

## The Ultimate Chessed Model

By Yoni Aharon, 10th Grade

**W**hen portraying the scene of Avraham welcoming the angels disguised as unidentified nomads, the Torah provides a detailed account of how Avraham interacted with them in preparation and execution of the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim, welcoming guests. In fact, the Radak suggests that the primary purpose of the entire story is to provide for us a paradigm for how to perform acts of kindness.

Even a cursory reading of the story leaves the reader in awe of the speed Avraham exhibited in performing the mitzvah. For every situation, Avraham doesn't just walk – he runs. The preparations are done with zerizus. His actions are even more impressive, as the Ramban points out, since he was old, weak, and in pain from the recent brit milah, and that he had a household full of servants ready to assist. Yet, Avraham teaches us the importance of doing the mitzvah with alacrity and making sure to do most of the mitzvah on one's own.

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## Prepare To Act

By Mordechai Ostreicher, 12th Grade

**T**his week's laining begins by relating to us how Hashem, the omnipotent creator, once again portrayed his qualities of kindness that we as his mortal creations are meant to emulate. God Himself visited Avraham who was recuperating from his Bris Milah which Avraham had performed on himself three days earlier.

For Avraham, who personified kindness, the pain was more than physical. He wanted mortal visitors for whom he can perform acts of kindness. He wanted human guests. And so Hashem sent three messengers, angels disguised as farmers, to visit Avraham.

But in addition to providing the man of kindness with an opportunity to pursue his righteous desires, the angels had additional missions. They came as celestial agents to perform superhuman tasks. Rashi tells us that one of the angels came to tell Sara that she was going to have a baby boy, one of them came to destroy the city of S'dom, and the third came to heal Avraham from the pain of his Bris. This

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### Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

## Parshas Vayeira Questions

1. Where is butter mentioned in this parsha? In what context is butter mentioned in the Prophets?
2. In this parsha, who is referred to as being "elderly" with the expression *Zaken* or *Zekainim*? (4 answers)
3. In this parsha, which two people question Hashem about killing a *tzaddik* (righteous person)?
4. In this parsha, which two people make a Mishteh - "a feast"?
5. Where is salt mentioned in this parsha? When is the next time that salt is mentioned in the Torah?
6. Aside from the book of Genesis, where else do the cities of Sodom and Amora appear in the Torah?
7. In this parsha, who became intoxicated with wine? What other two people in the book of Genesis became drunk?
8. With regard to which events does the Torah state that Avraham "arose early in the morning"? (3 answers) Who else in this parsha arose early in the morning?

## Answers

1. Avraham serves butter to the angels (Genesis 18:8). In the book of Judges, Yael serves butter to Sisra (Shoftim 5:25).
2. The Torah refers to both Avraham and Sarah as "elderly" (Genesis 18:11). Later on, the Torah describes the crowd that converged on Lot's house as ranging "from young to old" (Genesis 19:4). Lastly, the daughters of Lot called their father a *Zakein* (Genesis 19:31).
3. Avraham asks Hashem if He will kill the *tzaddikim* of Sodom (Genesis 18:25). Avimelech also asks Hashem if He will kill a *tzaddik* (referring to himself for not touching Sarah) (Genesis 20:4).
4. Lot makes a feast for the angels (Genesis 19:3), and Avraham makes a feast when Yitzhak is weaned (21:8).
5. Lot's wife turns around and becomes "a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26). Salt is not mentioned again until Leviticus 2:13 with regard to the salt required for *korbonot*.
6. The song in Parshat Ha'azinu mentions Sodom and Amora (Deut. 32:32).
7. Lot became drunk after the destruction of Sodom and Amora (Genesis 19:33). Also, Noach became drunk after the Flood (Genesis 9:21), and the brothers became drunk after bringing Benyamin to see Yosef (Genesis 43:34).
8. Avraham arose early to look at what happened to Sodom (Genesis 19:27), to send away Hagar and Yishmael (Genesis 21:14), and to travel to the *Akeida* (Genesis 22:3). In this parsha, Avimelech also "arose early in the morning" to consult with his advisors after Hashem tells him in a dream that Avraham is married to Sarah (Genesis 20:8).

# ALIYAH SUMMARY

**1st Aliyah** - Hashem visits Avraham after he is given a Bris Milah. Avraham sees three travelers and he invites them in with incredible hospitality. He and Sarah prepare a lavish meal for them and afterwards these travelers reveal themselves to be Malachim who tell them that Sarah will have a son in one year's time. Sarah laughs at this news and Hashem expresses His displeasure with her for laughing.

**2nd Aliyah** - The Malachim head to the five cities of Sedom in order to destroy them and save Lot from Sedom. Hashem tells Avraham about His plans to destroy Sedom and Avraham tries to save Sedom by bargaining with Hashem. Unfortunately, Avraham's bargaining fails and we will see in the next couple of Aliyos how Sedom does in fact get destroyed.

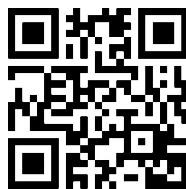
**3rd Aliyah** - The Malachim come to Sedom and Lot invites them to his home. The people of Sedom become so enraged with an act of Chesed occurring in their city that they surround the house and try to harm the guests. As the people of Sedom try to break into the house, the angels strike the people with blindness. The Malachim then tell Lot that Sedom is to be destroyed. They encourage him to run away. Lot, his wife, and his two daughters leave the city and are told not to look back.

**4th Aliyah** - Hashem destroys Sedom. In the midst of fleeing the city, Lot's wife looks back and is transformed into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters take shelter in a cave and, thinking that the entire world was destroyed, Lot's daughters intoxicate their father, seduce him, and eventually each give birth to a son. They were the forefathers of Amon and Moav. The Aliyah continues with Avraham moving to Garar which belonged to the Plishtim. Avimelech, the Melech Plishtim, takes Sarah because he thought that she was Avraham's sister. Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream and tells him that he must return Sarah to her husband. Avimelech does so and gives them both many gifts in addition. At the end of the Aliyah we hear about the birth of Yitzchak, who receives a Bris when he is eight days old.

**5th Aliyah** - In this Aliyah we see that Yitzchak grows up. Sarah sees that Yishmael is a negative influence on Yitzchak, and Sarah tells Avraham to expel Yishmael and Hagar from their home. Avraham is reluctant to do so but Hashem tells him to listen to everything that Sarah says. The Aliyah continues with Hagar and Yishmael wandering in the desert. Eventually, an angel shows a well to Hagar, thus enabling the pair to survive. Yishmael continues to live in the desert, and eventually gets married there.

**6th Aliyah** - Avimelech requests that he and Avraham form a pact, and Avraham agrees that they will not harm each other. However, Avraham is angry that Avimelech's servants stole a well that he had personally dug. Avraham sets apart seven sheep as a testimony that he had in fact dug the well, not Avimelech. He then plants an orchard and establishes an inn in Be'er Sheva, proclaiming the name of Hashem to anyone who enters.

**7th Aliyah** - This is the Aliyah where Akaidas Yitzchak takes place. Avraham was prepared to kill his own son because Hashem said to do so. At the very last minute a Malach calls out to him to refrain from killing Yitzchak. Avraham is shown a ram in a nearby bush that he is told to take as a Korban instead of his son. Hashem promises Avraham great blessings as a reward for passing this difficult test. After these events, our Aliyah ends with Avraham Aveinu being notified that his sister in law had given birth to children. One of these children, Bitul, is going to be the father of Rivka, the future wife of Yitzchak.



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# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz  
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by  
Yoni Sheinman

## Tefillin at a Bris

- Many poskim say that you should wear tefillin at a bris.
- The Shach says that we do the bris before aleinu and we keep our tefillin on for the bris since both the tefillin and the bris are both an ot (sign). These dinim are maybe connected in that we do the bris before aleinu since most people won't take their tefillin off before aleinu.
- The Harerei Kedem explains the first din of the Shach based on the function of aleinu. He says the function is either that it finishes up the davening, or it's a way to say goodbye to the shul after you have already finished davening. If it's to finish davening, you should do aleinu and finish davening before the bris, while if it is to say goodbye to the shul, you should say aleinu after the bris.
- The Magen Avraham and Mishna Berurah says that on a day with a bris, the people should not remove their tefillin until after the bris.
- The Shach says that the reason for this is that we always need 2 signs just like 2 witnesses for testimony.
- Other Achronim give a different answer based on the gemara in Megillah which says "Layehudim haysa orah visimcha visasson vikar". The word orah is a reference to torah, the word simcha is a reference to Yom Tov, the word sasson is a reference to Mila, and the word vikar is a reference to tefillin. Since mila and tefillin are right next to each other, maybe we can explain that they should be together and we should keep our tefillin on for a bris milah.
- The Be'er Hetev points out that if orah refers to torah, then we should always have the torah reading before the bris (like on a monday or thursday).
- Based on the gemara Eruvin, there is a fundamental problem with the reasoning of the Shach. The gemara says that Rebbe Akiva says that on shabbos or Yom Tov one should not wear tefillin since both shabbos/Yom tov and tefillin are each otot (signs) and we don't want to make it seem that the ot of shabbos is not good enough. Based on this gemara it seems that we specifically don't want two signs at once.
- Many Achronim take the approach to answer this question that we always need 2 signs. At a bris, we have the bris and the tefillin. On shabbos we have shabbos and you always walk around with a bris.
- The Elyah Raba explains differently that shabbos and tefillin both discuss leaving mitzrayim and having both of them as an ot at the same time would suggest that either of them are not strong enough to be an ot by itself. The bris is an ot, but it's not about leaving mitzrayim so it doesn't conflict with the ot of shabbos or tefillin.
- The Igros Moshe says that ot of the bris is not just having the bris, it's the action of getting it. Therefore we wear tefillin to show that the baby is about to have an ot for the rest of their life.
- Rav Ovadia Yosef says that the baby is getting the ot and he is not wearing tefillin so the two signs don't conflict.
- Nafka Mina: If a person does not have a bris milah, should he wear tefillin on shabbos?
- The Terumot Hadeshen says that it is a silly question. This idea is an agadata and you can't always derive a halacha from an agadata.
- Another Nafka Mina could be if a person does not have the ot of issur melacha. The ot of shabbos is part of this idea. If a person is in the desert for many days and can do melacha on shabbos, there are those that say you don't wear tefillin.
- There are others that hold that at the time of a bris, you don't wear tefillin.
- They explain that just like on shabbos we don't want 2 signs, so at the bris we don't want 2 signs.
- The Tzitz Eliezer says strongly that one should keep their tefillin on for a bris.
- The common practice is not to specifically put tefillin on for a bris, but not to take them off if you already have them on.
- On Rosh Chodesh when we have already taken the tefillin off, even though it seems from the mishna berurah that you should put it on, the common practice is that you don't put it back on. This idea is from the Sheilot U'Teshuvot Torat Yekutiel.
- The Teshuvat Maaseh Adam says that you should put the tefillin back on for mussaf.
- Who should be wearing tefillin at a bris?
- From the lashon of most of the poskim it seems that everyone should be wearing their tefillin. The Tzitz Eliezer says this.
- The teshuva Baer Moshe says that the minhag is that the bris is right before aleinu so that everyone would be wearing their tefillin for the bris.
- The Chida says that the mohel and the tzandig should be wearing tefillin. Only the baala bris and the ones who are most involved.
- In the sefer Ot Chaim Shalom he says that we should not be wearing tefillin at the time of the mila especially a moel since we don't want anything to get in the way for him.
- The Gemara in menachot says that the retzuot of the tefillin on the front must be black and on the back it can be any color besides for red. This is because we don't want people to think it is blood and then it will be a disgrace to the tefillin. Therefore there is to suggest that anyone who is close to the baby and could be in the radius of the blood should not be wearing tefillin.

# SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With  
Ari Ivry*

## Acting Out of Character

Avraham Avinu is famously known for his attribute of kindness. When guests were at his doorstep, he would welcome them in and offer them food and drinks. However, it is somewhat surprising to find that Avraham spoke “harshly” to Hashem (Rashi v.23) when he was arguing for the salvation of Sodom. This teaches us that when faced with the hefty task of saving another’s life, a person may be required to overcome his nature and personality and take radical action. Hence, when Avraham, whose nature was to be polite and kind, gathered the courage to act in a manner of harshness and severity when attempting to save lives.

It was during the Nazi takeover of Budapest in the year 1944 when the Jews in Budapest were scrambling to escape. One particular Jewish family needed to hide their baby boy from the Nazis' hands. Thinking of possible shelters, they eventually came to the conclusion that they needed to give him to their gentile neighbor. They hoped the neighbor would take the baby boy since he resembled an Arian child and was a quiet baby. So they knocked on the neighbor’s door with their baby boy in hand and begged the neighbor to take their baby. The neighbor initially declined. He did not want to get tangled in any business that involved the Nazis, because he usually kept to himself. The next day, however, the Jewish family heard a knock at their door and saw their neighbor standing by their doorstep. He declared he would take the baby on condition that this never be mentioned. The family agreed and thanked their beloved neighbor. The boy ended up surviving through the holocaust in the neighbor’s possession and was later reunited with his mother who made lived through it too. This action done by the discreet neighbor shows the radical action necessary for a person to save a life.

This story, though, teaches something even more critical that can be applied to one’s spiritual life as a Jew. If one sees another Jew “drowning” spiritually due to a lack of Jewish education (or other reasons), one should make every effort to help him — even if this entails an action which is out of character with one's usual personality.

DOVIE HIRSCH  
11TH GRADE

HACHNASAS ORCHIM

At the beginning of Parshas Vayeira, the Torah introduces us to the concept of hachnosas orchim, describing how eager Avraham Avinu was to serve guests and how graciously he served them.

In his sefer Shalom Rav, Rabbi Rosner says that Avraham Avinu wasn't the only one in this parasha who performed the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim. In the next perek we find Lot performing this mitzvah when he invites the angels who came to Sodom into his home. Lot later takes extreme measures to protect these angels from attempted assault by the malicious people of Sodom.

Why do Chazal emphasize and magnify the hachnosas orchim of Avraham, yet they hardly comment on Lot's hospitality?

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, cited in Lahzot Benoam Hashem, suggests the following: Both Avraham and Lot engaged in hachnosas orchim, but there is a qualitative difference in the way each of them performed this mitzvah. When describing Lot's actions, the pasuk says, "The two angels came toward Sodom." Here, they are explicitly identified as malachim, whereas with respect to Avraham, they were called anashim. Reb Levi Yitzchak explains that Avraham thought they were men—simple nomads traveling in the desert. Lot saw that his guests were angels—important, dignified individuals, and he was therefore prepared to host them. Lot performed the mitzvah only because he thought his guests were important people. Avraham, ish hachessed, the man of kindness, ran toward his guests even though he thought they were just a group of simple desert wanderers. The essence of hachnosas orchim is not for our pride or kavod; it is not so we can brag about who we are hosting. It's a great thing to host important people, but the real message of hachnosas orchim is to perform the mitzvah even for simple, unfamiliar people who need hospitality.

We have to contemplate this point when we perform mitzvos. How much is our chesed really about the recipient, and how much is it about ourselves as the providers? Our chesed has to be focused on the recipient and their needs, not on ourselves and our needs.

A story is told about the legendary hospitality and amazing sensitivity of Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the great tzaddik and spiritual leader of early-20th-century Jewry in Eretz Yisrael. One Pesach, some guests from outside of Eretz Yisrael came to visit Yerushalayim and asked to join Rabbi Sonnenfeld and his family for Pesach. He graciously agreed to their request and brought them to his home. Just to be cordial, the guests offered the Rabbi some money to help defray the huge expenses of hosting the Pesach Seder, and, much to their surprise, he immediately accepted their offer. They promptly gave his wife, the Rebbetzin, 5 liras sterling, and they settled into their rooms. On the first day of Chol Ha'moed, when the guests were about to leave, Rabbi Sonnenfeld suddenly appeared at the door to their room with the 5 liras sterling, and he placed them on the table in front of them. The guests were both surprised and confused. They thought that the Rabbi had accepted their offer to pay for part of the food that they would be eating at his home, yet here he was, returning all their money to them. Rabbi Sonnenfeld explained his strange behavior to them. He said, "When you offered to pay for your meals, I realized that you didn't feel good about taking other people's food for free, and I knew that you would have limited how much of my food you were going to eat, thus not being able to enjoy the holiday meals. I therefore allowed you to give me

