

## Hospitality to Guests:

### **A. The Mitzvah:**

1. Whenever we meet up with someone who is travelling or who needs sleeping and eating accommodations for other reasons, we are obligated to do for him whatever we would wish others to do for us were we in the same position.
2. Some opinions maintain that we fulfill the mitzvah even when we invite friends to our home who are not necessarily in need, as long as we are doing it for their honor.
3. The mitzvah includes: 1) welcoming the guest into our home, 2) providing for him food and drink, 3) arranging sleeping accommodations for him, 4) accompanying him when he departs, and 5) meeting any other needs he has.
4. People in a city can compel each other to bring in guests and contribute to the local *hachnosas orchim* fund.
5. This mitzvah applies to men and women, in all places and at all times.
6. Even a poor or sickly person should perform this mitzvah to the extent that he is able to do so, as long as he first sees to it that his needs and the needs of his family members are adequately met.
7. It is important to train our children in this mitzvah and allow them to actively participate in this mitzvah.

### **B. A Top Priority:**

1. Talmud Shabbos 127a: Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence.
2. Hospitality toward guests is greater than rising early to go to the Beis Medrash.
3. In a case where the guest specifically needs the host, and not anyone else, to serve him, the host may miss Tefillah

Betzibur or interrupt his Torah study in order to care for his guest.

4. We are lenient in certain specific halachos in order to facilitate the proper performance of *hachnosas orchim*. (e.g. not waiting for rain to stop on the first night of Sukkos)

### **C. Making the guest feel at home:**

1. We derive many of the many nuances of the laws of proper hospitality from the hospitality Avraham showed the angels.
2. Following Avraham's lead, we should provide for the needs of our guests - food, drink, a place to wash and rest, etc. - enthusiastically and quickly.
3. The host should always serve with a smile, as if he is wealthy and has plenty to spare, and should apologize that he does not have more to offer them.
4. If they need a place to sleep, he should offer them the most comfortable beds, even if that means displacing his own family members to lesser accommodations.
5. Whenever possible, the host should dine together with the guest.
6. The host should not invite more people to his meal than he has room to seat and food to serve.
7. We should never look at person - especially guest - while he is eating, nor should we look at the portion on his plate, so as not to embarrass him.
8. The host should be extremely careful to maintain a positive demeanour at the table, not to lose his temper or act in a fussy or irritable manner.
9. The host should not display sadness or relate his misfortune, since the guest might surmise that he is actually the cause of the host's unhappiness.

**D. Rich & Poor:**

1. The Mitzvah of hachnosas orchim should be performed even for wealthy guest who can afford to pay for his accommodations - such as rich businessmen who is stuck in a strange town for Shabbos.
2. We are certainly required to provide for the needs of poor guest, where the mitzva of tzedaka is also fulfilled.
3. A host should not be distressed if his guest curses him or offends him, since the merit of the mitzvah far outweighs any harm or pain he may sustain.
4. We should be careful not to invite wicked people into our homes, since they could have a negative effect on the household.
5. The purpose of hachnosas orchim is not to “grab the Mitzvah for ourselves” but rather to provide for the guest in a way that is best for him.
6. If there are others with greater resources, who are willing to host the guest and are more capable of properly honouring him, we should relinquish the mitzvah and allow them to take the opportunity.
7. If no one else is available, then it is certainly preferable to offer the guest our simpler accommodations than to leave him out in the cold.
8. If a guest is in hurry, or insists that he does not want to trouble the host, we should not delay him in our homes.
9. Really, one who has the financial resources should set aside a room in his home, or build special guest room, for the purpose of properly fulfilling this mitzvah.
10. Every community has the responsibility to make sure that accommodations are available for guests.
11. It is especially important to house poor guests at our table on Yom Tov (or to send necessary food, when that is preferable arrangement.)

**12. Rambam Ch. 6, Laws of Yom Tov, 18:** “a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his gut.”

**E. Women’s Hospitality:**

1. A women is obligated in this mitzvah even toward male guests.
2. Women are known to be personally involved in this mitzvah more than men and to excel in providing for the needs of their guests ( Shunamis women offering hospitality to Elisha), however...
3. She should not indulge in light conversation more than is absolutely necessary to make the guest feel welcome, and she should be careful in regard to all the accepted rules of separation between men and women.
4. She should make sure to dress and conduct herself with strict modesty and should always be careful not to be secluded with the guests in violation of the laws of Yichud.

