at his rejection, Lazer asked if he could be taken to meet the Ponevezher Rebbetzin.

The staff members smiled to themselves. The Rebbetzin had nothing to do with enrollment, but still they pitied the youngster, who had traveled thousands of miles only to be rejected. They complied with his wishes and took him to see Rebbetzin Hinda Kahaneman. When he met her, Lazer took out a letter from his pocket and handed it to her. She read it intently and then looked up at the staff members and then at Lazer and said, "All of you come with me right away to the Rav (Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, 1886-1969)."

Astounded, they all followed her to the Rav. The Rav greeted Lazer with his radiant smile and pleasant words. The Rebbetzin told him why Lazer had come to Eretz Yisroel and gave him the letter. The Rav read it, stood up, hurried over to Lazer, embraced and kissed him, and said warmly, "You will be accepted into the yeshivah," The staff members were astounded. What could have been written in that letter?

Over the next few years the Ponevezher Rav told this story numerous times and that is how it became known. The story happened 10 years earlier in Switzerland...

The operator of a certain Orthodox Jewish hotel in Switzerland, a certain Mr. Pugatsch, had a problem. He had a very important guest who needed a ground floor room. However, no rooms were available. Mr. Pugatsch decided that he would try his luck and see if any of the occupants of the ground floor rooms would be willing to trade rooms.

Mr. Pugatsch walked to room 111 and knocked on the door. Mrs. Marilus opened it and he bowed courteously. "Mrs. Marilus, I am here to ask you for a very great favor. The Ponevezher Rav is here from Eretz Yisrael to recuperate from major surgery. It is hard for him to walk, but our only empty room is on the third floor. Would you mind giving up your room to the Rav and the Rebbetzin, and moving up to the third floor?"

"I certainly wouldn't mind," said Mrs. Marilus, "but" — turning to her six-year-old son, she said — "you have to ask the young cavalier (French for gentleman), as well. He, too, must be willing to give up his room." The owner smiled, bent down to little Lazer and said, "Young man, the Rosh Yeshivah, the Ponevezher Rav, is here from Eretz Yisroel. He needs a room on the first floor because he just had an operation and it is hard for him to walk. Would you be willing to give him your room to make it easier for him? You and your mother would have a room on the third floor."

The little boy said, "Of course. I am happy to give my room to the Rav." Mr. Pugatsch was overjoyed. Immediately, the hotel staff helped the Marilus family and the Kahanemans to their new accommodations. About half an hour later, the Ponevezher Rebbetzin walked up to the third floor to visit Mrs. Marilus. "The Rav asked me to thank you for giving us your room," she said graciously. "We are very, very grateful. When you are on the first floor, the Rav wants to thank you in person." "Don't thank me," said Mrs. Marilus, slightly embarrassed. Pointing to her son she said to the Rebbetzin, "You have to thank the young cavalier. He also gave up the room for the Rav."

The Rebbetzin smiled affectionately at Lazer. "We thank you, young man, for giving up your very comfortable and convenient room. Can I buy you a piece of chocolate? There is a very nice shop on the first floor."

"No, thank you," said Lazer, "it's not necessary." "Well, I am going into town this afternoon. Can I get you a special toy to show you how much we appreciate your kindness?" asked the Rebbetzin. "No, thank you," said Lazer once again. "My parents give me toys." "But we would like to do something," insisted the Rebbetzin. "What can we do for you?"

The little boy thought for a moment and said, "I just gave my bed to the Ponevezher Rav. I would hope that if I ever come to the Ponevezher Yeshivah, the Rav would give me a bed in his yeshivah." She took out a sheet of paper and wrote, "If this boy ever comes to Ponevezh, he will have a bed waiting for him in the yeshivah." She dated and signed it, and immediately went downstairs and had the Ponevezher Rav sign it as well. A few minutes later the Rebbetzin returned to the Mariluses room and smiling broadly, handed the signed note to Lazer. Mrs. Marilus took the paper from Lazer and, when they returned to their home, she put it in the family safe.

There in the safe remained the letter for more than 10 years and when Lazer was ready to study in Eretz Yisroel, she gave him the letter and said, "Show this to the people in Ponevezh; you won't have a problem." That was the piece of paper that Lazer gave the Rebbetzin after his disappointing rejection. Lazer Marilus went on to learn in Ponevezh for more than 10 years. (From "The Echoes of the Maggid," p.231, Reb Paysach Krohn) From this story we see the greatness of welcoming guests into our homes. By giving up his bed to the Rav, young Lazer preformed the mitzvah of welcoming a guest. Let us learn from this example and always strive to welcome others into our homes. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda

"Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands." Avos 5:21

To sponsor a drasha: M. Wolfberg 150 Clinton Lane, Spring Valley, New York 10977 (845) 362-3234

THIS PAPER CONTAINS HOLY WRITING AND SHOULD NOT BE DISPOSED OF IN THE GARBAGE