

## פרשת וירא

Do we emulate the Ribbono Shel Olom?

Do we emulate the *Ovos*? Do we emulate Avraham Ovinu Olov HaShalom?

We are often told of an obligation of *mesirus nefesh*, dedicating ourselves to G-d's service and we learn that dedication from its supreme fulfillment by Yitzchak Ovinu at the *Akeida*. That is one example of our emulation of the *Ovos*.

And in this week's Parshas Vayera we learn of the unique *chessed* of Avraham Ovinu and its specific application for *hachnosas orchim*.

It would be most inexact to render הכנסת אורחים as hospitality. Hospitality has a wide-range of connotations, all good, but not necessarily representing the true meaning of *hachnosas orchim*.

When we have our neighbors and friends for a Shabbos meal, that is certainly hospitality. When a friend comes over to your house to study and you serve them cookies and drink that is certainly hospitality. But is that the meaning of *hachnosas orchim*?

Let us see Halachic sources that define this Mitzvah.

One may not perform laborious activities on Shabbos, even if those activities are not one of the thirty-nine Melachos prohibited on Shabbos.

Thus, if one has an area that is stuffed with all sorts of items, that area cannot be cleaned out on Shabbos, even if the items themselves are not *muktzah*. And thus, the inconvenience that may be caused by leaving the 'mess' is viewed as secondary and less important vis a vis the prohibition of intensive work, even when that work is not a *melachah*.

However, the Mishnah in Masseches Shabbos teaches that there is an exception to that rule. We read there (126 b):

מפנין אפילו ארבע וחמש קופות של תבן ושל תבואה מפני האורחים, ומפני בטול בית המדרש,

We may clean away even four or five boxes of straw or grain<sup>1</sup> to make room for guests and to avoid wasting time of those who wish to learn.

What is the reason that such strenuous activity may be undertaken? The Gemara (ibid. 127 a) explains:

מפני האורחין וכו'. אמר רבי יוחנן: גדולה הכנסת אורחין כהשכמת בית המדרש, דקתני מפני האורחין ומפני בטול בית המדרש. ורב דימי מנהרדעא אמר: יותר מהשכמת בית המדרש, דקתני מפני האורחין והדר ומפני בטול בית המדרש.

*For guests etc.* – Rabi Yochanan said, ‘*Hachnosas Orchim* is as important as early attendance in the Beis HaMidrash to learn Torah. We learn this from the fact that the Mishnah writes ‘*hachnosas orchim*’ and ‘avoiding wasting time from learning’ in one joint sentence.

Rav Di’mi of Nehardea said, ‘*hachnosas orchim*’ is greater than ‘avoiding wasting time from learning’ because the Mishnah first says *hachnosas orchim* and only then says ‘avoiding wasting time from learning’.

These statements are very powerful. We know the unmatched importance of Shabbos. As much as we can value the kindness that is expressed by *hachnosas orchim* it would certainly seem strange that one could violate those Rabbinic prohibitions of arduous labor on behalf of guests.

And since we know the unmatched importance of *Talmud Torah*, equating *hachnosas orchim* with the Mitzvah of learning is a very impactful statement. And therefore Rav Dimi, who says that the importance of *hachnosas orchim* is superior to *Talmud Torah*, surprises us with the weight that he gives to *hachnosas orchim*.

Therefore the *sugya* there continues the discussion and presents us with a hierarchy of Torah values. We continue to read:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה, דכתיב ויאמר א...דני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר וגו'. אמר רבי אלעזר: בא וראה, שלא כמדת הקדוש ברוך הוא מדת בשר ודם: מדת בשר ודם - אין קטן יכול לומר לגדול המתן עד שאבא אצלך, ואילו בהקדוש ברוך הוא כתיב ויאמר א...דני אם נא מצאתי וגו'.

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<sup>1</sup> If the straw and grain were *muktzah*, this would be forbidden.

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: *Hachnosas Orchim* is greater than 'Receiving and greeting the Shechinah as it is written, 'Avraham said, 'G-d, if I have found favor in Your eyes please do not pass me by'.

Rabi Elazar said, 'Come and see, G-d's attributes are not like those who are flesh and blood. The attribute of flesh and blood is that one who is of lesser status cannot say to the one who is of greater status "Wait for me until I will come to you". But in regard to HaKodosh Boruch Hu, it is written, 'He said, G-d if I found favor, etc.'

