

תשפ"ד · Bnos 5784

Parshas

Vayeira

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה העומדים בין בים ובין ביבשה המקום ירחם עליהם ויציאם מצרה לרוחה ומאפלה לאורה ומשעבוד לגאלה השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן:



Story

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

In less than an hour the sun would set over Boston, and with the appearance of the first stars of the night of Shemini Atzeres 1946, the Succos holiday would fade into cherished memory. A row of old houses stood silhouetted against the darkening sky, looking solemn and vaguely sinister. But in one house the bleak exterior belied the unmistakable warmth of the lights that burned within its windows. It was the home of the Bostoner Rebbe. While the Rebbe himself, in the succah, was savoring the departing mitzvos of the holiday, the Rebbetzin was in the kitchen putting the final touches to the Yom Tov meal. Her preparations were always something of a mathematical feat: no matter how many guests were expected, she invariably seemed to produce three times the quantity required. And somehow nothing ever went to waste. The Rebbe's house was a veritable magnet for guests – those who were invited and those who invited themselves. Some were travelers unable to catch a connecting train or plane; others were strangers who had come to the area for medical treatment at one of Boston's renowned hospitals. And still others simply wanted to participate in a chassidic experience in the heart of New England. How did they all find their way to the home of the Rebbe? Most had simply heard about him from others who had enjoyed his hospitality. The Bostoner Rebbe's reputation as a host extended nearly as far as his reputation as a charismatic leader. Meanwhile, in the harbor at the other end of Boston, preparations of a different sort were being made. The longshoremen on the wharf were securing the thick ropes, as the sun dipped into the horizon. It was 4:05 in the afternoon, and the Thomas Edison was about to dock at Pier 34. Huddled aboard the overcrowded vessel were over 400 passengers from all over Europe. Of them, sixty-two were Jews, all survivors of the Nazi inferno. The rest were prospective immigrants who would first have to undergo medical examinations before an immigration official would determine their fate. For the Jews, the United States would at last provide a haven from the murderous horrors they had endured in Europe. Alas, their relatives and friends would not share their new home. It was too late. And so, together with the haunting memories that were their constant companions, they joined the other passengers passing through the Reception Center, up the central stairs to the Great Hall. They had made it this far, and now they were actually on American soil. But were they really home yet? During the voyage they'd heard disheartening stories of people who had been turned back because of sickness. Heaven knew, none of them were strong. And after all they had endured, it seemed inconceivable that they would soon be granted the precious gift of a secure existence. They stood waiting, nervous and confused, in the vast hall. It was an exceptionally busy day, for three other boats – from Liverpool, Greece and Naples – had arrived earlier that morning. The Jews were separated from the others and directed to a side room where they would be checked and deloused. The very idea of such "selections" touched a raw nerve, awakening still-vivid memories of the painfully recent past in the unspeakable camps. Jewish immigrants who arrived in New England invariably traveled directly on to New York by train. Rarely if ever, was there an acquaintance in New England to encourage them to stay. And while many who arrived on Fridays made the mistake of continuing their journey, not realizing that New York was six hours away, those who had arrived at this late hour of Hoshana Rabba knew that no trip before Yom Tov was possible. In fact, the Jews had talked of little else during the long voyage, for not one of them knew a soul anywhere near their vessel's destination. And yet, the most devoutly religious among them seemed to be the least concerned with the dilemma. Their apparent indifference was so striking that a group of fellow Jewish passengers had finally approached them and asked how they intended to spend the next two days of Yom Tov and the Shabbos which immediately followed them. "Why, didn't you see the sign in Yiddish pinned up at the Hamburg port?" asked the oldest one, Abish Gottesman, a stooped, gray-bearded man with a smile of rare warmth. "What sign?" "The one about the Bostoner Rebbe." "Bostoner Rebbe? What's that?"

“A ‘Rebbe’ is a Rebbe, and Boston is the town he comes from ... I guess.” “Where is Boston?” “I never heard of it before either, so I imagine it must be in Galicia,” Abish ventured. “But that doesn’t matter. The notice said that he takes guests and that the food is reliably kosher.” “How will you find him?” “If there was a sign in Germany I’m sure that there will be signs in America telling us how to get to him.” “Are you really serious?” Isaac Hertz asked derisively. Isaac’s father had been a tailor and a pious Jew, but Isaac himself had long since discarded the traditions and was now the self appointed chief cynic. “You don’t even know what city he lives in.” “Don’t worry,” said Abish. “I saw the sign, and he takes guests and new arrivals.” And so news of the Bostoner Rebbe had swept quickly among the Jewish passengers, and in their state of anxiety, the image of the Rebbe was grasped enthusiastically as a sign of promise in the new and strange land they were entering. It did not matter that they had never heard of the town of Boston. It hadn’t occurred to a single one that a “Rebbe” could get his title from an American town. All they knew was that the boat was docking at a city in New England, far from New York. For the last two days of the voyage the Jews had begun to wonder who this Bostoner Rebbe could be. A man who just picked up Displaced Persons from the piers and gave them food and lodging? A long-lost father who would be there to welcome them? Their imagination was heightened by the tedium of the voyage and the harrowing memories of the world they had left behind. Exhausted and close to despair, they had begun to think of little else but the Bostoner Rebbe. For some he had taken on the dimensions of a Messianic figure; even the non-religious among them were intrigued by this mysterious man from an unknown city. “So, did you hear these learned men?” Isaac Hertz had mocked with the other cynics who had relinquished all their faith and hope somewhere in the ashes of Auschwitz. “They will end up spending their so-called holiday in the streets!” And now, in the stark, unfamiliar surroundings of the immigration building, the reality of the delousing and processing procedures did indeed shatter most of the illusions that the Jews had nurtured. As they gathered their meager possessions, the setting sun outside seemed to join in ridiculing their earlier fantasies. And the cynics clearly enjoyed the discomfort of the others, though some of them still appeared to expect the Bostoner Rebbe to magically emerge somehow from among the throng of officials. “Maybe your Rebbe has a dark uniform,” jeered Isaac, indicating a group of officials, “and plans to use this hall for the Simchas Torah celebration.” What could they say? In their pitiful imaginings, they had actually pictured the Rebbe greeting them at the docks and escorting them, all sixty-two of them, into his home. Now they stood outside, blinking in the sun’s dying glare. Some children began to cry. At that very moment, two young men were walking down the docks to the immigration building. They walked briskly, but their steps were heavy, as though they were reluctantly following instructions. And indeed they were. For Tuvia and Shabsai had instructions from the Bostoner Rebbe. By the time the immigrants had cleared official registration and customs formalities, it was just one hour before Yom Tov. Those who had placed their frail hopes in the imagined hospitality of the Bostoner Rebbe felt so gullible and dejected that they hardly noticed the sarcastic comments of their cynical companions. But then something happened that took everyone by surprise. Two chassidim appeared among the crowd of visitors outside the doors of the Arrivals Hall. “Sholom aleichem, welcome to America, and gut Yom Tov! The Bostoner Rebbe would like to invite you for Yom Tov and Shabbos,” said Tuvia mechanically, prepared for a blanket refusal of his invitation by the group. The sound of Abish’s voice, quavering but clear, broke the silence: “We accept.” “We?” The question came simultaneously from both the chassidim and the cynics. “Yes, we,” he said firmly, “the whole group. We are extremely grateful. We had already decided to accept the Bostoner Rebbe’s invitation.” The chassidim looked around at the tightly assembled group and saw the nodding heads. Their spokesman was indeed speaking for all of them. It suddenly dawned on Tuvia that somebody had finally accepted an invitation. Somebody? That sixty-somebodies had accepted. He dashed over to a phone booth to make a call. “Hello, Rebbe? We found some guests!” he blurted out excitedly. “A whole group of DPs have just got off the boat and they don’t want to travel to New York before Yom Tov.” “Boruch Hashem! But you must hurry. There isn’t much time!” “But, Rebbe, they wo-wo-won’t fit in our car! The Rebbe doesn’t understand. It’s a group over si-si-sixty!” “All the better,” replied the Rebbe calmly. “I can see we’ll have a very joyful Simchas Torah.” “Some of them are not religious.” “Even better.” “Even better?” “Yes, they need a proper Yom Tov even more. Now hurry and help them into taxis. I will have someone waiting outside with money for the taxi fares and instructions as to which families will host them. I’ll make the arrangements right away.” “But, Rebbe, I don’t know how to break this to you. We were speaking to the group, and they think – they think – that they are all coming to you! As if you were expecting them! I told them that I hoped we would be able to place them with different families, but they told me – I repeat THEY told me – that the Bostoner Rebbe was waiting for them. They won’t go to anyone else. They trust only YOUR kashrus.” “B’ezer Hashem,” came the relaxed reply of the Rebbe, “we will think of something.” As soon as he put the phone down, the Bostoner Rebbe made a quick reckoning. It was now forty-five minutes until Yom Tov and all of the stores carrying kosher products were closed. Even if the Rebbetzin had enough food stocked in her kitchen, there would certainly not be enough time to cook as much as was needed for three days. “Hello, a gutten Yom Tov, this is the Bostoner Rebbe speaking ...” “... Sheairis hapeleita! ... Of course, we’ll do anything; send them right over.” “One last thing – we need food. Please bring over whatever you can spare right away, and don’t come in the front entrance. Come around the back and bring the food directly to the kitchen.” Sleeping arrangements also presented a bit of a problem. Among the arrivals were families who should be housed together. The irreligious ones needed to be placed with extra care. And all of them had to be close to the Rebbe’s house, where they would eat.

