

INVITING GUESTS PART 2

by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen

In the previous article we discussed the greatness of inviting guests. We will now define exactly what this mitzva (commandment) entails:

When a person encounters someone who is traveling and in need of food and/or shelter, it is incumbent upon him to supply the traveler with his needs. This mitzva also applies to people who are poor and do not have enough food or sufficient shelter. Of course, it is a mitzva to host anyone, however, the mitzva is greatest when the guests are more in need.

The main components of this mitzva are offering food and drink to the person and accompanying him out of the house when he leaves and show him the safest way to return to his place of lodging (this is known as *leviya* in Hebrew). This accompanying was more important in the past when it was genuinely dangerous to go out alone in the night. Nowadays, when there is normally good lighting on the streets and people normally know the way home, it is not necessary to accompany them all the way home however one should still accompany them until the exit or a few meters - this gives the guest a sense of importance.

The host should strive to satisfy all the needs of his guest, including a place to wash himself and to rest if necessary.

It is advisable if possible to have a spare room available which is set aside for hosting guests.

Even a poor person should strive to host others if possible, however he must put himself and his family first and foremost.

This mitzva is highly prevalent in Orthodox circles. Many communities have organizations or individuals who take it upon themselves to ensure that visitors have accommodation. People who become more observant are pleasantly surprised by the extent of having guests in observant communities. It is very common that complete strangers will host numerous people to their house, providing them with lavish meals and offering accommodation. This is an excellent illustration of the Torah's approach to interpersonal relationships. The Torah sees the Jewish people as one family, and therefore it is only natural that a Jew will gladly invite any fellow family member to his home.

Text Copyright © 2008 by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen and [Torah.org](https://torah.org)