What do the P'sukim under discussion say and what is their interpretation? We read at the beginning of our Parshas Vayera (B'reishis Perek 18/P'sukim 1-4):

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֵי מִמְרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח הָאֹהֶל כְּחַם הַיּוֹם: וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרֶץ לְקִרְאתָם מִפְּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲ...דָנִי אִם נָא מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵל נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: יִקַּח נָא מֵעֵט מִיָּמַי וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֲנוּ תַחַת הָעֵץ:

Hashem appeared to Avraham in *Eilonei Mamrei* and Avraham was sitting at the opening of his tent at the heat of the day. He raised his eyes and he saw and behold three men were standing by him and he ran to greet them from the opening of his tent and he bowed to the ground. Avraham said, 'My masters, if I have please found favor in your eyes do not pass by from your servant. A bit of water will be taken and you will wash your feet and lean under the tree.

Let us learn some Rashi:

וירא אליו - לבקר את החולה. אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא יום שלישי למילתו היה ובא הקדוש ברוך הוא ושאל בשלום:

*Hashem appeared to him* – Hashem came to visit the sick. Rabi Chamoh bar Chanina said, It was the third day from his Bris Milah and Hashem came to wish him well.

פתח האהל - לראות אם יש עובר ושב ויכניסם בביתו:

*At the opening of the tent* – to see if there were passerbys so he could bring them into his tent.

כחום היום - הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא חמה מנרתיקה שלא להטריחו באורחים, ולפי שראהו מצטער שלא היו אורחים באים, הביא המלאכים עליו בדמות אנשים:

*At the heat of the day* – Hashem took the sun out of its sheath [to make the world extremely hot] so that guests would not bother Avraham. When Hashem saw that Avraham was troubled because there were no guests, He brought the angels in the form of people.

In the following Rashi we read a resolution for the inconsistency of the language. Avraham addresses all three in the plural, 'my masters', but his request, that they should enjoy his hospitality, is said in the singular.

ויאמר א...דני אם נא וגו' - לגדול שבהם אמר, וקראם כולם אדונים ולגדול אמר אל נא תעבור, וכיון שלא יעבור הוא, יעמדו חבריו עמו

*He said, 'My masters, if please etc.* – Avraham spoke to the senior person of the three. He called them all 'masters' and to the senior one he said, 'please do not pass by' because if he would not pass by, his colleagues would stay with him.

If we were learning this section for the very first time we would express surprise that the word in the Torah for 'Masters' is written here broken up, with dots interrupting the flow of the whole word. Why can't the word be written in its entirety without the dots? The continuation of that Rashi explains:

ובלשון זה הוא חול. דבר אחר קודש הוא, והיה אומר להקדוש ברוך הוא להמתין לו עד שירוץ ויכניס את האורחים.

In this expression, when the word 'Masters' refers to the angels, it has no *kodesh* connotation.

Another explanation – the word 'Masters' is holy<sup>2</sup> and it refers to G-d.

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<sup>2</sup> Only the four-letter Name of G-d written with a *yud* and a *heh* and a *vov* and a *heh* is not subject to any alternate interpretation. That is Hashem's 'personal name'. However, as is well known, His Names of *E...lokim* and *E...I* are not exclusively divine and can be used to refer to others – sometimes people who are, or perceived as such, to be powerful as well as to false gods to whom people attribute power and might.

[And this is how to understand the verse]: Avraham said to Hashem that He should wait for him until Avraham would run and bring in the guests<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, this alternate interpretation of the word 'Masters'<sup>4</sup> serves as the source for the extraordinary statement that greeting people takes precedent over learning Torah if those two values are in conflict.

*Hachnosas Orchim* is part and parcel of the inclusive Mitzvah of *Gemilus Chassadim*, treating people with kindness.

The Mitzvah of *Gemilus Chassadim* is discussed in the first Mishnah of Masseches Peah that is appended to our daily *Birchos HaTorah*. It reads:

אלו דברים שאין להם שיעור...וגמילות חסדים.

אלו דברים שאדם אוכל מפירותיהם בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לעולם...וגמילות חסדים...ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולן:

<sup>5</sup>These are the things that any amount is their fulfillment and there is no limit to their fulfillment:...*Gemilus Chassadim*.

These are the things that a person benefits from their reward in this world and the reward itself remains for the next world: *Gemilus Chassadim* and the study of Torah is equivalent to them all.

