

Remarks by Rebbetzin Hauer

**SPEECH GIVEN BY REBBETZIN HAUER
AT THE BJSZ WOMEN'S GET TOGETHER**

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When I was newly married, I worked for an orthodox accountant who would give me free advice on non-accounting related matters. One of the things he told me was that it was very important for me to belong to a shul.

(Clearly not only did I take his advice seriously but I took it to a whole new level.)

But at the time I didn't really understand what he meant. After all, I was a Baltimore native, my husband was in the Ner Israel kollel, I knew people, I had family in town. My father, A'H, was the rav of a shul, Bnai Jacob. Why did I need a shul?

Well, I remember taking his advice to heart and starting the process of looking for a shul. My parents were understanding that I needed to chart my own course in shul hunting. So I walked into one shul a really, really small minyan. I sat down and davened. I don't remember seeing anyone my age there. I thought about saying hello to a lady about twenty years older than me that I sort of recognized but then I thought, who am I? I'm just this young newcomer. I didn't think that this shul was for me anyway. Then I tried out another, was there for a while, and then tried out another.

I hadn't really found my niche. Somewhere along the line, much further down the line, I realized that my approach to shul hunting was seriously flawed. My approach was purely from the standpoint of a consumer. Is this shul my type? Are the people like me? What does this shul have to offer me so that I will be comfortable? It did not occur to me that perhaps I should be looking at shul in terms of what I could give, what I could contribute.

And I don't mean as a rebbetzin, just as a person.

Well, as we all know, Hashem has His ways of guiding people along exactly where they need to be, so eventually Hashem guided me to a training facility where I could learn or at least be exposed to the art of how to be a contributing shul member, i.e. how to be a Jew. The original name of the institute where I trained was Bnai Jacob and then later it became the Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Institute for Advanced Studies in Giving.

I had come full circle.

It was here and is here where I learned the essential principle that belonging to a shul where people are not exactly like you is a GOOD thing - a very GOOD thing. Not only does it more accurately represent Klal Yisrael itself, which comprises a variety of people, but practically speaking it creates a perfect setting to cultivate giving. After all if we are

different than one another then we all have different things to offer, to give.

And I can't describe to you how incredibly heartwarming it is when I see this giving taking place in our shul on a regular basis. There is nothing like it.

Whether it is seeing Mr. Darrell Zaslow escorting Mr. Sylvan Wolpert to shul on a regular basis or attending the 90th birthday party of Mrs. Guta Fieldman, (she should have a Refua Shelayma), there is nothing like it. This birthday was celebrated with a party hosted by Rena Walter, and attended by 15 or so women of varying ages, who represent the only "family" that she has in town. Then I see the same Guta Fieldman teaching Hebrew to members of our shul who have limited backgrounds. And then there are the many friendships that have been cultivated through intergenerational mishloach manos deliveries on Purim. It is so inspiring! And I am awed when I consider the outstanding efforts that Orlee Luchansky expended to procure a hands-free electronic reading device for a handicapped young woman connected with our shul who had previously not been able to read a book independently. Then I think about the anonymous tip given by a young member of the shul to Rabbi Hauer about Mrs. Biederman's special birthday which was noted with a presentation of flowers at the shul banquet. Of course, as a result Mrs. Biederman was ready to kill Rabbi Hauer but fortunately she restrained herself because she didn't think that doing so would be in the best interest of the shul.

Then there was the warm welcome extended by a shul member, Paysi Golomb, to an Israeli guy, who was visiting Baltimore for a brief stay who happened to come into shul one Shabbos morning. This led to an incredible relationship where the Golombs eventually made Aliyah and work for the very organization founded by the father of this Israeli fellow.

And this was all from a Hello.

What about the feeling that visitors to our shul express time and again upon davening in our shul? The experience of davening shoulder to shoulder with Jews of all types and ages in such a spirited and elevating way is simply overwhelming. It is so pure and so real. Perhaps it is a teeny, tiny taste of what it may have been like in Yerushalayim 2000 years ago and a teeny, tiny taste of what it will be like in Yershalayim HaBenuya.

And this is all reason to be proud and treasure what we have created.

However, as you know, it does present a challenge. Because our backgrounds vary, because we are not all at the same stage of life, we need to make a little extra effort to find ways to connect with each other and give to each other because it may not come naturally.

So we need to do something about that. We need to facilitate that connecting because this shul is a veritable treasure house of talented, caring and giving people. We just need to find each other.

So that's what we hope to jumpstart today. I encourage you all to use this precious opportunity to connect. Whether you've been here for ten years or ten weeks or ten minutes, reach out. Look at those nametags, look for those new faces and introduce yourselves. Expand your horizons, go out of the box, talk to people of a different age group and find the treasures in our shul that are sitting right next to you.

And this is not just for today. When you're in shul next shabbos, here's an idea; Why not take on the role of the official welcoming committee of the shul? Even if you're brand new. You see someone standing alone, walk over to them. Don't wait for someone to say hello to you.

Act like you own the place and care about the guests coming through because after all, you do own the place and you do care about the people inside.

A few years ago, a woman repeated the following to Rabbi Hauer. She was in Seven Mile Market and was helpful and friendly to a woman in the store whom she did not know. The woman turned to her and said, "You must be from Bnai Jacob Sharrei Zion. That's the kind of thing people from Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion do."

In fact the woman who did the kindness was not from Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion. But the comment was very telling.

It is my hope and prayer that Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion always be associated with warmth, caring and reaching out. It should be the feeling that is generated both within the shul and beyond.

And in this Zechus we should merit the Geula Sheleimah and be able to transplant this holy shul to Yershulayim HaBenuya!