The Weekly Daf

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Week of 3-9 Nisan 5758 / 30 March-5 April 1998

Rav Weinbach’s insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Shabbos 121-127

How Great is Hospitality!

Hospitality to guests is mentioned by our mishnah in one breath with learning Torah as a justification for exerting oneself on Shabbos. This led Rabbi Yochanan to conclude that the mitzvah of hospitality is equivalent in its importance to that of Torah study. Rabbi Dimi of Nehardoa takes this one step further by stating that its importance is even greater, because the mishnah mentions it even before Torah study.

But it is Rabbi Yehuda quoting the Sage Rav who raises the importance of hospitality to its highest level by stating that it is even greater than welcoming the Shechinah (the Divine Presence). He deduces this from Avraham’s request that Hashem, Who came to visit him while he was recovering from his circumcision, allow him to interrupt their encounter. This was in order for Avraham to welcome into his home the three angels disguised as wayfarers (Bereishis 18:3).

Why is hospitality to guests considered so great a mitzvah that it surpasses even an audience with the Shechinah? Man is commanded to perform mitzvos in order to raise his spiritual level and bring him closer to Hashem. Receiving Hashem certainly represents a high level of intimacy with Him, but what could be a greater closeness than actually emulating Hashem? We are all guests in the world which Hashem created; when we welcome a guest, who is dependent on our hospitality, it is a reflection of the way we are dependent on Hashem. We are, as it were, “playing G-d” in a very positive way. This brings us closer to our Divine role model than even receiving the Shechinah.

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