



Hosting Shabbat Guests

Some practical pointers on how to maximize the opportunity

Some community members have asked us for advice on hosting their Shabbat guests. We hope these pointers are helpful.

1. 95% of kiruv is caring. When people feel accepted and cared for, they are touched and moved. Who takes “strangers” into their home, treats them like royalty, gives them their best food, and has them sleep over? Only family. With your care, you are showing them that they are part of our family – the Jewish People.

2. Many people do not get together weekly with their own families. Just seeing the warmth of your family, in a Shabbat setting, can touch the neshamah in its own unique way. This does not mean that your kids have to behave perfectly or that the house should be spotless! Be yourselves and they’ll love it.


3. It is not our job to “make people frum,” the Ribono Shel Olam takes care of that! It is also not necessary to explain complicated hashkafot or to prove anything to them. Our job is to make them feel comfortable and accepted. Due to the unique nature and beauty of Shabbat - Shabbat sells itself. So just relax and enjoy!

4. You do not need to know all the answers. Saying you don’t know the answer to a question is perfectly fine. If you compliment them on the great question and tell them you will look into it, they will respect you for that. Afterwards you can look into it and get back to them. This will even give you an opportunity to start a learning relationship with them!

Some Specifics:

1. Show interest in their lives and try to ask them about themselves. This can create an atmosphere of mutual sharing and connection.

2. Sometimes a guest might mistakenly switch the lights on or do another Shabbat melachah. It is important to be aware that their feeling your acceptance will encourage their Torah observance in the long run much more than anything else.



3. If someone does not have a kipah, have one handy to offer in a friendly way.

4. It is helpful to make any divrei Torah easy to relate to and not too long. It's also a great experience for guests to see kids saying divrei Torah or answering parshah questions. Kids and their interaction with your guests can make a big impact!

5. It can be a kiddush Hashem to see the husband helping his wife with family needs in any way possible - kids, serving or even cleaning up! (. . . but we don't tell people what to do!)

6. If you sing zemirot, a bentscher with English phonetics is ideal (e.g. the NCSY bentscher). Short songs or simple niggunim without words are great. Beautiful singing touches the soul. It is also nice to sing the bentsching - many people know the tune even if they are not observant. Showing where you are up to or the page number as you bentsch can also help.

7. On Motzoi Shabbat, you might want to get their contact information so you can stay in touch. You might even want to call them during the week to express how much you enjoyed having them and would love to have them again! This way your Shabbat meal can be the doorway to so much more.

Feel free to take what you want from these general guidelines. Most of all, we hope you enjoy your guests and may you be zocheh to many brachos as a result of your involvement in the beautiful mitzvos of hachnasat orchim and kiruv rechokim.

Have a wonderful Shabbat!



Explanations



It may be helpful to give some simple explanations. Nevertheless, they are not essential, as the warmth of your table is what touches the most.

Eishet Chayal and Birchat Habanim

Isn't it funny how we can tend to take for granted the most precious things we have – especially our family, our loved ones? On Shabbat we take the time to appreciate each other. "Eishet Chayal" written by King Solomon, is said in honor of the woman of the family as appreciation for all she does. Solomon, the wisest of men, understood the essence of marriage: "a happy wife is a happy life!" We also appreciate our children by blessing them with physical and spiritual bounty.


Kiddush

During the week we spend much time running around achieving and trying to be successful, with little time to spare. We're bombarded by computers, e-mails, mobile phones, deadlines, and results. On Shabbat we take a deep breath and leave all that behind. By ceasing our weekday activity, we are able to spend time with our family, appreciate the beauty of life, and recognize that there's a Creator who runs the world and gave us all we have. It's a time to stop doing and focus on being. Kiddush helps us go into Shabbat with this awareness.

Washing Hands

Ask them if they know how to wash hands for bread. Suggest that you can show them how and help them with the brachah. (See the transliterated "netilat yadayim"). Let them know that we don't speak until we eat the challah. You can even make a joke "whoever likes to talk the most . . . wash last!"

Human beings have the capacity to eat in a dignified and spiritual way or to devour food like animals! Our hands represent our actions, and washing represents the purity of our actions. We wash our hands to remind ourselves that



the meal should not be an end unto itself, but a means to a higher purpose, giving us the energy to do actions that are meaningful and pure.

The Challot

We eat two challot to symbolize that Shabbat is the source of blessing. The Jewish people in the desert received a double portion of manna on Friday in honor of Shabbat. Shabbat gives us the time and space to stop and appreciate all the physical bounty we have. This in turn brings more blessing into our upcoming week.

The Salt

Salt does not decompose, and is therefore a symbol of our eternal relationship with the Almighty. Even when we eat our meal we bear in mind that there is an Infinite Being who has taken care of us throughout the generations, and is the source of all the blessing we have in our daily lives.

Brachot



FOR CAKES, COOKIES, SOME CEREALS, ETC.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת.

Boruch atoh Adonoy, Elohaynu melech ho-olam, boray minay m'zonot.

You are blessed, Lord our God, the sovereign of the world,
Creator of various kinds of food.

FOR WINE

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Boruch atoh Adonoy, Elohaynu melech ho-olam, boray p'ri hagofen.

You are blessed, Lord our God, the sovereign of the world,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

FOR FRUIT THAT GROWS ON TREES

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Boruch atoh Adonoy, Elohaynu melech ho-olam, boray p'ri ho-aytz.

You are blessed, Lord our God, the sovereign of the world,
Creator of the fruit of trees.

FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES THAT GROW IN THE GROUND

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

Boruch atoh Adonoy, Elohaynu melech ho-olam, boray p'ri ho-adomoh.

You are blessed, Lord our God, the sovereign of the world,
Creator of the fruit of the earth.

FOR ALL OTHER DRINKS AND FOODS NOT SPECIFIED ABOVE

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ.

Boruch atoh Adonoy, Elohaynu melech ho-olam, shehakol nihyeh bidvoro.

You are blessed, Lord our God, the sovereign of the world,
by whose word everything came into being.

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Netilat Yadayim



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

Baruch atah Adonoy, Eloheinu, melech ha-olam

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the Universe

אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ

asher kidishanu b'mitz'vosav v'tzivanu

Who has sanctified us with His commandments
and commanded us

עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

al n'tilat yadayim.

to wash our hands.

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