



## MUCH, MUCH BETTER

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*A mysterious traveler, welcomed into a couple's home for Shabbat, shares a strange and wonderful blessing with them. The two can't help wondering: What will happen next?*

There are many things that children can do, even from a young age, to learn about welcoming guests. Talk with your children about the kinds of things you can do to make any guest feel comfortable, be it a grown-up or a playmate. Some things that even little children can do are:

- greet guests with a smile when they come to the door;
- say goodbye when guests leave;
- share toys and books with guests;
- comfort a guest who is lonely or having a difficult time.

With older children, you can talk about more sophisticated topics.

- How does it feel to be a guest in someone's home?
- What makes a person feel comfortable in someone else's home?
- How do we behave when a guest in someone's home?
- How can you make a grown-up guest feel more comfortable when in your home?
- How should we treat a guest at the table?
- What might you say to a guest who leaves?

### THE JEWS OF IRAQ

*Much, Much Better* is a very special PJ Library book not only for its message that children (while potentially chaos-creating!) make our homes “much, much better,” but because it takes place in a Jewish world that no longer exists—Iraq. The Iraqi

Jewish community was said to be one of the world's oldest—dating back to 600 B.C.E. Judaism flourished in Iraq and many Jewish laws and traditions were born in what was then Babylon, the most important Jewish community after the destruction of Jerusalem. This community thrived until the 2nd half of the 20th century, when persecution abounded. While there were 150,000 Iraqi Jews in 1948, there are, sadly, only a handful left. Many people around the world remember with great fondness the Iraqi Jewish community of their youth.

### WELCOMING GUESTS

A fundamental Jewish value is that of hospitality. The quintessential role models for this were Abraham and Sarah, our Biblical ancestors. When three guests unexpectedly arrived at their tent, without hesitation Abraham and Sarah warmly welcomed them, made them feel comfortable, and fed them generously.

Shlomo and Miriam go to great lengths to make sure they have a guest at their table. While many of us feel stretched making plans for even the most comfortable guests—friends, neighbors and family members—how wonderful it can be when we are inspired to include others who might enjoy or need an invitation. Especially around the holidays, there are many people who are alone and an invitation to a home with children can transform a lonely time into one of great joy. Pj