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## STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOEL HORWITZ

The Blanket - Advice from Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel

When I was in Israel, I went to Me'ah She'arim, the traditionally Orthodox area within Jerusalem. Along with a group of businessmen I was with, I had the opportunity to have an audience with Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the head of the Mir Yeshiva seminary. I had never heard of him and didn't know anything about him. We went into his study and waited ten to fifteen minutes for him. Finally, the doors opened. What we did not know was that Rabbi Finkel was severely afflicted with Parkinson's disease. He sat down at the head of the table, and, naturally, we inclined to look away. We didn't want to embarrass him. He asked, "Who can tell me what the lesson of the Holocaust is?" We were all looking away, and we heard this big bang on the table: "Gentlemen, look at me, and look at me right now." Now his speech affliction was worse than his physical shaking. It was really hard to listen to him and watch him. He said, "I have only a few minutes for you because I know you're all busy American businessmen." You know, just a little dig there. Then he asked, "Who can tell me what the lesson of the Holocaust is?" He called on one man, who didn't know what to do — it was like being called on in the fifth grade without the answer. And the man says, "We will never, ever forget..." And the rabbi completely dismisses him. I felt terrible for the man until I realized the rabbi was getting ready to call on someone else. All of us were sort of under the table, looking away — you know, please, not me. He called on another guy, who had such a fantastic answer: "We will never, ever again be a victim or bystander." The rabbi said, "You guys just don't get it. Okay, gentlemen, let me tell you the essence of the human spirit. "As you know, during the Holocaust, the people were transported in the worst possible, inhumane way by railcar. They thought they were going to a work camp. We all know they were going to a death camp. After hours and hours in this inhumane corral with no light, no bathroom, cold, they arrived at the camps. The doors were swung wide open, and they were blinded by the light. Men were separated from women, mothers from daughters, fathers from sons. They went off to the bunkers to sleep. As they went into the area to sleep, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket, when he went to bed, had to decide, 'Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people who did not get one, or am I going to pull it toward myself to stay warm?'" Rabbi Finkel said, "It was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit because we pushed the blanket to five others." With that, he stood up and said, "Take your blanket. Take it back to America and push it to five other people."

*(Hirsch-Continued from page 5)*

the money, which in turn enabled you to eat to your hearts' content, thinking, as you were, that you were paying for part of it. But now that you have completed your stay at my home and are preparing to leave, I am returning your money, as I had no intention whatsoever of actually taking money from you in exchange for the tremendous opportunity to perform the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim!" Rabbi Sonnenfeld went above and beyond to ensure that his guests truly felt relaxed and comfortable.

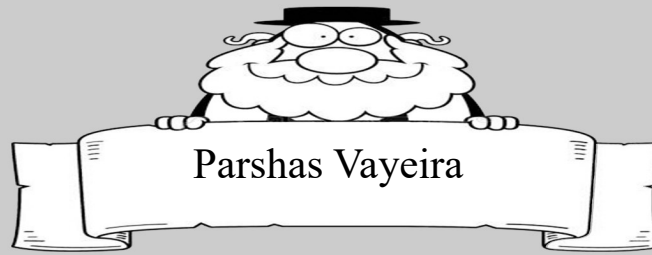
Avraham had 3 guests, all of whom were total strangers he had never seen before in his life. Nevertheless, he ran to the cattle and slaughtered 3 animals for these 3 people—ensuring that each guest would be able to have his own tongue, a great delicacy. In truth, the size of one tongue from a single head of cattle is far more than enough to feed three people. In fact, it is virtually impossible for one person to finish a whole tongue in a single sitting! Why then did Avraham do what he did? The answer is because this is how one makes a guest feel like he is the most important person in the world. One of the main facets of hospitality is to honor one's guest, rather than just providing for his bare necessities for food and shelter.