In Masseches Bava Metzia (30 b), Chazal interpreted the Posuk in Parshas Yisro (Sh'mos Perek 18/Posuk 20) wherein Yisro presents his suggestion regarding the functioning of courts and judges that will be under the jurisdiction of Moshe Rabbenu. We read:

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<sup>3</sup> In the continuation of that Rashi we read:

ואף על פי שכתוב אחר וירץ לקראתם, האמירה קודם לכן היתה, ודרך המקראות לדבר כן,

Even though this request from G-d to wait for him is written only after the Torah already wrote that Avraham ran to the guests, in fact the statement to G-d was mentioned first. And that is a normal presentation in Tanach.

<sup>4</sup> Because of its dual meaning, we will write 'Masters' in English as the equivalent of אדני... rather than write the Hebrew with the dots breaking that word which may or may not be *kodesh*.

<sup>5</sup> According to many opinions, this section is a *Braisa* and not a Mishnah.

והזהרתה אתהם את החקים ואת התורות והודעת להם את הדרך ילכו בה ואת המעשה אשר יעשו:

And you will warn them regarding the statutes and the laws and you will inform them of the path in which they should go and the actions that they should do.

The Gemara there writes:

תני רב יוסף...את הדרך - זו גמילות חסדים, ילכו - זה ביקור חולים, בה - זו קבורה...

Rav Yosef taught: *the path* refers to *Gemilus Chassadim*; *they will go* refers to visiting the sick; *in which* refers to burying the dead<sup>6</sup>.

And we read in Masseches Sotah (14 a) a section that provides us with more details regarding the uniqueness of *hachnosas orchim*.

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: (דברים יג/ה<sup>7</sup>) אחרי ה' א...ל'קים תלכו? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: (שם ד/כד<sup>8</sup>) כי ה' א...ל'קירך אש אוכלה הוא! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, מה הוא מלביש ערומים, דכתיב: (בראשית ג/כא) ויעש ה' א...ל'קים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם, אף אתה הלבש ערומים; הקדוש ברוך הוא ביקר חולים, דכתיב: וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, אף אתה בקר חולים; הקדוש ברוך הוא נחם אבלים, דכתיב: (שם כה/יא<sup>9</sup>) ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך א...ל'קים את יצחק בנו, אף אתה נחם אבלים;

<sup>6</sup> The Gemara there questions the separate mentioning of visiting the sick and burying the dead since they are part and parcel of *gemilus chassadim*.

<sup>7</sup> The entire verse reads:

אחרי ה' א...ל'קים תלכו ואתו תיראו ואת מצותיו תשמרו ויקלו תשמעו ואתו תעבדו ובו תדבקון:  
After Hashem your G-d you should go and Him you should fear and His Mitzvos you shall observe and to His voice you should listen and Him you should serve and to Him you should cleave.

<sup>8</sup> The entire verse reads:

כי ה' א...ל'קירך אש אוכלה הוא א...ל קנא הוא:  
Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire; He is a jealous G-d.

<sup>9</sup> The entire verse reads:

ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך א...ל'קים את יצחק בנו וישב יצחק עם באר לחי ראי:  
It was after the death of Avraham and Hashem blessed his son Yitzchak; Yitzchak dwelled in *B'er LaChai Ro'I*.

הקדוש ברוך הוא קבר מתים, דכתיב: (דברים לד/ו<sup>10</sup>) ויקבר אותו בגיא, אף אתה קבור מתים.

Rabi Chamo ben Rabi Chanina said, 'What does this verse mean- "you should go after Hashem your G-d"? Is it possible for a person who go after the Shechinah? Is it not written, "Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire"? But, this means to follow the attributes of HaKodosh Boruch Hu. Hashem dresses the unclothed as it is written, "Hashem E...lokim made cloaks of skin for Odom and his wife and He dressed them. You, too, should dress the unclothed. HaKodosh Boruch Hu visits the sick as it is written, "Hashem appeared to Avraham at Eilonei Mamre". You, too, should visit the sick. HaKodosh Boruch Hu comforts mourners as it is written, "It was after the death of Avraham and G-d blessed his son Yitzchak." You, too, should comfort the mourners. HaKodosh Boruch Hu buried the dead as it is written, "Hashem buried Moshe in the valley". You, too, should bury the dead.

