

Genesis 18:1-8

א וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה בְּאַלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם: ב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרָץ לִקְרַאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם־נָא מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶל־נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: ד יִקַּח־נָא מֵעֵט־מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ: ה וַאֲקַחְהָ פֶתֶלֶחַם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבַבְכֶם אַחַר תַּעֲבְרוּ כִי־עַל־כֵּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל־עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: ו וַיִּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה אֶל־שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מִהָרִי שְׁלֹשׁ סְאִים קָמַח סֹלֶת לוֹשִׁי וְעָשִׂי עֲגוֹת: ז וַאֲל־הַבָּקָר רֹץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן־בָּקָר בֶּדֶ וְטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנְּעָר וַיִּמְהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ: ח וַיִּקַּח חֲמֹמֶה וְחֹלֵב וּבֶן־הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנֵיהֶם וְהוּא עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ:

1. And the Eternal One appeared to him in the plains of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;
2. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the ground,
3. And said, my lords, if now I have found favor in your sight, pass not away, I beseech you, from your servant;
4. Let a little water, I beseech you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;
5. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and you comfort your hearts; after that you shall pass on; seeing that you are come to your servant. And they said, So do, as you have said.
6. And Abraham hurried to the tent to Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes.
7. And Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to a young man; and he hurried to prepare it.
8. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they ate.

An (apparently) unrelated text from the Mishnah (Peah 1):

אֵלוּ דְּבָרִים שֶׁאָדָם אוֹכֵל פְּרוּתֵיהֶן בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְהִקְרוֹן קִיּוּמָת לּוֹ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. כְּבוֹד אָב וָאִם, וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים, וְהַבָּאת שְׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ וְתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנִגְדַּת כָּלֶם:

These are the things which bring benefit here and now, but whose full value can only be measured in the light of eternity: honouring one's father and mother, acts of loving kindness, bringing peace between a person and their neighbour, and the study of Torah leads to them all.

## Hospitality Jewish Texts

This list is discussed in the Talmud, where other mitzvot are added to the list: attending the beit midrash morning and evening, welcoming in guests, visiting the sick, enabling bride and groom to rejoice, consoling the bereaved, praying with sincerity. Some of these are based on a rather fanciful notion of 'imitateo Dei', for example, the rabbis understood God's appearance to Avraham at this point (right after his circumcision) as 'visiting the sick'. The rabbis in the passage below are comparing the relative merits of the mitzvot, though it is taken as read that ALL are equally observed.

From Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 127A

אמר רבי יוחנן: גדולה הכנסת אורחין כהשכמת בית המדרש.... ורב דימי  
מנהרדעא אמר: יותר מהשכמת בית המדרש.... אמר רב יהודה אמר רב:  
גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה, דכתיב (בראשית יח) ויאמר  
אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר וגו'.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Hospitality to wayfarers is as great as early attendance at the Bet Hamidrash... And Rav Dimi of Nehardea said: It is greater than early attendance at the Bet Hamidrash.... Rav Yehuda cited Rav: Hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the presence of the Shechinah, for it is written And [Avraham] said: 'My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. (note difference with previous translation - My Lord, meaning God, and 'My lords', meaning the three visitors.

The traditional explanation of this narrative is that Avraham was talking to God, and then saw the three angels. He left off from speaking to God in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *hachnasat orechim* (welcoming guests). The Talmud text continues, "Rabbi Eleazar said: Come and observe how the conduct of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like that of mortals. The conduct of mortals [is such that] an inferior person cannot say to a great[er] man, Wait for me until I come to you; whereas in the case of the Holy One, ever to be blessed, it is written it is written Bereishit 18:3 'And [Avraham] said: 'My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.