Hachnosas Orchim has been a defining attribute of Klal Yisroel going back to Avrohom Avinu. Hakadosh Boruch Hu chose Avrohom Avinu and his descendants as the Am Hanivchar to instill in his children to carry on and emulate his ways. Klal Yisroel is now known as a nation of rachmonim and gomlei chassodim. These are the traits of Avrohom Avinu and they are the essence of Klal Yisroel.





Rabbi E. Polakoff



12th Grade Shiur Rebbe

Human beings are curious. When we see or hear something, we naturally want to find out more. There is even a term, "rubber-necking," which is when drivers slow down to get a better look at an accident or incident on the other side of the road. Is this human trait of curiosity something positive or negative?

In Parshas Vayeira we read about the destruction of Sedom. One of the most well-known aspects of this story is when Lot's wife turns around to look at the destruction and is punished by turning into a pillar of salt. Why was salt chosen as her punishment? Rashi (יט:כו ד"ה ותהי נציב מלח) explains that since she had sinned with salt when she did not want to serve salt to her guests, she was punished with salt, Midah Keneged Midah. Perhaps we can suggest another reason as well, which teaches us an important lesson about human nature and interaction.

Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin ("Netziv") explains (העמק דבר ויקרא ב:יג) that salt is an ingredient that can enhance the taste of food, but if one adds too much salt it will ruin the food. Salt represents balance in life. Most things are good in the proper measure, but when they are in excess they can often be detrimental.

When Sedom was being destroyed, the proper reaction was care and concern. Avraham Avinu exemplified the concern for others when he negotiated with Hashem to save the city and its inhabitants. However, Lot and his family were not on the level of Avraham Avinu (עי' רש"י יט:יז ד"ה אל תביט אחריו) and they were therefore commanded not to turn around to see Sedom's destruction. Hashem knew that if they looked, they would not be looking out of care and concern for their neighbors, rather they would be looking purely out of curiosity. Lot's wife's curiosity got the best of her and she turned to look and see what was happening. She was punished by being turned into a pillar of salt because she did not have the proper balance. She was not curious because of her care and concern, but rather just for the sake of curiosity.

Often things happen around us and we are curious as to the details of what happened. When our curiosity is because we care and we are concerned about the people involved, that is completely appropriate. However, we must make sure that our curiosity is not just curiosity and that we always maintain proper respect for people's privacy and dignity.



## THE POWER OF EMUNAH

### TANI LEITNER, 12TH GRADE

Rav Soloveitchik and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks agree that the real test of the Akedat Yitzchak was to test Avraham Avinu's belief in Hashem. Hashem had just commanded Avraham to do an incredibly daunting task: to kill his only son that was promised to him. Additionally, He did not promise Avraham that he would get another son. This test, full of contradictions and ambiguities, is one that most nearly everyone would find impossible to complete. Put yourself in Avraham's shoes; could you possibly complete a challenge so emotionally draining? Could you kill your own son, just because Hashem commanded you to? The test was not fair to anyone, not even Avraham. Yet we find that Avraham not only performs the akeda without hesitation, but he wakes up early that morning with the sole

purpose of fulfilling the word of Hashem. Very often we see things Hashem does as contradictory, such as a pandemic that restricts our ability to go to shul and daven with a minyan. We can look at the age-old pair of questions which have troubled generations of Jewish thinkers: why do good things happen to bad people and why do bad things happen to good people? We see from Akedat Yitzchak that we can attain a level of emunah that, despite any contradictions we might see in the world, will allow us to acknowledge that it all comes from above and it is all for the best. Of course, this does not provide clarity to why these events happened, but as long as we have emunah in Hashem, we can accept the results of these events, even if we don't understand them.

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דברים היוצאים מן הל"ב זכנסיים אל הל"ב