**F. Miscellaneous Laws:**

1. If we know that someone will definitely not take up our invitation, we should not implore him repeatedly to be guest at our table just to flatter him or cause him to feel indebted to us, since this is considered deceit.
2. Nowadays, a person’s table - that is, his hospitality to guests at his table - provides atonement in the place of Korbonos, when we had a Temple.
3. If the guest is a talmud chacham, then our hospitality is tantamount to offering a Korban Tamid.
4. Hosting a needy Yeshiva Bachur also fulfills the mitzvah of Tzedaka and our table is also enhanced with Divrei Torah.

5. **Talmud Sanhedrin 103 - 104:** Great is eating, as it distanced two clans from the Jewish people, as it is stated: “An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord...because they met you not with bread and with water” (Deuteronomy 23:4–5). And Rabbi Yoḥanan himself says: Food distances the near, and draws near the distant [Yisro] , and averts eyes from the wicked [Michah], sparing them from punishment, and causes the Divine Presence to rest on the prophets of the Baal [Navi who tricked Ido]; and an unwitting transgression with regard to it is at times considered an intentional transgression [Dovid & Yonason].
6. One who strengthens themselves in this Mitzvah, merits to have children.

**G. Accompanying Departing Guests:**

1. Accompanying a guest when he departs is even greater than that of inviting him in.
2. If a person is lax about escorting his guests, it is considered as if he has shed blood, as we learn from the story of the *Egla Arufa*.
3. When someone escorts his guests even for the minimum of 8 feet within the city limits, we are assured that the guests will not be harmed the entire day.
4. The main purpose of the accompaniment is to make sure that the guest understands clearly how to proceed toward his destination. Therefore, the host should either walk along with his guest until the guest is confident of the route or should give him clear directions that he can remember and follow, so that he will not run into trouble finding his way.
5. Anyone who offers directions to someone - not just ghost for his guest - fulfills this Mitzvah. ( And seen from the reward given to the man who pointed out with his finger

the entrance to Beis El so that Sheet Yosef could capture it.)

6. We are obligated to post clear sheet signs, and addresses on buildings, to make it easier for people to find their way.
7. We are responsible to provide guest with provisions for the continuation of his journey.
8. Nowadays, many factors relating to this mitzvah do not exist. The custom nowadays is to walk his guest at least 8 feet outside his house.

#### **H. The Guest's Responsibilities:**

1. A guest should not eat meal with people - even if he was invited - who do not have food to spare, as that would be tantamount to stealing the food that the host needs himself.
2. A guest should not show up at the end of a meal, since the host may be ashamed if he does not have any food left over.
3. Generally, a woman guest should not drink any wine or intoxicating beverage, even if her husband is present at the table.
4. It is not proper for one guest to invite another guest into his host's home.
5. A person should never walk suddenly into his friend's home - or even into his own home - without first knocking on the door.
6. it is not befitting the honor of a Talmid Chochom to sit at a meal of ignorant people.
7. Generally, if a guest stayed at one person's home when he came to a certain town, he should remain loyal to his hosts and return there each time he visits the town.
8. When in a host's home, the guest must do whatever his host tells him.

9. If a guest generally conducts himself in a manner of prishus - such as by abstaining from certain permitted pleasures - he should conceal his deeds from his host.
10. If his host instructs him to do something that borders on the prohibited, then he is not obligated to comply.
11. A guest does not have to partake of food or drink that could be harmful to him, even if the host insists.
12. **Talmud Berachos 58a**: A good guest, what does he say? How much effort did the host expend on my behalf, how much meat did the host bring before me. How much wine did he bring before me. How many loaves [geluskaot] did he bring before me. All the effort that he expended, he expended only for me. However, a bad guest, what does he say? What effort did the host expend? I ate only one piece of bread, I ate only one piece of meat and I drank only one cup of wine. All the effort that the home owner expended he only expended on behalf of his wife and children.
13. A good guest appreciates every detail of his host's work.
14. However, he should sing his host's praises aloud only privately, or among fine, decent people.
15. A host should not divulge any secrets or private matters that he saw in the host's home, even if asked about them by others.
16. A guest should express his thanks to his host and should inquire about his well being regularly.
17. If speaking at a gathering at his host's home, a guest should preface his words with praise of his host.
18. If he has an opportunity to help his host, he should do so.
19. The guest can express his appreciation by leaving small gifts for members of the household at the end of his stay.
20. Talmud Brachos 46a: What is the formula of the blessing (during Birchas Hamazon) with which the guest blesses

his host? May it be Your will that the master of the house shall not suffer shame in this world, nor humiliation in the World-to-Come....And may he be very successful with all his possessions, and may his possessions and our possessions be successful and near the city, and may Satan control neither his deeds nor our deeds, and may no thought of sin, iniquity, or transgression stand before him or before us from now and for evermore.