Jewish Hospitality



**Introduction**

1. **Pirkei Avos 1:5**

*Let your home be wide open, and let the poor be members of your household.*

1. **Pirkei Avos 1:15**

*Shammai would say: ...greet (receive) each person with a cheerful facial expression.*

1. **Pirkei Avos 3:16**

*Rabbi Ishmael would say: greet (receive) each person with joy.*

1. **Pirkei Avos 1:2**

*The world stands on three things: … (3) and deeds of kindness.*

1. **Talmud Shabbos 127a**

*There are six things for which a person receives dividends [of his reward] in this world, and the principal is intact for him in the world to come - (1) hosting guests...*

1. **Talmud, Sotah 14a**

*Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said, “What is the meaning of the verse, ‘After the Lord your God shall you follow’ (Devarim 13:5)? Is it possible for a person to walk and follow the Shechinah [the Divine Presence]?*

*Rather, this teaches us to emulate God’s attributes – just as He clothes the naked, as it is written: ‘And God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them’ (Bereishit 3:21), so must you clothe the naked.*

*God visits the sick...so must you visit the sick.*

*God comforts mourners...so must you comfort mourners.*

*God buries the dead...so shall you bury the dead.*

**Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers) 4:1**

*...Who is strong? One who overpowers his inclinations. As is stated (Proverbs 16:32), "Better one who is slow to anger than one with might, one who rules his spirit than the captor of a city..."*

**Shelah, Parshat Vayeira, Ner Mitzvah**

*It is clear to me, that besides for its status as a lofty moral attribute, the mitzvah of hospitality constitutes fulfillment of the mitzvah to “walk in His ways” by emulating God.*

*For the Holy One, Blessed be He, extends hospitality to all of His creatures who are guests – in every period and epoch, at every second and every moment of every day. If not for God’s hospitality at every moment, then all of existence would cease to exist.*

*This means that all the inhabitants of the world are like guests of God. A person is like one who has come to lodge in this world for a time. We are visitors here, and God hosts us. Therefore, by acting as a host to others, one is directly emulating God and “walking in His ways.”*

**#1**

Our friend Dave has traveled to the East in search of enlightenment. He has spent many years training in Vipassana meditation from Tibetan masters. Now, by the instruction of his teachers, he will go into the mountains with food and water to begin a five-day solo meditation retreat. His goal is to reach a complete transcendence of the body.

All is going well, until day four, when the silence is rudely interrupted. It is our other friend Josh, who has traveled to the East in search of adventure. But unfortunately his adventure has gotten out of hand – Josh misplaced his Tibetan Mountains map on his five-day solo hike. He’s lost and has almost run out of food and water.

Exhausted and hungry, but ecstatic to bump into another human, Josh shatters Dave’s pristine meditative silence with, “Um, do you have, like, uh, have a Snicker’s bar or something? Like, like, yeah.”

Dave thinks to himself, “A Snicker’s Bar!! Can’t he see I’m meditating?! I’m about to achieve transcendence and he wants a Snicker’s Bar?!”

**Question:**          Is Dave right? Or, maybe Dave should really invite Josh for lunch. On the other hand, maybe Josh shouldn’t be interrupting Dave in the first place.

**#2**

**Explain what is the meaning of the Source A (above)!**

**#3**

**Bereishit (Genesis) 18:1-8**

***God appeared to him*** *[Avraham] in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting* ***at the entrance to the tent*** *in the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and there were three men standing before him. He saw them, and ran to greet them from the entrance to the tent, and bowed toward the ground. He said: “****My Lord, if I have found favor in Your eyes, please do not leave your servant****.”*

*“Take some water and wash your feet, and rest under the tree. I will fetch some bread and you will satiate yourselves, then go on – in as much as you have passed your servant’s way.” They said, “Do so, just as you have said.”*

*So Avraham hurried to the tent, to his wife Sarah, and said, “Hurry! Three measures of fine flour – knead them and make cakes!” Then Avraham ran to the cattle, took* ***a******good, tender calf*** *and gave it* ***to the youth*** *who hurried to prepare it. He took cream and milk, as well as the calf which he had prepared, and he placed these before them. He stood before them, under the tree, and they ate.*

**Commentary of Rashi:**

***“God appeared to him”***:

*to visit the sick. It was the third day from his circumcision, and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and inquired about his welfare.*

***“at the entrance to the tent”:***

*to see whether there were any passersby whom he would bring into his house. The Holy One, blessed be He, took the sun out of its sheath so as not to trouble him with wayfarers, but since He saw that he was troubled that no wayfarers were coming, He brought the angels to him in the likeness of men.*

“***My Lord, if I have found favor in Your eyes, please do not leave your servant***.”

*he was telling the Holy One, blessed be He, to wait for him until he would run and bring in the wayfarers.*

***“a good, tender calf”:***

*There were three calves, in order to feed them three tongues with mustard.*

***“to the youth”:***

*This was Ishmael, to train him to perform commandments (mitzvos).*

**Questions:**

1. Avraham just had a surgery (circumcision) and was still very weak from it. And it was an unusually hot day - people are not travelling in such unbearable heat. And Avraham was 99 years old. **Would all of the above not be a valid reason to abstain from the hospitality? Why was Avraham so stubborn about it?**
2. **Is it not a bit inappropriate to abandon God who is the Creator of the Universe, King of kings in order to serve the idol worshipping arabs (as Avraham thought the angels were)?** God’s Divine Presence appeared to Avraham. According to the Torah the purpose of our lives is to build a deep relationship with God - what can be better than receiving the prophecy?!
3. **Find as many things as you can that we learn from Avraham about hospitality!**

3a. **Anything else you would add to this list of this Etiquette for a good host?**



**#4**

**Bereishis 21:33; Rashi, Sotah 10a**

*Avraham planted an* ***eshel*** *in Be’er Sheva, and he called out there in the name of God, Master of the Universe.*

**Rashi**:

*“Avraham planted an* ***eshel*** *which is a lodge” – for travelers. The term* ***eshel*** *is an acronym for the Hebrew words: eating, drinking, and escorting guests on their way.*

**Question: Why is escorting part of mitzvah of hospitality?**

**#5**

Two types of guests.

**Genesis Rabba 52**

*Good guest: “Look how much this householder has done for me! He has brought me so much meat [i.e., fine, expensive food]! How many cakes he has set before me! And all that he has done, he has done just for my benefit.”*

*The bad guest, receiving the same treatment, says:“What has this householder done for me, after all? I’ve eaten one serving of bread. I’ve eaten one slice of meat. I’ve drunk one cup of beverage. And anyway, the work was all done for the [host] family, anyway.”*

**Question: Is** **there an Etiquette for Houseguests? Examples please!**

**#6 Questions: Sources B and C above.**

1. **What is the difference between source B and C?**
2. **What is the connection to hospitality?**

**#7 Question: What is your takeaway from today's discussion?**