Rambam codifies these values of Gemilus Chassodim in Hilchos Eivel (Perek 14/Halachah 2):

שכר הלוייה מרובה מן הכל, והוא החק שחקקו אברהם אבינו ודרך החסד שנהג בה, מאכיל עוברי דרכים ומשקה אותן ומלוא אותן, וגדולה הכנסת אורחים מהקבלת פני שכינה, שנאמר וירא והנה שלשה אנשים, ולוויים יותר מהכנסתן, אמרו חכמים כל שאינו מלוא כאילו שופך דמים.

The reward for escorting the dead to their burial is more than all else. It is the law that Avraham Ovinu instituted and the way of life of kindness that he led. He fed the travelers and gave them drink and escorted them. *Hachnosas Orchim* is greater than greeting the Shechina as it says, 'He saw and there were three men'. Escorting guests at their departure is greater than the hospitality itself. Our Chachomim said, 'One who does not escort a departing guest [to assure their safety as they begin their travel] is as if he spills their blood.

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<sup>10</sup> The entire verse reads:

ויקבר אותו בגי בארץ מואב מול בית פעור ולא ידע איש את קברתו עד היום הזה:  
He buried him in the Land of Moav in the valley, opposite Beis Peor; no person knew his burial place until this day.

What defines *Hachnosas Orchim*? Shulchan Aruch HaRav writes (in a specific context which is not relevant for our subject) regarding a particular relaxation of a Halachah under extenuating circumstances (Orach Chaim Siman 510/s'if 20):

אף על פי שהאורחים הן מאותה העיר שאין כאן מצות הכנסת אורחים

Even though the guests are from the same city and there is no Mitzvah of *hachnosas orchim*.

*Hachnosas Orchim* is not 'having company over'. *Hachnosas Orchim*, with its unique status establishes it to being equivalent to or even overriding greeting the Shechinah, exists only when the guest's needs would not be met without one's hospitality.

In his commentary (Derech Emunah) to Rambam's Hilchos Maasros (Perek 12/Halachah 3 in his *Biur Halachah*), Maran Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita writes regarding a comment that there are special relaxations in a specific category of Maasros for guests who 'are from outside the city'.

We read:

... דלא התירו אלא באורחים שלא מאותה העיר... ולעניינת דעתי נראה דלאו מילתא דפסיקא הוא דהטעם שהתירו הוא משום מצות הכנסת אורחים ואטו בבן עיר לא משכחת לה שיש מצות הכנסת אורחים כגון שנאבד לו מפתח ביתו ואין לו עתה היכן לאכול (ואף על פי שאינו עני...) וגם בבן עיר אחרת משכחת לה שיש לו כאן בית מלון טוב שכבר נותנין לו שם כל צרכיו ובזה לא יתירו כשירצה להתאכסן אצל חברו שאין בזה מצות הכנסת אורחים כיון שאין זקוק לזה כלל...

That which was said that [this allowance] applies only to guests from outside the city – in my humble opinion that [distinction] is not clear-cut.

Do we not find that one from the same city would not need the hospitality of *hachnosas orchim* if, for example, the keys to his house were lost and he has nowhere and nothing to eat (and even if he is not a poor person [at this moment he is considered as being 'poor']).

And not always does someone from out of the city need the allowance that is given to guests who are recipients of *hachnosas orchim*. If they are in a fine hotel where they take care of all of their needs – they do not meet the qualifications of the allowance of guests who are recipients of *hachnosas*



*orchim*. Similarly, someone who is a guest by a friend [for a meal] there is no allowance of *hachosas orchim* since they don't need the food that their host is providing.

These sources are clear. The hospitality of *hachnosas orchim* that Chazal praised effusively refers to meeting the needs of someone who has no other way of having those needs met. The uniquely praiseworthy act of *hachnosas orchim* is found when the hospitality that is offered is indispensable for the guest.

With all this being said, we still need to explore two very basic questions.

The first question is to seek a philosophical understanding of the unique place that *hachnosas orchim* occupies.

On the face of it, does it not seem preposterous to ask G-d to wait so that wanderers who are suspected of being idolaters<sup>11</sup> can be fed?

A second question that we wish to pose is in reference to the word 'Masters' that has two very opposite meanings: the travelers or the Ribbono Shel Olom.

Certainly there is no error regarding the Torah's writing a term that has a double entendre. The term was chosen deliberately and we want to understand why the Torah would present us with such a question<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Rashi writes to a Posuk in our Parsha that was brought earlier:

ורחצו רגליכם - כסבור שהם ערביים שמשתחיים לאבק רגליהם והקפיד שלא להכניס עבודה זרה לביתו.

