



Outstanding Hospitality

Parshas Vayera

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

David Bialka heard the shooting and explosions and did not think twice. He put his head out of the window of the Chabad house in Mumbai and saw people running for cover. He knew that the Chabad house was the target of an attack and that he had to seek some cover. From the fourth floor, he proceeded to climb down using pipes attached to the exterior of the building, he managed to get to the ground floor. The Indian police mistook him for a terrorist and attacked him as soon as he arrived on the ground. He was severely wounded, and only in the hospital did his real identity become known.

While in the hospital he learned he was one of the only survivors from the Chabad house, he and the boy Moshe Holtzberg, whose parents were murdered in the attack.

David could not forget his last conversation with Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, Moshe's father. Rabbi Holtzberg expressed his desire that David would schedule a *Chavrusa*, a study session, with his friend in Israel, "when you come back to Israel please contact Rabbi Nachum Goldshmidt and ask him to study with you."

David thankfully returned home to Israel.

In our weekly parsha we learn of Avraham's outstanding character. The Torah commends his hospitality: "And he (Avraham) planted an *eishel* in Beer-Sheba, and he called there in the name of the Lord, the G-d of the world."¹ Our sages explain: "Avraham set an inn for lodging, creating entrances from all directions to accept all the by passers." In his own unique way Avraham taught the world about G-d.

"And he called there in the name of the Lord, the G-d of the world" – Reish Lakish² teaches us of Avraham's way: "By means of that *eishel*, the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, was called "G-d of the whole world." After they would eat and drink, he (Avraham) would say to them, "Bless the One of Whose food you have eaten. Do you think that you have eaten of my food? You have eaten of the food of the One Who spoke and the world came into being!"

The essence of Avraham's hospitality was an educational method to teach the world about G-d. To teach them he had to create the proper setting, and after satiating themselves they were prepared to hear about the Creator.

My dear nephews, Rabbi Gavriel and Rivkah Holtzberg carried on Avraham's legacy; they established the Chabad house in Mumbai, opening its doors to every Jew. They set an example by their actions and good traits, bestowing upon their guests from their Judaism. Those who left their home left satiated spiritually as well

as physically. Many own their *yideshkeit*; their Judaism, to them – "And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had acquired, **and the souls they had acquired in Haran**, and they went to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan."³ Rashi explains: "whom he had brought under the wings of the *Shechinah*. Avraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women, and Scripture ascribes to them a merit as if they had made them."

The massive funeral procession entered the Chabad plot on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Thousands deeply grieved the loss of this special couple. After all the mourners had left David Bialka still stood there in tears, bewildered by the events he had recently experienced. Had the attack actually happened only a few days ago, and was he the sole survivor? Was his existence now only a dream?

He then remembered Rabbi Gavriel's last request: "I promise you I will study with Rabbi Nachum," he declared before the fresh mound of soil.

Rabbi Nachum was actually standing there, and seeing David, he walked over and introduced himself. Bialka was stunned. "I just made a promise to find you, and G-d set things that I should find you here and now." They talked of David's bitter experience and of Rabbi Gavriel's last request. Rabbi Nachum said: "When I heard your story and learned you were from Netanya I knew I had to meet you, and now that I have found you here, we must start studying together immediately." They found a *Schul* nearby and began to learn.

¹ Beresheit 21:33.

² Tractate Sotah 10a.

³ Beresheit 12:5.