

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <editor@ascentofsafed.com>
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A Meal for Eighteen Strangers

One day, **Yaakov Rechimi** (the grandson of Rabbi Michael Peretz of Mexico), received a phone call from a man who wanted to invite him to a *seudat hodaya*, a thanksgiving celebration that one hosts when one experiences a miracle. The caller told him his name, which community he belonged to, and which synagogue. Yaakov thought he recognized the name, but he didn't really know the person and wasn't sure why he was invited. Still, he said: "Of course, you invite me to a *seudat hodaya*, I will come. What is it that you want to thank *HaShem* for and celebrate with a meal?"

The caller tells him, "I almost passed away. One month I was in the hospital with Corona; I almost died. But I survived, thank G-d, so now I want to make a *seudat hodaya*."

So Rechimi said: "Of course I'll come," even though he still wasn't sure why he was invited.

When he arrived at the host's home, he saw 17 other men were also present for the celebration meal. The 18 people including himself were a random group; each man was from a different *shul*, a different community, a different area. It just didn't click for him why this specific group of 18 people were there. He remarked to the person next to him: "It's so nice that he invited us to his celebration."

They started talking and the other man tells him that he has no idea why he was invited; he doesn't know the person who is making the *seuda*. "I got a phone call," he shrugged, "so I came."

Rechimi told him "Yes, the same thing with me. I don't know why I was invited, but I'm here."

It turned out that all 18 at the table didn't know why he was invited and was puzzled. Then, the person who the miracle happened to, who appeared to be

about 60 years old, stood up and started speaking. “I know you all want to know the reason why I invited you. I’ll tell you what happened.

“When I was lying in the hospital, basically dead from the Corona, I felt myself rising up to Heaven. The first one I saw there was my mother, who had passed away a few years before. She exclaimed, ‘What are you doing here?! Go back down!’

““I answered her, “Ma, I want to go back down but I can’t.”

“My mother waved off my answer. ‘No, you *can* go down. You want to know why? Look down there -- just take a look!’

“So I look down and what did I see? I saw all of you that I invited to this meal. You were in 18 different places but I saw you all in one glance while I was in Heaven. I saw you sitting saying *tehilim* (Psalms) for me. In fact, at that moment every single one of you was mentioning my name and my mother’s name. Even though you had no clue who I was, you mentioned my name and recited *tehilim* for my complete recovery.

“My mother then said to me ‘You see, they are giving you the power to come back alive.’

“And that’s what happened and that’s why invited every single one of you 18 people to the *seuda*. Because while I was in Heaven, I saw you saying *tehilim* for me and saving my life!”

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*Source:* Rewritten by Yerachmiel Tilles from the report (transcribed by Mrs. Chaya Benami) of Rabbi Peretz about the NDE experience of his grandson.

*Connection:* Weekly Readings – this week: *Vayikra* is completely devoted to describing (nearly) all the different kinds of offerings in the Holy Temple, including various forms of the *Shelamim*/Peace Offerings; Next week: *Tzav* provides the details of the Thanksgiving Offering (Levit. 7:11-15), which is one form of the Peace offering.