*Wash your feet* – Avraham thought that they were Arabs who worshiped the dirt on their feet and he was careful and precise not to allow them to bring idolatry into his home.

<sup>12</sup> Although we will not discuss the entirety of Halachic implications regarding these two dissimilar explanations, we can note two ramifications that easily come to mind.

When a *Ba'al Kriah* errs in the Torah reading, he must correct his incorrect reading. If he errs in a verse containing *Shem Hashem*, after having read after the Name, he must start that Posuk again and read the whole verse a second time. He is not allowed to return and read only a segment of a verse that contains G-d's Name. His Name may be pronounced only in the context of a complete Posuk. Thus, whether or not 'Masters' is G-d's Name is influential.

In order to deal with these questions let us learn a Midrash in B'reishis Rabba (Parshata 68/9).

The Midrash wishes to interpret the verse in Parshas Vayetze that teaches us regarding the vision of the ladder that Yaakov had on his way to Choron. That section begins with the Posuk (B'reishis Perek 28/Posuk 11) that reads:

וַיִּפְּגַע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׂם מֵרָאשֵׁיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא:

And he happened to the place and he slept there because the sun set and he took from the stones of the place and placed them from his head and he laid in that place.

Rashi teaches that 'the place' was Mt. Moriah, the location where *Akeidas Yitzchak* occurred and the site where the Beis HaMikdosh would be eventually built.

However, it appears that this Midrash is seeking an explanation of a different sort than that which Rashi presents. The reason for seeking a different explanation is the interpretation that Chazal gave to this verse.

We read in Masseches B'rachos (26 b):

יעקב תקן תפלת ערבית - שנאמר ויפגע במקום וילן שם, ואין פגיעה אלא תפלה, שנאמר (ירמיהו ז/טז<sup>13</sup>) ואתה אל תתפלל בעד העם הזה ואל תשא בעדם רנה ותפלה ואל תפגע בי.

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A far more serious issue is if the Sofer writing a Sefer Torah errs in writing one of G-d's Names that are holy. Those Names of G-d's Names are called:

שמות שאינם נמחקים

Holy Names that cannot be erased.

What happens where there is such an error in writing one of those Names? Often the entire parchment, which is usually three columns has to be removed and replaced in its entirety! A unique and onerous task.

If the word 'Masters' is G-d's Name and there is an error in its writing – the entire *klaf* is removed. If 'Masters' is not a Name of G-d, but a form of addressing other people, an error can be corrected on the spot, even, if necessary, by erasing the entire word.

<sup>13</sup> The entire verse reads:

Yaakov established the evening Amida as it says, 'He happened to the place and he slept there'. The term **ויפגע** implies prayer as it says, 'And you should not pray for this people; do not raise up for them song and prayer; and do not **תפגע** at Me.

Chazal understood that the term **תפגע** in this verse is parallel to the terms for prayer used in it and therefore apply that translation to our verse and render **ויפגע** in Parshas Vayetze as prayer.

Now when I translate that verse as Yaakov *prayed* at the place – that refers to what would be the site of the Beis HaMikdosh. And Rashi discusses that at length in Parshas Vayetze.

However, the Midrash wishes to suggest another possibility, once that I establish that **ויפגע** means prayer.

We read there:

ויפגע במקום, רב הונא בשם רבי אמר מפני מה מכנין שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא וקוראין אותו מקום שהוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו, מן מה דכתיב (שמות לג/כא<sup>14</sup>) הנה מקום אתי, הוי הקדוש ברוך הוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו, אמר רבי יצחק כתיב (דברים לג/כז<sup>15</sup>) מעונה א...ל'קי קדם אין אנו יודעים אם הקדוש ברוך הוא מעונו של עולמו ואם עולמו מעונו מן מה דכתיב (תהלים צ/א<sup>16</sup>) ה' מעון

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וְאַתָּה אֵל תִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּעַד הָעַם הַזֶּה וְאַל תִּשָּׂא בְעַדָּם רִנָּה וּתְפִלָּה וְאַל תִּפְגַּע בִּי כִּי אֵינְנִי שֹׁמֵעַ אֹתָךְ:  
And you, do not pray for this people and do not raise song and prayer for them; do not pray to Me because I will not listen to you.

<sup>14</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֵתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל הַצּוּר:  
Hashem said, 'Behold there is a place with Me and you will stand on the rock'.

