

## Teachings of the Maharal

### The Virtues of Inviting Guests

**Netiv Gemilut Chasadim 4:148** - The Torah relates that Avraham planted a terebinth in Beersheva, on which the Gemara says Rabbi Nechemia and Rabbi Yehuda disagreed - one said it was an orchard and one said it was an inn [Sota 10a]. Orchard is fitting as it is planted with all sorts of fruit trees. But what does "planting" have to do with inn? It is written, "He will yita [pitch, plant] the tents of his palace and he called in the name of Hashem, God of the world" [Daniyel 11:45]. Resh Lakish comments that Avraham had his visitors call out Hashem's name. How? After they ate and drank, they stood to thank him. He said to them, "Did you eat food that belonged to me? You ate the food of the God of the world. Thank him and bless the One who spoke and the world was created." Avraham, paragon of lovingkindness, pitched his tent, his inn, to bring Hashem to the people of the world. The dispute, inn vs. orchard, is about the delicacies from the orchard offered to the visitors. He planted an orchard to prepare the most pleasurable experience for the visitors. The one who said terebinth is inn emphasized the primacy of the kindness in inviting visitors, caring for their basic needs. The inn represents what the visitors needed, not the attractive delicacies.

Rabbi Yochanan said that [offering a] swallow, a drink of liquid [legima]

is great, for having not done it resulted in distancing two families from Israel [Amon and Moav], for they did not proceed to offer you bread and water [Bamidbar 23:5]. This same legima [offering a lechayim] results in friendship and bringing close someone distant [Masechet Rei'im] [Sanhedrin 103b]. Because Yitro fed Moshe bread [Sh'mot 2:21], Yitro's descendants merited serving in the Sanhedrin, as it is written, "The children of Keni the father-in-law of Moshe rose up from the city of palm trees [Shoftim 1:16]. Rav Yehuda said in Rav's name that had Yehonatan lent David two loaves of bread, Nov the city of kohanim would not have been killed, Do'eg would not have been troubled, and Shaul and his three sons would not have been killed [Shmuel Bet 20-23]. If one gives food and drink to one in need, as Yitro did for Moshe, this is a very great thing. If a man provides from his bread for another he is doing a similar act to what Hashem does for us all, as it is written, "He gives bread for all flesh, for His kindness endures forever" [T'hilim 136:25].

*Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr*