



Hospitality

Beloved in Yeshua,

Loving the Stranger (aka "Hospitality")

While hospitality has been a major part of our lives and ministry since meeting the Messiah in 1973, the Lord has recently taken a holy highlighter and underlined the importance and blessing of welcoming the "stranger" into our hearts and lives. We hear Yeshua saying, "...*for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in...*" (Matthew 25:35). According to the Brit HaDasha, when the nations of the world are judged, they will ask Yeshua the question, "*When did we see You a stranger and take You in...?*" (vs. 38). "*And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'.*" (vs. 40)

Now the question remains: who are the "brethren" of Yeshua? Traditionally, these brethren have been thought of as *all* believers in Jesus, the Messiah, the "church." While we don't dispute this interpretation, there is another equally plausible one that must be considered: the Jewish people as Yeshua's "brethren" or brothers. In either case, **welcoming the stranger is to welcome Yeshua Himself.**

The Messiah Yeshua identified deeply with the stranger. He was a stranger on this earth. As we sat in our sukkah (temporary booth) last month, we thanked God that the Messiah loved us so much that He left the glories of Heaven to take on a human *sukkah*, and dwelt among sinful man. He was a stranger to sin. He was a stranger to this earth. He chose to be homeless, but there were those who welcomed Him into their homes.

The Apostle Peter reminded all believers in Yeshua in I Peter 2:11 that **we are all strangers and pilgrims on this earth**. We are just passing through. Heaven is our real home. God wants us to have a heart for our fellow "strangers."

Hospitality Defined

Hospitality can be defined as the art of receiving with cheerfulness, of entertaining, feeding and lodging a guest with liberality. A "hospital" was originally a "guest house." We actually stayed in one in northern Spain last year. It was formerly a "hospital" started by a religious order devoted to the care of pilgrims traveling to Santiago de Compostela. Our homes are supposed to be like hospitals – places where the wounded, the sick and the needy find loving care and healing. To

be hospitable is to be ready to welcome guests or strangers in a friendly, generous manner without expecting reward. (You are giving as unto the Lord; He is your reward!)

As believers, it is crucial that we grasp the difference between "hospitality" and "entertaining." Hospitality is opening one's home for the Lord's service. Open heart. Open home. It's O.K. to use paper plates and plasticware on Yom Teruah. (It took Jamie 30 years to get to this point. May you be faster learners!)

Abraham and Hospitality

In the Torah (Leviticus 19:34), hospitality is specified as an obligation, even a sacred duty: "*The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*" The word for stranger or alien in Hebrew is *ger*, pronounced "ghair." The term originally referred to non-Jews living in Israel. That is why non-Jewish believers are reminded by the apostle Paul that before they met Messiah they were: "...aliens" from the commonwealth of Israel and "strangers" from the covenants of promise" (Ephesians 2:12).

Abraham is looked up to as a model of hospitality in the Torah. In Genesis, chapter 18, we read the account of three men who visited Abraham's tent in the heat of the day. This encounter occurred when Abraham was ninety-nine years old. He had just been circumcised. He probably was not in the mood for visitors, but God sent them. (We have noted that hospitality is not always "comfortable" and rarely "convenient," but **always** a "blessing.") Abraham was not expecting guests but when he saw them, the Bible tells us that he "ran" from the tent door to meet them. He followed certain Oriental customs of the time:

Bowing: Abraham bowed himself to the ground, *shachah* in Hebrew, to welcome his guests (Genesis 18:2-3).

Foot washing: The washing of feet was an integral part of hospitality because of the dry, dusty soil and sandaled feet (Genesis 18:4).

Not eating alone: It was part of Oriental etiquette to *invite others to partake of food*. It was considered much better to eat with others than to eat alone (Genesis 18:5).

Rules for guests: Guests were expected to *be polite, grateful and to inquire about the welfare of the host family* (note Genesis 18:9). They were to *eat whatever was set before them and part with a blessing*.