<sup>15</sup> The entire verse reads:

מְעֹנָה אָ...ל'קי קדם ומתחת זרעת עולם ויגרש מפניך אויב ויאמר השם:  
The abode of the ancient G-d and from beneath He grasps the world; he banished from before you the enemy; He said, 'Destroy!'

<sup>16</sup> The entire verse reads:

תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֵל...ל'קים א...ד...נִי מְעוֹן אֶתָּה הָיִיתָ לָנוּ בְּדֹר וָדֹר:  
A prayer of Moshe, the man of G-d: My Master, You were an abode for us from generation to generation.

אתה, הוי הקדוש ברוך הוא מעונו של עולמו ואין עולמו מעונו, אמר רבי אבא בר יודן לגבור שהוא רוכב על הסוס וכליו משופעים אילך ואילך הסוס טפילה לרוכב ואין הרוכב טפילה לסוס שנאמר (חבקוק ג/17) כי תרכב על סוסך,

*He happened/prayed at the place* – Rav Huna said in the name of Rabi Ami, ‘Why do we call the Name of G-d by the term *Makom* – place? It is because He is the place of the world and the world is not His place.

This is learned from the verse, “behold there is a place with Me.” – from there we learn Hashem is the place of the world and the world is not His place. Rabi Yitzchak said, ‘It is written ‘the home of G-d of ancient times.’ From this verse we cannot derive if Hashem is the abode of the world or if place His Abode. But from the verse, ‘Hashem you are our place’ we can derive that He is the home of the world.

Rabi Abba bar Yudin says, ‘this is a parable to a wealthy person that would ride on a steed and his clothing was on all sides of the horse – the steed is of secondary to the rider but the rider is not secondary to the rider<sup>18</sup> as it says, ‘When you ride on your horse.’

The Midrash is teaching us to understand the verse in Parshas Vayetze as meaning, Yaakov prayed to G-d. Yaakov prayed to the Omnipresent. Yaakov Ovinu *davened* to the G-d Who is everywhere and thus can take care of Yaakov’s needs wherever Yaakov will be found.

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<sup>17</sup> The entire verse reads:

הַבְּנֵהָרִים חָרָה ה' אִם בְּנֵהָרִים אַפָּךְ אִם בַּיָּם עֲבַרְתָּךְ כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתֶּיךָ יְשׁוּעָה:  
Was it against the rivers that Hashem was angry? Is Your anger at the rivers?; is Your anger at the sea? When You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are a salvation.

<sup>18</sup> That is, although the objective fact is that the horse is carrying the rider and all of his belongings and thus it can be argued that the horse is more important than the rider and the belongings, such an argument is false.

The purpose of the horse is to serve the rider and the belongings. The rider does not ride on the horse to give the horse its purpose in life. The horse’s purpose is fulfilled when the rider decides to use it for his own personal benefit.

And what a fitting way it was for Yaakov Ovinu to term the Ribbono Shel Olom as *Makom* when he was fleeing from the place of his father and going to a place of threat and danger.

And thus, the Midrash teaches, *Makom* can refer Hashem –not only because He is everywhere – but also, and more significantly, because He contains the entirety of Creation and not vice-versa.

We are contained in a place – He Yisborach is not.

And, the Midrash continues, not only is Hashem our place our מקום, Hashem is our home, מעון.

The significance of that statement that He is not only our place but our home is that He cares for us. Not only does He give us existence, as indicated by the term *makom*, but He provides us as well with a home and all that goes with having a home. That is, Hashem takes care of our needs!

If we take this a step further and apply it to our subject of *hachnosas orchim* we can understand that Hashem provides us with a place; He provides us with a home.

If Hashem would not provide us with a place, if He would not provide us with a home, we would not exist.

That is what Rambam writes in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah (Perek 1/Halachah 2):

ואם יעלה על הדעת שהוא אינו מצוי אין דבר אחר יכול להמצאות.

If one could conceive of the idea that He does not exist, nothing else could exist.

Think about the implications of these last paragraphs and translate them into the subject of our Parsha:

Hashem provides us with *hachnosas orchim*!

We are totally dependent on Him for shelter and food. Without Him we would have nothing. Is that not the point that Shulchan Aruch HaRav and Rav Chaim Kanievsky make?

If so, we can understand the profound statement that says that *hachnosas orchim* is greater than greeting the Shechinah.

When we greet the Shechinah, when we welcome the Shechinah into our homes, we are not doing the Shechinah any favor whatsoever.

