

LET THEM EAT LEFTOVERS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeira

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 347, Women and the Laws of Tznius.
Good Shabbos!*

Let Them Eat Leftovers!

"Please take a bit of water, wash your feet, rest under the tree, and I will give you a little bread" [Bereishis 18:4]. We would think that the person who epitomized welcoming guests into his home would speak differently. Rather than promising a bit of water and a little bread and offering them rest under the tree, we would have expected that Avraham would invite them directly into his house, promise them a nice meal, and put them up in the finest accommodations.

Rav Nissan Alpert explains that many times we are hesitant to take guests into our house. Our excuse is that we really cannot do them justice. We cannot serve a meal that is appropriate for them. "We are having leftovers tonight." "We cannot serve tuna fish to the guests!" "We cannot give them the accommodations that they deserve." "I would rather not invite guests at all than invite them and not give them the honor that they deserve."

We learn just the opposite from Avraham Avinu. Proper hospitality (Hachnasas Orchim) is to invite the guests when they "show up". Let them eat Rice Krispies -- a bit of water, a little bread -- but invite them in. The lesson that our patriarch is teaching us regarding Hachnasas Orchim is to always be ready to have guests. People do not need sumptuous meals. They do not need meals akin to the meal of Shlomo in his heyday. People are even happy with tuna fish. They do not need more. They do not want more.

Rabbi Alpert said that his father used to say "One should never PREPARE for company; but one should always BE PREPARED for company." The quintessential host tells us to have the company. Even if we cannot provide them with our "knock-out" recipes, have the company, nevertheless.

Avraham's Prayers For Sodom Did Help - They Helped Avraham Himself

When G-d was about to destroy Sodom, He said "Will I hide from Avraham that which I am about to do?" [18:17]. He then told Avraham about the imminent destruction of Sodom. Avraham prayed...50, 40, 30,... Ultimately G-d decided to destroy Sodom anyway.

This narration is hard to understand. G-d knew that he was going to destroy Sodom. G-d knew up front that Sodom did not possess 50 or 40 or even 10 righteous people. So what was He doing? Was He playing games with Avraham? It seems as if He was dangling a little prize called Sodom in front of Avraham, challenging him to save the city. It seems as if He was teasing Avraham, because there was no way that Avraham could win the prize! Avraham grasped for the prize, as it were, but could never catch it! It appears as if G-d was setting Avraham up for disappointment.

The fact is that it is possible that G-d was actually doing a tremendous service to Avraham. This exercise helped Avraham to become the pillar of Chessed [altruistic kindness] that he would ultimately represent. We fail to realize that when we pray for something or for someone, those prayers have an effect on us regardless of whether those prayers are answered or not. How many times have we come together as individuals or as a community and poured out our prayers for somebody? There are unfortunately times when "it did not work" and the effort was seemingly to no avail. We ask ourselves "What did we do?" We did what we could. We fasted. We cried. We gave charity. But it did not help!

This is a tremendous mistake. It did help. Even if it did not help anyone else, at least it helped us! We became better people because we were concerned about somebody else -- a neighbor, a friend, a member of the community. We prayed and we gave our hearts. We did something. We became better.

This is what G-d was telling Avraham. "Pray! I will not destroy Sodom until you pray. Why? I know your prayers will not be effective. I know Sodom is doomed. But that is irrelevant. You, Avraham, will become a different person as a result of those prayers. You will perfect your attribute of Chessed, your attribute of caring and compassion. That is what it is all about."

This is so important when we pray for something or someone. We should never think that the prayers are for naught. We do not know what the prayers accomplished -- even for the person for whom we are praying. Maybe, somehow, they lightened the load. We can only speculate about that. But there is one thing regarding which we can be certain -- we became different people as a result of those prayers.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayeira are provided below:

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