

ETIQUETTE AND MANNERS IN THE TORAH:

1. Visiting the sick

Genesis 18:1: Hashem appeared to him by the plains of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. **Rashi** R. Hama the son of Hanina said: it was the third day after his circumcision and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and enquired after the state of his health.

- Any sickness deserves a visit.
- Bring pleasure and joy to the patient, no sadness.
- Determine patients' needs and their families.
- Pray for them.
- Patients' medical needs, without confusing.
- Physically visit them best
- Not to impose.
- Even important and great person must visit.
- Calling is a mitzvah too!

2. Gratitude

Rashi It was he (Mamre) who advised him (Abraham) regarding the circumcision and therefore He revealed himself to him in his (Mamre's) territory (Genesis Rabbah 42:8).

3. Welcoming guests

Genesis 18:3 he said, "My lords! If it please you, do not go on past your servant.

Talmud Bava Metziah 8b: Abraham **himself went out and saw the Holy One, Blessed be He, standing at the entrance** to his tent. **This is as it is written:** "My Lord, if now I have found favor in your eyes, **do not leave Your servant**" (Genesis 18:3), i.e., God's presence was there, and Abraham asked Him for permission to attend to the travelers.

4. Honour the elder

Rashi on Genesis 18:3 He addressed himself to the Chief of them; calling them all "lords, whilst to their Chief he said "Do not I pray thee pass away", for he knew that if he would not pass by, his companions would certainly remain with him.

5. Speak little, do much

Genesis 18:4 Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree.

Bava Metziah 87a The Gemara continues analysing the same passage. **It is written: "And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and satisfy your heart" and it is written: "And Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good" Rabbi Elazar said: From here we learn that the righteous say little and do much, whereas the wicked say much and do not do even a little.**

6. Host etiquette

Genesis 18:5 And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on—seeing that you have come your servant's way." They replied, "Do as you have said."

7. Be quick to serve, educate your family

Genesis 18:6-7 Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quick, three *seahs* of choice flour! Knead and make cakes! Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to a servant-boy, who hastened to prepare it. **Rashi:** This was Ishmael whom he bade to do this in order to train him to the performance of religious duties (in this case the duty of hospitality).

8. Enough to go around

Rashi on Genesis 18:7 There were three calves so that he might give them to eat three tongues together with mustard condiment

9. Adhere to local customs

Rashi, Genesis 18:8 They appeared to be eating: from this we may learn that a man should not act differently from the prevalent custom.

10. At your services

Reggio on Torah, Genesis 18:8:3

...“And he stood over them” — meaning, he was standing on his feet near them to serve them.

11. Ask after family / Endear to spouse

- a. **Genesis 18:9** They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he replied, “There, in the tent.”
- b. **Rashi on Genesis 18:9** that of Sarah also, they asked, ויא “where is he (Abraham)”? So we may learn that in his inn a man should enquire of the man (the host) as to his wife’s welfare and of the woman (the hostess) about her husband’s.

12. Escorting guests

Genesis 18:16 The agents set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Abraham walking with them to see them off.

Steinsaltz on Genesis 18:16 And Abraham was walking with them to see them off, as befitting a host.

13. Good natured people

a. **Genesis 18:19**

For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of Hashem by doing what is just and right, in order that Hashem may bring about for Abraham what has been promised him.”

b. **Yevamot 79a**

David said: There are three distinguishing marks of this nation, the Jewish people. They are merciful, they are shamefaced, and they perform acts of kindness.

They are merciful, as it is written: “And He will give you mercy, and have mercy upon you and multiply you” (Deuteronomy 13:18); not only will God have mercy upon you, but He will bestow the attribute of mercy upon you.They perform acts of kindness, as it is written: “For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to practice righteousness and justice” (Genesis 18:19), i.e., to perform acts of kindness.

14. Who is inviting you?

Genesis 19, 2: And he said, "Behold now my lords, please turn to your servant's house and stay overnight and wash your feet, and you shall arise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will stay overnight in the street." And they said, "No...". But to Abraham they said, "So shall you do..." From here [we learn] that one may refuse an offer by a person of lesser importance, but should not refuse an offer by a great man.

15. Do all what the host says, (except leave)

Pesachim 86b

The Gemara relates that **Rav Huna, son of Rav Natan, happened to come to the house of Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak. They said to him: What is your name? He said to them: Rav Huna**, even though using his title appeared to show pride. **They said: Our master may sit on the bed** due to his great stature. **He sat** immediately, despite the fact that common etiquette dictated that he initially refuse. **They gave him a cup** of wine that **he accepted the first time**, without initially refusing it. **And he drank it in two sips and did not turn his face** from the rest of the people who were present. These actions all appeared to be departures from the common etiquette and surprised his hosts, who **said to him: What is the reason you call yourself Rav Huna? He said to them: I am known by that name** since my youth, and therefore referring to myself with that title does not indicate

conceit. They asked him: **What is the reason that when they told you to sit on the bed, you sat immediately and did not initially refuse?** **He said to them:** We have learned that **anything the master of the house says to you, you should do, except for an inappropriate request, such as if he says to leave.** They continued to question his conduct: **What is the reason that when they gave you the cup, you accepted it the first time and did not politely demur?** **He said to them:** **One may refuse a lesser person, but one may not refuse a great person;** when an important person makes a request, it is respectful to comply immediately. They persisted in their questioning: **What is the reason you drank it in two sips?** **He said to them:** **As it was taught in a baraita: One who drinks his cup at one time is a guzzler;** drinking it in **two sips is proper manners;** one who drinks his cup in **three sips is haughty,** as he thereby demonstrates that he is pampered and indulgent. They continued to question his conduct: **What is the reason you did not turn your face** in accordance with the common etiquette? **He said to them:** **We learned in the mishna that a bride turns her face;** however, there is no reason for anyone else to turn his face.

16. Will you eat?

If one enters a house [by invitation], whatever the host tells him he must do.

Tractate Derekh Eretz Rabbah 6:1 *If one enters a house [by invitation], whatever the host tells him he must do.* The story is told of R. Simeon b. Anṭīpaṭros with whom many guests used to come and stay. When he pressed them to eat and drink, they vowed by the Torah that they would neither eat nor drink, but later they partook of food and drink. When the time came for them to depart he used to flog them. This matter came to the notice of Rabban Joḥanan b. Zakkai and the Sages who were angered by it. They said, 'Who will go and inform us [of his action]?' R. Joshua replied, 'I will go and see how he conducts himself'. He went and found him at the entrance of his house and greeted him, 'Peace be upon you, Master'. The other replied, 'Peace be upon you, Master and Teacher'. He said, 'I need a lodging'. The other replied, 'Lodge here in peace'. They sat down and occupied themselves in the study of the Torah until evening. In the morning [R. Joshua] said to him, 'Master, I want to go to the bath-house'. He replied, 'As you wish'; whereupon R. Joshua was afraid lest he would smite him on his thighs. After he returned [from the bath-house] they ate and drank. He then said, 'Who will accompany me [on my way back]?' The other replied, 'I will'. R. Joshua was then meditating and saying [to himself], 'What can I report to the Sages who sent me [to institute inquiries]?' He then turned [to look] back. [R. Simeon] asked him, 'Master, why did you turn to look behind you?' He replied, 'I have something to ask you. Why did you flagellate other guests who stayed with you and me you did not flog?' He said to him, 'Master, you are a great Sage and you have good manners. The persons who stay with me I usually press to eat, but they vow by the Torah [not to eat] and transgress [their vow]; and so have I heard from the mouth of the Sages that whoever vows by the Torah and breaks his vow has to be given forty lashes'. He said to him, 'May Heaven bless you for what you have done. By your life and by the life of your head! Whoever behaves in this manner, give him the forty lashes on your account [57a] and [another] forty on account of the Sages who sent me'. R. Joshua returned and reported to the Sages what he had witnessed while he was with Simeon b. Anṭīpaṭros.

Tractate Derekh Eretz Rabbah 8:1 A guest should not say to his host, 'Serve me that I may eat', but [must wait] until he is invited to eat. If they poured out a goblet [of wine] for him he must drink it with pauses. How many pauses should he make? In the case of warm [beverages] three and with cold four. R. Judah said: This applies only to goblets of Galilee, but with goblets used in Judah he drinks with as many pauses as he likes.

THE TEN TESTS OF ABRAHAM

1. Testing time

- a. **Genesis 22:1** Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test, saying to him, “Abraham.” He answered, “Here I am.”
- b. **Or HaChaim G'd tested Abraham.** The Torah adds the conjunctive letter vav before the word אלוקים to remind us that this was not Abraham's only test, only the most recent and most difficult one.
- c. **Pirkei Avot 5:3** With ten trials was Abraham, our father, tried, and he withstood them all; to make known how great was the love of Abraham, our father (peace be upon him).
- d. **Magen Avot on Avot** “Abraham our forefather was tested with ten trials. The Midrashic sources do not agree on their enumeration