But the Rebbe was not unduly troubled. Despite all the problems, and the fact that many homes were already filled with Yom Tov guests, the issue at hand concerned the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim, and so was certain to evoke Divine assistance. The Rebbe also had two factors working to his advantage – his charisma and his kehillah. “Hello, this is the Bostoner Rebbe speaking...” In phone call after phone call, the Rebbe made the same appeal, pulling strings like a puppeteer and keeping a ledger of how many beds he had amassed. In less than twenty-five minutes, as the first taxis drove up to the entrance of his home, his work was done. The group, exhausted after the seven-day ordeal of their voyage, also bore the indelible scars of a decade-long experience of horror. They were utterly drained and their tattered clothes hung loose from their shrunken frames. In the few minutes it took for the group to emerge from the taxis and enter the house, the Rebbe braced himself for the extraordinary variety of temperaments and dispositions that he was about to host for Yom Tov. He knew that this group would require particular sensitivity and understanding. The very fact that they had all left the taxis – even though his representative had asked them to remain inside so that they could be taken directly to their lodgings -- was indication enough of what trouble might be in store. But the Rebbe was wrong. Those who trooped into his house did not want food or sleep. It was twenty minutes to Yom Tov, and they were starving for mitzvos. The Rebbe was in the midst of bidding farewell to the succah and to the lulav and esrog when he heard them call, “Where is the succah?” The Bostoner Rebbe was inside the succah waving his lulav to and fro in praise and deep supplication. The group had just a few minutes left to fulfill the mitzvos of the holiday and not a second to waste. Cake was hurriedly rushed into the succah for a blessing of Leishev B'Sukkah, while the guests impatiently waited on line for their turn to bless the lulav and esrog. At the same time, a veritable underground railroad was chugging its way into the kitchen. The Rebbe’s wife had also been busy on the phone, and women were soon bringing kugels, chickens, cakes, fruit, desserts, pastry – and whatever else they had in the house. Within minutes, the Rebbetzin’s kitchen appeared to be equipped for a year-long siege. Now, squeezing out of her packed kitchen, the Rebbetzin emerged to meet her guests. A more serene and courteous woman never graced New England. Moving effortlessly through the crowd, she smiled her “Sholom aleichem” and “Thank you for coming,” lighting a spark of warmth and hope in everyone she greeted. Noting the relatively humble surroundings, they wondered how she was able to prepare for such a huge crowd. “I have help,” answered the Rebbetzin sweetly, pointing to the steady stream of women coming and going outside the window. Like the Rebbe, she was careful not to betray the fact that they had only just found out about the group’s arrival. Had the newcomers known of the desperate flurry of activity preceding their arrival, they would surely have felt embarrassed at causing their hosts so much trouble. Instead, they smiled in their blissful ignorance, believing that they were doing this Rebbe – who nebach lived so far from New York – a favor by joining his court for Yom Tov. The members of the Rebbe’s community played their roles with equal perception. In almost every home the hosts willingly vacated their own bedrooms and gladly suffered discomforts to make room for their guests. They were only too eager to do whatever they could to help the Sheairis hapeleitah. And whatever they gave up was well compensated for with the most moving and memorable Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah of their lives. The singing that night seemed to resound for miles around. The city of Boston had not seen such celebration since its Tea Party. And the dancing was the dance of victory. The feverish intensity of the celebration continued until the small hours of the morning. This lesson was not lost on the non-religious members of the group – all of whom received the same attention, and even additional courtesy, from the Rebbe. And the skepticism of the skeptics was quickly melted away by the Rebbe’s warmth. They soon forgot themselves and sang and danced no less heartily than the rest. As crazy as it was, it all made sense -- even to the cynical immigrants who had thought they would never see their host, and the cynical young chassidim who had thought they would never greet these guests.

(Medrash and Maaseh
by Hanoach Teller
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Parsha Quiz

**See how much
you know!**

1. How long after Avrohom's bris milah did Hashem appear to him?
2. Who were known for their hospitality (hachnasas orchim)?
3. Who were the three people who came to Avrohom?
4. Why did the malachim come?
5. How do we see that Avrohom practiced, "Say a little and do a lot."
6. Who served the guests?
7. Who prepared the matzo-crackers?
8. How long would it be until Avrohom and Soroh would have a son?
9. How old would Avrohom be then?
10. How old would Soroh be then?
11. For whom did Avrohom pray to be saved from destruction?
12. Were there ten Tzaddikim in S'dom and Amoroh?
13. What happened to the people of S'dom when they attacked Lot's house?
14. What did the malachim (angels) tell Lot?
15. Did Lot's sons-in-law believe Lot?
16. Who turned into a pillar of salt?
17. Who was the king of G'ror?
18. Why did Soroh say she was a sister of Avrohom?
19. What was the name of Soroh's son?
20. How old was Yitzchok when he had a bris milah?
21. Who told Avrohom to send Hogor and Yishmoel away?
22. Why?
23. Who told Avrohom to do as Soroh suggested?

Recipe

Chunky Monkey Brownies

Brownies:

4 eggs, separated
4 very ripe bananas
2 teaspoons Gefen Vanilla Extract
1 (18-ounce) jar cashew butter or Gefen Almond Butter
2 teaspoons baking soda
1/2 cup Gefen Cocoa Powder (unsweetened)
1–2 tablespoons Gefen Honey (optional, most people find this unnecessary)

Optional toppings:

1 cup mini dark chocolate chips or 1/2 cup cacao nibs
1 cup chopped walnuts or any other nuts of your choice
1/2 cup coconut flakes

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease a 9- x 13-inch baking pan, or line 20 muffin tins and set aside.
2. Beat egg whites in a food processor fitted with the “S” blade, until stiff.
3. Slowly incorporate the yolks and bananas. Mix for two to three minutes until very smooth.
4. Add vanilla, cashew or almond butter, baking soda, cocoa and honey, if using. Mix well.
5. Pour batter into prepared pan or muffin tins.
6. Combine topping ingredients and press lightly into the brownie to adhere.
7. Bake for 20–22 minutes for muffins, or 25–30 minutes for 9- x 13-inch pan.

Yields 1 9- x 13-inch pan or 20 muffin tins

Middah of the Week

Hachnasos Orchim

We want to hear from you!!

Questions, comments, or suggestions?
Email us at bnos@agudah.org.
