



The Proper Way to Host Guests Parshas Vayera

In the winter of 1975, forty years ago, the high rabbinical council sat to discuss the spiritual future of the youth emigrating from the western countries. My father recommended that they establish for them a special network of Yeshivos.

His suggestion was approved and he was tasked with leading the project. My father enlisted the help of Rabbi Shalom Schwadron, they held long meetings, and it was finally decided that they had to begin fundraising.

They contacted Rabbi Moshe Sherer in the US, and he invited them to come, offering them full support. They decided to make the trip.

On the day of the flight Rabbi Sherer came to meet them himself at the airport, together with a group of rabbis. It turns out that the plane was forced to land on the way, and was delayed for a few hours. The accepting committee went home, and when my father finally arrived there was no one to receive him.

As they were looking around they were approached by a Jew who warmly greeted them. He was Rabbi Avraham Krohn, from Queens. When he heard that rabbis from Israel were coming he brought his entire family to greet them. He had been waiting for over six hours.

My father blessed them, and then Rabbi Krohn immediately invited them to stay with him for the duration of their trip. My father tried to explain that they had already made arrangements, but to no avail; Rabbi Krohn insisted that they stay with him before moving to the hotel they had booked. They had little choice and joined the Krohn family.

The house was beautifully prepared for the guests. As my father and Rabbi Shalom prepared to move on to their next destination Rabbi Krohn told him: why leave, consider my home your hotel.

My father said that most of his business was away from Queens, and that he planned to stay for three months, and therefore they were moving to a hotel. Rabbi Krohn did not relent, and even offered to serve as their driver.

My father and Rabbi Shalom finally gave in and notified Rabbi Sherer that they were going to stay with Rabbi Krohn throughout their entire trip.

We learn about hosting guests in our weekly parsha. "And he (Avraham) lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing beside him, and he saw and he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent, and he

prostrated himself to the ground. And he said, "My lords, if only I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass on from beside your servant."¹

Our Sages learn here that hosting guests is greater than greeting the G-d's presence.²

When we take a closer look at the idea of hosting we seemingly find a contradiction. On one hand we learn: "Rabbi Nathan Bar Abba further said in the name of Rab: He who is dependent on another's table, the world is dark to him... Rav Hisda says: Also his life is no life."³ On the other hand our Sages praised being hosted, as the hosts were honored by guests' presence.⁴

The Magid of Dubnah explains that there are two types of hosting, one in dignity and the other in a non-dignified fashion. When the host does all he can to ensure that his guest has a good time and is comfortable it is positive. When the host is forced upon and does only what he is asked, then "the world is dark to him."

Avraham, we are taught, cherished his guests. "And he ran toward them" – he did not wait for them. This kind of hosting is greater even than greeting G-d's presence.

After a month's stay the guests said that they could not stay anymore, and as they had a few more months left on their trip they would move to a hotel. Rabbi Krohn had tears in his eyes, "did I not respect you enough?" he asked.

My father had an idea – if you allow us to pay you like a hotel we will stay here. Rabbi Krohn agreed. They stayed with him for their entire visit.

When they returned back to Israel they found that Rabbi Krohn had put all the money in their suitcases. Father immediately called Queens to protest. "Did you really think I would take your money? I wanted your minds to be at ease," Rabbi Krohn explained.

His son, Rabbi Pesach Krohn, the famous rabbi, always said: my father's hosting these guests was a great lesson on hosting guests and greeting the presence of G-d.

¹ Beresheit 18: 2-3.

² Talmud tractate Shabbat 127a.

³ Talmud tractate Bezah 32b.

⁴ Tractate Hulim 44b.