



First Guest in the Time of Corona

It has been a long time. Too long since we had a guest in our home. Over 20 months to be exact, more or less. Among other sacrifices COVID brought was the inability to open our homes to friends. At first, a seemingly small sacrifice. But then again, there have been many small sacrifices. By now they are all too familiar-working from home (which for some turned out not to be such a sacrifice after all), not going out, wearing masks, and having our kids attend school remotely.

Little by little many of these restrictions have been lifted. And the ones that remain, are the subject of endless discussion by folks who want things to be better faster. Patience is one virtue that the Time of Corona has taught us. But not everyone.

Among the many sacrifices, some snuck up on us, and we may not have realized how much we missed simple acts of kindness. Such as opening one's home. Having guests to one's abode is as old as our patriarch Abraham who was known for the openness of his tent. And while we have thankfully improved upon offering a tent for shelter, the virtue of *hachnasat orchim*-of welcoming guests-is a cherished Jewish value found in many societies.

There are few places where we can truly "be ourselves" other than our home. It is where we can wear that comfy shirt that our spouse tells us to throw away (and we refuse.) It is where we can eat over the sink (if no one is watching!) Or we can watch TV shows with the volume as loud as we want and when we want and it works just fine for us.

And so, when we have a guest over, while we may be on "good behavior," nonetheless, the appeal of home is that people can enjoy each other "warts and all." And it is all good. That is what friendship is built upon. I would venture to add, that by extending our homes, that is a way of insuring that our home is filled with love. Love is the mortar that holds a home together.

Perhaps, not having guests was a bigger sacrifice than I realized. One can never have too much love. Or laughter. Or friendship. As each of these feelings permeate our dwellings, something special; dare I say sacred, takes place. After all that is the difference between a house and a home.

If we lose site of that, then COVID would have truly robbed us of something priceless.