In fact we may cause sorrow to the Shechinah because of our lack of holiness. We are attempting to be hosts and we are often truly inept.

However, when we provide true *hachnosas orchim* for guests who are significantly dependent upon us, then we are doing G-d's Will.

We are doing G-d's Will because so He commands and we are doing G-d's Will because we are emulating Him.

Avraham Ovinu was well aware that he was a guest, his existence and his life were hosted by the Ribbono Shel Olom. He emulate G-d's attribute and sought to provide comfort and shelter for those who had no other means of caring for themselves. And thus, primary in the life of Avraham Ovinu was to display *kavod* for HaKodosh Boruch Hu which was realized by providing public awareness of all that G-d does for us.

*Kabbolas P'nei HaShechinah* is not how we display our *kavod* for HaKodosh Boruch Hu. We display our Kavod for HaKodosh Boruch Hu by learning from His 'behavior' and copying it a way that is appropriate for us and activating that behavior.

And it is for that very same reason that the Torah chose to use the term *אֲנִי...וְ...אֲנִי* for both the guest and for the Ribbono Shel Olom.

The reason is that just like Hashem provides us with a place and a home and He makes us masters over Creation, so we are to make those who are dependent upon us for place and home to become our masters vis a vis the hospitality they need and that we wish to provide them.

Let us allow the Netziv (B'midbar Perek 15/Posuk 39 d.h. *u'zchartem*) to provide us with a Torah summary of our subject. Netziv cautions us against misunderstanding the Gemara that pivots *Hachnosas Orchim* against Greeting and Receiving the Shechinah.

Let us read is a segment of his mini-essay.

(במדבר פרק טו/יט<sup>19</sup>) וזכרתם את כל מצות וגו' ולא תתורו וגו'- וכבר אמרו חז"ל במסכת שבת [קכז א] גדולה הכנסת אורחים יותר מהקבלת פני שכינה שכן מצינו באברהם אבינו שאמר להקדוש ברוך הוא אל נא תעבור וגו', ולא כווננו חז"ל שהמכניס אורח גדול במעלה ממי שזכה להקבלת פני שכינה, שזה אינו מוכח מזה המקרא כלל, אלא גדול לפני ה' לעשות זה המצוה של הכנסת אורחים יותר מהקבלת פני שכינה, ומי שהגיע לאהבת ה' והקבלת פני שכינה והגיע לפניו מצוה של הכנסת אורחים, עליו להפסיק דביקותו ולהזדקק למצוה שבאה לידי, כמו שעשה אברהם אבינו...

Chazal have already said in Masseches Shabbos that *hachnosas orchim* is greater than greeting and receiving the Shechinah. So we found with Avraham who said to Hashem, 'please do not pass'.

Chazal's intention in their words is not to say that a person who has a 'regular' guest in their home is of greater status than one who greets the Shechinah<sup>20</sup>. That is not clear from this verse at all.

But the intent of this *drasha* is that one who performs *hachnosas orchim* is greater in G-d's eyes than one who greets the Shechinah.

Therefore, one who has reached the level of loving G-d and greeting Him and receiving the Shechinah and is now presented with the opportunity for the Mitzvah of *hachnosas orchim* – he must stop his cleaving to G-d and to take responsibility that comes to his hand.

So did Avraham Ovinu.

If we wish to be significant in G-d's eyes, to enjoy His palpable Providence and to serve Him with dedication, we must first learn how the Ribbono Shel Olom serves us.

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<sup>19</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְהָיָה לָכֵם לְצִיצֵת וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה' וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא תִתְּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲתֶם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם:

The *tzitzis* shall be for you and you will see them and you will remember all of the Mitzvos of Hashem and you will do them; you may not stray after your heart and after your eyes that you turn after them.

<sup>20</sup> Certainly one whom the Shechinah visits is on a uniquely high *madreiga* and such is not necessarily true of those who are hosts fellow human beings.

When we appreciate G-d's service to us, we will discover how we can transfer the wonderful message of His dedication to us by ameliorating the distress of others, following in His footsteps and clinging to righteous ones.

When we emulate great people we are learning from them how they emulated the Ribbono Shel Olom.

When we seek to find favor in G-d's eyes we will do well to internalize the principle that is espoused here: G-d tells us what finds favor in His eyes.

Let us learn the Word of G-d Who commands us to care for others and bring *nachas ruach* to Him and to all of Creation.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock