

Angels in Action in Netanya

When we were children, our family used to go on a big vacation holiday once a year. Since our family did not have a car, my father hired a minivan for the trip. In order to save unnecessary expenses, we prepared all the food for the journey, and my father told us what the itinerary would be, as well as what the budget of the trip was. One reason he did this is so that we wouldn't ask him in the middle of the trip for all sorts of extras that he hadn't budgeted for. My parents were not miserly, but they were responsible and planned financial matters carefully. They simply didn't like squandering money, but they made sure we had everything we need.

My parents are very special, good people who give us their heart and soul, and gave us everything we needed – not necessarily everything we wanted, but everything we needed and which they thought was good for us, even if we might have disagreed and, at the time, not liked them for it!

So anyway, we set off on the trip, headed for Tiverya [Tiberias] and the Kinneret Lake ["Sea of Galilee"] where we planned on going on a boat trip. On the way, we stopped off, as planned, at Netanya, so that we could take a break and eat next to the sea. When we were close to the promenade, one of my brothers needed to go to the toilet. My father started to drive around looking for a place.

There were many restaurants, but my father was looking for a kosher one. We didn't understand why, so he explained that if we'd enter a non-kosher restaurant it would be a *chilul Hashem* [disgrace for G-d] when people would see *chareidi* Jews going into it – they might think we were going inside to eat.

When my father found a kosher restaurant, he parked the minivan and went inside with my brother. As they entered, a waitress asked my father how many they were, assuming they were coming to eat. My father replied, "My son just needs a toilet."

She hesitated a bit, and then said, "ok, fine."

They entered, my father waited in the restaurant. After two minutes, just as my brother came out the bathroom, the head waiter saw this and understood immediately that they hadn't entered the restaurant to eat.

He began to scream, "This is a restaurant, not a public toilet! With whose permission did you enter?!"

My father and brother didn't answer, and the head waiter continued to scream, "You are religious people! How can you allow yourselves to use a toilet without permission?!"

My father was now in a big mess. On the one hand, he could have just said, "Mister, you're making a mistake. I entered with permission from the waitress by the door."

However, he knew that if he would say this, he would cause her harm. After all, she had helped him. It would be a lack of appreciation, and also lashon hara [evil speech].

From the corner of his eye, he could see she was afraid of what would happen next. On the other hand, what was happening right then was a *chillul Hashem*. The waiters and also all the diners who had heard the screams might think that he had really used the bathroom without permission.

So how could he get out of this predicament without harming the waitress who let them in?

My father was a student of Rav Avraham Ganichovski; he learned with him in Slobodka Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. R' Ginichovski was a wise man with a noble soul. He would always say, "Every problem can be solved 90% with intellect, and if not, one can add another 10% of good character traits."

So then my father thought about what R' Ganichovski would do, and within a few seconds he had an idea.

"My dear sir," he began, "a pity you're angry at us for nothing. We are planning to eat here. And not only the two of us; all of my family are just about to enter."

(My father didn't lie. He didn't say we had planned to eat there, but that we *are* planning.)

The head waiter quickly apologized, "Oh, sorry, I apologize. Please understand. There are people who enter without permission just to use the toilets, and I thought by mistake..."

"That's fine," my father said, "don't worry about it. Just tell us where to sit."

"How many are you?" he asked

"Nine" my father replied, and with that he sent my brother to run to the minivan and tell everyone to come into the restaurant.

"Come," my brother said, "We're going to eat in the restaurant!"

“What?! A restaurant? How?” we all asked. It wasn’t on the plan, AND, we had never eaten in a restaurant, not ever! My brother quickly explained to them what happened, and everyone hurried into the restaurant.

Already as we were going in, we were talking about whether it would be at the expense of the other activities of the trip – it wasn’t planned, which means it wasn’t on the budget! And if so, would it be at the expense of the boat trip or the jeeps? We knew that my father always kept to the budget.

On the other hand, eating in a restaurant was an novel and exciting “activity.” We entered the restaurant and found the waiters joining together tables.

Everyone sat down and tried to behave in a dignified way, not to speak loudly, etc. Then a waiter came and asked us what we wanted to order.

Not used to eating in a restaurant, my father wasn’t sure, so the waiter showed him the menus, and the sorts of things they could order.

After the initial shock of seeing the prices, my parents began to order dishes that would satisfy everyone.

It really was an exciting activity for us! We felt like kings, with special dishes and drinks. The little kids even did their best to eat nicely (without using their hands). Just seeing my parents, who are so careful with how they spend their money, sitting in a restaurant was an experience in itself!

Then, toward the end of the meal, we suddenly noticed all the waiters including the head waiter, and someone else who appeared to be the manager of the restaurant, coming out the kitchen in a line, and each one was carrying a dessert – cakes and ice cream! – with sparklers on them. It was very showy and we looked around to see to which important diner they were going. But they came to our table!

They surrounded it, and then in a rehearsed movement, put down all the desserts on our table!

“What’s this?” my father said. “I think there’s been a mistake. We didn’t order dessert.”

“That’s fine,” said the manager, “You indeed didn’t order it, and you don’t need to pay for it. This is a gift from the restaurant’s staff, to you and your special family.”

He then sat down next to my father, while the rest of the waiters remained standing.

“Listen,” he said. “After you began eating, one of my waiters noticed that the waitress who greets people by the door was crying. He said that he went to her and asked what happened, but she didn’t want to answer, but when he pressed her, she said nervously what had happened, and that she had given you permission to

enter the toilets, and so on. She said that when the head waiter started to scream, she was sure that you would say you had got permission from her and she would end up losing her job. She was already thinking where else she could work!

Then to her shock, she saw that you had decided to eat in the restaurant with all your family, just so she wouldn't be harmed. Then," related the manager, "she started to cry again! This time, she explained that, in all her life she's never seen anyone behave like this, and with such consideration for others. No one had ever done anything like that for her, Nor had she ever heard of anyone doing such a thing for anybody else."

"So as you were eating," said the manager, "everyone here in the kitchen was very inspired and impressed by what happened. So this is our gift to you, with all our heart. We all think you are special unique family. And your children can be proud to have such a father."

Then the waitress came and thanked my father.

So then we finished eating and they came with the bill. My father opened the holder and saw there was...no bill. Instead there was a card on which was written that next time we would eat there, we would receive 50% off.

My father called the manager and thanked him for the discount for the future occasion, and then quickly asked, "But what about the bill for this time?"

The manager said, "You don't need to pay. It's free. Our policy in this restaurant is not to take money from angels!"

We left the restaurant and continued on our trip to Tiverya, and were able to do all the activities that had been planned. But we knew that the "activity" that we had at the restaurant was unique and we would not experience anything like it again. I'm not talking about the food, though of course it was very tasty, but that my father, with his wisdom and good character, was able to think about someone else, even someone he had no relationship with (the young waitress). He showed appreciation to her, for her helping his son.

And he prevented a *chilul Hashem*, (which is what his original intent was when he looked for a kosher restaurant). Instead, he made a big *Kiddush Hashem* [sanctification of G-d].

All this was years ago. I have since married and have a boy. I don't know if I will be able to raise my children as my parents raised me, but I know for what to aim.

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*Source:* This story first appeared in 2019 in the weekly newsletter, "*Heichal Hamelech*," which is distributed here in Israel. Submitted by one of our readers, it was adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles.

*Connection:* The angels disguised as humans, only *appeared* to be eating [see Gen. 18:8 with Rashi (end).]