Abraham as a model host offered his guests a "morsel of bread" to refresh their hearts. Of course, that morsel of bread turned out to be a full meal with "cakes," "tender calf," "butter" and "milk" (He was, after all, Jewish!) It is also interesting to note how quickly he moved. The following words in Genesis 18 convey this: "ran," "hurried," "quickly," and again "ran," and "hastened." When Abraham had set the food before his guests, he stood by them under the tree as they ate. (We recommend sitting down with your guests!)

Hospitality has its rewards. Look what happened to Abraham and Sarah. One of the three guests happened to be "the Lord" (Yeshua). He promised the couple that Sarah would have a son. When Sarah laughed at this seemingly preposterous statement, the Lord said, "*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*" **Extend hospitality. You never know whom God may send to your door or what blessing He has planned for you!**

Jewish Roots of Hospitality

The theme of hospitality continues throughout the Holy Scriptures. In I Kings 17:9, a widow in Zarephath is commanded by God to extend hospitality to the Prophet Elijah. In Isaiah 58:7, the Lord instructs believers to **share your bread with the hungry, and bring the poor who are cast out to your homes**. This "bringing in of guests" or "gathering in of travelers" is considered to be one of the most important functions of the home. The Hebrew word used for hospitality in this sense is: *hakhnasat orhim* (hakh-nah-SAHT oar-HEEM). One rabbinic saying concerning hospitality is: "Great is hospitality; greater even than early attendance at the house of study or than receiving the Shekhinah."

Traditional Jewish teaching on hospitality stresses the absence of discrimination. The home is to be open to all classes and kinds of people. Graciousness and cheerfulness is encouraged in receiving guests. Hospitality is never to be abused. It is considered an act of great baseness for anyone to do an evil deed against those who have offered him hospitality. (Psalm 41:9 and John 13:18, and Judas).

Partaking of salt together has traditionally been regarded as a pledge of friendship. It was equivalent to a solemn covenant (especially among the Arabs). Why not rent a good movie and share popcorn with someone! (We suggest *Ushpizin*, a great movie on "hospitality" in Hebrew with English subtitles.)

The Passover Seder begins each year with an open invitation: "All who are hungry, come..." The Lord's table is open to all who are spiritually hungry..." **God is a God of the open invitation.** His Spirit is a Spirit that invites, that says, "Come!"

Hospitality in the New Covenant

The New Covenant opens with a "hospitality deficit" (see Luke 2:7). The Messiah is ready to put on his earthly tabernacle (a baby's body) but this stranger from Heaven finds "no room" at the inn. No welcome. No hospitality. Finally, a manger, *sukkah* in Hebrew, is made available to Him. It was a humble dwelling, but that did not stop the glory of God from shining forth from that place. (Your humble home has the same potential.)

Yeshua loves to be welcomed into homes. When He saw Zacchaeus, a despised tax collector, looking for Him from his vantage point in a sycamore tree, He said to him: "*Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house*" (Luke 19:5). There we have that "make haste" to show hospitality again! (Interesting, because when extending hospitality, there is often a great deal of last minute scrambling. In our house it is – "Quick: Vacuum the dog and cat hairs off the floor and furniture!")

In Romans 12:1,10-13, believers are exhorted to present their bodies as servants of God, to think as He thinks, to be humble, to exercise their gifts as members of Messiah's body, and to show sincere brotherly love. We are challenged to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, "*distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality*". Verses 14-21 of Romans 12 goes even further to encourage hospitality to one's enemies. This **radical hospitality** enables us to overcome evil with good.

While leaders in the Body of Messiah are to be hospitable (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8), all believers are called to "*be hospitable to one another without grumbling*" (I Peter 4:9). He who has, must also have compassion and share (1 John 3:17). Strangers are to be welcomed without respect of

persons (James 2:2-4). The early believers in Yeshua made a regular practice of offering hospitality to one another: "*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...*" (Acts 2:46).

Entertaining Angels

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." (Hebrews 13:1-2) During this past High Holy Day Season, we had the opportunity to open our home to a number of people who had never been there before. Hospitality offered during one of God's *moedim* (special appointments) is considered a special blessing.

First, a king came to brunch. Yes, a real king. His name is A.E. Chukwuemeka-Eri. He is the ruler of the Enugwu Aguleri Community, Eri Kingdom, Nigeria, and he is a Jewish believer in Yeshua! The king attended two of our Shabbat services and was consummately blessed. He wears a type of talit with Hebrew inscriptions, a menorah and a Magen David. He carries a royal scepter made of an elaborately carved elephant tusk. King Chukwuemeka-**Eri** is from the Ibo tribe which traces its roots to **Eri**, the grandson of Jacob, whose father was Gad (Genesis 46:16). We shared food, scripture and prayer with the king and even danced before the Lord in our kitchen. Abundant joy was our portion!

The Lord sent us many special guests at Sukkot. A few came with messages for us from God. Three ladies who have prayed for us faithfully and frequently – for over 15 years – **sat in our sukkah** and encouraged us to keep on course, that God is with us and is pleased. We needed their words. A couple from Haiti (new members of our congregation) surprised us by telling us why they decided to join Temple Aron HaKodesh. Yanick recounted the following dream as she sat in our *sukkah*.

The setting was in a place like a church but not a regular church. The light in the place was brighter than in other dreams. The leader of the place was Jewish, a Rabbi with a wife and two sons. There was a service and after it was over the wife gave Yanick a test... After the test, the couple left with her, and the wife gave her a great deal of gourmet food at an outside table...

There is more to the dream, but imagine Yanick telling us this as we were serving them food in a *sukkah* at an outside table. Her dream even included our white plastic water pitcher. Towards the end of Yanick's dream, while having all the food and desserts, she said to herself, "*I am going to tell my husband and my sisters how the Jewish people eat a lot...*" That day Yanick's dream became a reality.

Your Turn

Another holiday season is upon us. We believe that the word of the Lord to us is: **hospitality**. So many are lonely. So many hurt. Psalm 68:6 tells us that "*God sets the solitary in families.*" As the Holy Spirit leads, invite the "stranger" into your home. It may not be much more than a *sukkah*, but love and fellowship can make a simple meal a feast.

Do you have a home to live in? Be thankful. Do you have enough to share with someone else? Be thankful. Can you afford to rent a movie and invite someone to watch it with you? Be thankful.

Do you live in the U.S.A.? Be thankful. Were you a "stranger" and are now a part of God's people Israel? Be thankful. Were you on your way to hell, and are now on your way to Heaven? Be thankful. We are thankful for each one of you, our fellow pilgrims, on this exciting journey to the Promised Land.

Thanksgiving blessings to you and your family,

Neil and Jamie

P. S. Of the 102 passengers on the Mayflower, only 41 of them were "Pilgrims" – religious dissenters who sought a new life and freedom of religion in America. The other 61 passengers were called "strangers" by the Pilgrims. They were merchants, craftsman, skilled workers, indentured servants, and several young orphans.

A Gift For A Special Friend? (Or For Yourself?)

Food at the Time of the Bible (from Adam's Apple to the Last Supper) - 100 full-color pages filled with fascinating facts about food and food customs in ancient Israel. Learn about wine, water, oil, bread, fishing methods, harvests, kosher animals, and much more. Authentic recipes from the time of Yeshua are included. (\$22 includes shipping.)

Open Heart Open Home - The hospitable way to make others feel welcome and wanted with 54 helpful ways to make it work. A classic. 208 pages. (\$15 includes shipping.)

Olivewood serving bowl -

Made in Israel. Perfect for dried fruits or nuts. (\$15 includes shipping.)
4" x 7.5" oval.



Hanukkah begins on the evening of December 15, 2006. Traditional brass hanukkiah with candles. (\$38 includes shipping.)
11 3/4" x 9 3/4"

