



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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Our *Sedra* opens with *Avraham Avinu*, sitting, recovering from his recent *brit mila*, outside his tent during the heat of the day. *Chazal* explain that *Avraham* is sitting outside his tent, anxious to welcome guests, that despite his discomfort and recovery from his recent “surgical” procedure, he is literally sitting and waiting for an opportunity to welcome visitors into his home.

Of course, the guests that arrive, are none other than the *malachim* that *Hashem* sends his way to cheer *Avraham* up, to enable *Avraham* to do that *maaseh chesed* he is longing to fulfill, as well as ultimately to share with *Avraham* and *Sara* that they will finally be blessed with a child.

As *Avraham Avinu* approaches the *malachim* to welcome them and offer them food and respite we read:

קָרַח־נָא מֵעַט־מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַחַת הָעֵץ׃

Let a bit of water be brought and wash your feet. Rest yourselves under the tree.

The great Chasidic Sage, **Rebbe Chaim of Chernovitz, the Beer Mayim Chaim, zy’a**, who made *aliya* to *Eretz Yisrael* and lived the last few years of his life in *Tzfat*, cites a beautiful *midrash* which states that since *Avraham Avinu*, provides a respite of shade under the branches of a tree for his guests, his descendants, *Am Yisrael*, will merit to sit under the shade of Divine protection, as they fulfill the *mitzvah* of dwelling in the *Sukkah*. The reward for this seemingly random act of *chesed*, is that all generations of the Jewish

People will have the opportunity to dwell in, and be safe-guarded by the shade of *Hashem’s* divine protection, and merit to invite guests, including the *Ushpizin* to visit with us as we dwell in the *Sukkah*.

In a stirring and beautiful teaching, **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Horowitz zy’a**, known as the **Patiker Rav**, points out that there are four eternal lessons to be learned from this story as to how one should perform the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*, the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests into our homes.

The first message- *Avraham* is waiting outside his home, seeking opportunities to be hospitable, rather than waiting for someone to knock on his door or ask to be welcomed. Each one of us must ask ourselves, how can we emulate this *midah*- to literally actively seek opportunities to do *chesed* and to welcome others into our homes.


The second point, *Avraham Avinu* of course had many servants. When these travelers arrive to visit them, it is he and *Sara* themselves who engage in welcoming the guests, in making sure they are comfortable, that they have shade and that they can freshen up. It is *Sara* herself who prepares a meal for these visitors. All this teaches us that *hachnasat orchim* should be done ourselves and not through an emissary.

The third message we can learn is that one should not interrogate our guests, or bombard them with questions to see if indeed they really are in need of our hospitality and assistance. Our *Chazal* point out that

Avraham Avinu intuited through his prophetic capabilities that these guests were *malachim*, that they really were not in need of any physical comforts or sustenance, yet this does not impact or limit *Avraham* in any way in terms of his desire to treat them with kindness and dignity.


Finally, these special guests ultimately reveal to *Avraham and Sara* that they will miraculously be blessed with a child! This, explains the *Patiker Rav*, teaches us the most profound message of all regarding the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim* and any act of *chesed*,- in reality our guests end up giving us much more than they receive!

May we be blessed to heed the *Patiker Rav's* powerful words, and to find fulfillment in a life filled with *chesed* and *hachnasat orchim*. ■




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