

Perfect Hospitality

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Before his daughter Sarah's wedding, Rebbe Nachman devoted time to teaching her concepts that he hoped would help her throughout her life. He spent much time explaining the greatness of the mitzvah of opening her home to guests. Rebbe Nachman wanted his daughter to have special enthusiasm and love for this mitzvah in particular, knowing full well the spiritual rectifications that take place throughout the worlds when proper care is taken of the guests that God sends us.

After all of her father's impassioned teaching, Sarah grasped the importance of the mitzvah, but now had a new question. Since the mitzvah is so great—it's considered even greater than receiving the Divine Presence—how would it be possible for her to ever carry it out properly, in the best way? It seemed too much for someone like her to be able to perform the mitzvah as it really should be done.

So she brought her question to her father, and Rebbe Nachman answered with classic simplicity, "A guest? It's the simplest thing in the world—another slice of bread, and another space at the table!"

The loftiness of the mitzvah shouldn't make us think that it's beyond us our capacity to fulfill. There's no contradiction between a mitzvah being profound, and at the same time profoundly simple to carry out with good intentions. True, one could exert oneself endlessly to carry out this mitzvah, but if we make it into something grandiose, we'll never do it at all!

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Once Rebbe Nachman visited Sarah after her marriage and found her in a terrible mood. The serving girl who helped her at home had fallen short in her duties and she was frustrated that the girl would not follow her instructions.

Rebbe Nachman said, "You should have prayed for this under your chuppah too, on your wedding day, that your household help won't get you upset!"

He meant to teach her that the wedding day itself has great power. It's possible to accomplish everything on that day through prayer. The potential of the day should be exploited to the greatest extent. Nothing is too small to pray about on a day when all the Heavenly gates are open!

Based on Or HaArot I, pp. 205-206