



The Wise Shoemaker of Studena

By Syd Lieberman

The merchant Samuel lacks good manners and fails to act kindly toward the wise but disheveled shoemaker. We all naturally react to people, places, and situations based on our impressions – on what we see, hear, smell, etc. What is important is that these impressions don't dictate how we act toward others – a lesson Samuel needed to learn and Yossi was able to teach. We make choices every day about how we behave toward others. To anticipate such real-life situations and make them more comfortable, devote some family time to role-playing diverse personalities in a wide variety of circumstances. Your family might begin by acting out a scene between Samuel and Yossi, moving on to other circumstances in which we strive to treat each other as we wish to be treated. These activities and related discussions can serve as reminders that character is determined by how we treat those to whom we have no strong connection or whom we have no clear need to treat well, but who deserve our consideration just the same. In Hebrew this precept of treating others respectfully is called *betzelem elohim*, a reminder that each human being is created "in the image of God."

An important value in Jewish tradition is *hachnasat orchim* (welcoming guests). The quintessential examples of this trait of kindness and inclusion were Abraham and Sarah, whose tent was always open to strangers who might come along and be in need of food, shelter, and a friendly face. Samuel's desire to have Yossi present at his daughter's wedding was nothing more than an attempt to puff himself up in order to seem more important in his guests' (and, perhaps, his own!) eyes. Whether by inviting a neighbor who lives alone to our home for a holiday meal or giving the last cookie on the plate to a visiting cousin, we can all practice *hachnasat orchim*, a lesson we hope Samuel learned from the wise shoemaker of Studena.

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