2. Death, Prison & Furnace

a. **Otzar Midrashim, Avraham our Father, The Story of Avraham 3**

The wise men said to King Nimrod: “A child has been born to Terach at this very hour, and from him will descend a nation that will inherit both this world and the World to Come. If you wish, give his father a house full of silver and gold, and have the child killed.” Immediately Nimrod sent messengers to Terach and said: “A child was born to you last night. Hand him over to me, and I will have him killed — and I will fill your house with silver and gold.” Terach replied: “Let me offer a parable. It is like a horse to whom people said, ‘Let us cut off your head, and we’ll give you a house full of barley.’ The horse answered them, ‘Fools! If you cut off my head, who will eat the barley?’ So too, if you kill my son, who will inherit the silver and gold?” The king said to him, “From your words I can tell that a son indeed has been born to you.” Terach replied, “A son was born to me, but he died.” Nimrod said, “I speak of the living, not of the dead.” What did Terach do? He hid his son in a cave for three years. God prepared for him two openings: from one flowed oil and from the other fine flour. Terach went to Nimrod and said, “My son has burned the gods — yours and mine — with fire.” Nimrod sent for Abraham and said, “Why did you do this?” Abraham replied, “I didn’t — the largest one did.” Nimrod said, “Do they have any breath of life to do such a thing?” Abraham answered, “Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying! If they have no power, why do you forsake the One who created heaven and earth and bow to wood?” Nimrod said, “I created heaven and earth by my own power!” Abraham said, “Can you really create? When I left the cave, I saw the sun rise in the east and set in the west. Make it rise in the west and set in the east, and I will bow to you. If not, the One who empowered me to burn the idols will strengthen me again, and I will kill you!” Nimrod turned to his wise men and said, “What should be done with him?” They said, “This is the very one of whom it was said: A nation will arise from him that will inherit both this world and the World to Come. Now, let the same judgment he brought upon the idols be done to him.” Immediately, they threw him into a fiery furnace. At that moment, God was filled with compassion for him and saved him, as it is written: ‘I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur Kasdim.’

b. The Story of Avraham 4

When **Abraham our forefather** gave a sharp answer to Nimrod’s accusation, Nimrod said to him: “Why did you rebel against me and break my idols?” Abraham replied, “This axe in my hand broke them.” Nimrod said, “Does an axe have strength or understanding to do such a thing?” Abraham answered, “Then why did your idols — whom you call your gods — not have enough understanding to defend themselves from being broken?” Nimrod replied, “I am god; I created the world, and I am master of the hidden things. You have destroyed my idols, and I will take vengeance upon you.” Abraham said to him, “If you are a god, reverse the order of the times — make the sun rise in the west and set in the east — and I will know that you are truly a god. And also, tell me what I am thinking in my heart.” Nimrod placed his hand on his beard and stood amazed at such words. Abraham said to him, “You are not a god; you are the son of Cush! Why did you not save your father from death? And you too will one day die.” Immediately Nimrod said to all the kings, “Give me counsel — what shall I do to this youth who has answered me as you have heard and has destroyed my idols, causing me to lose the fear I once inspired?” They said to him, “In what way did he destroy your fear?” He replied, “By fire!” They said, “Then let fire be used to punish him.” At once Nimrod ordered Abraham to be imprisoned — for **twelve years** (some texts say ten, as indicated elsewhere:

seven in Kardu and three in Kutha). During this time, all those kings would bring wood for Abraham's furnace. After twelve years, they brought him out of prison, bound him hand and foot to the ground, and surrounded him with wood on all four sides, to a height of six cubits. They set fire to the wood, and all the kings watched — but the flames did not reach Abraham, nor did the fire harm him.

c. **Pesachim 118a:**

And some say that the angel **Gabriel recited: "And the truth of the Lord endures forever."** This Gemara elaborates: **When the evil Nimrod threw our father, Abraham, into the fiery furnace, Gabriel said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, I will descend and cool the furnace, and I will thereby save the righteous Abraham from the fiery furnace. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: I am unique in my world and Abraham is still unique in his world. It is fitting for the unique to save the unique.** Therefore, God Himself went down and saved him.

3. Go forth:

Genesis 12:1 Hashem said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.

4. Famine:

Genesis 12:10 There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. **Rashi** — in that land only to test him whether he would take exception to God's commands in that He had bidden him to go to the land of Canaan and now forced him to leave it.

5. Sarah taken by Pharaoh

Genesis 12, 15, The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. **Rashi** — They praised her among themselves saying, "This woman is worthy of the king.

6. Battle of four kings

Genesis 14:1 Now, when King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim

7. Brit Bein HaBetarim

Genesis 15:13 And [God] said to Abram, "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years;

8. Hagar

Genesis 16:3 So Sarai, Abram's wife, took her maid, Hagar the Egyptian—after Abram had dwelt in the land of Canaan ten years—and gave her to her husband Abram as concubine.

9. Circumcision

Genesis 17:9,24: God further said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant. ... Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin,

10. Sarah taken by Avimelech

Genesis 20:2 Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

11. Expelling Hagar & Yishmael

Genesis 21:10-11, 22,1: She said to Abraham, "Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his.

12. Akeidat Yitzchak – offering Isaac

Genesis 22:1 Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test, saying to him, "Abraham." He answered, "Here I am."

Which are chosen?

1. Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 26:1

OUR father Abraham was tried with ten trials, | | and he stood firm in them all. The first trial was when our father Abraham was born; all the magnates of the kingdom and the magicians sought to kill him, and he was hidden under the earth for thirteen years without seeing sun or moon. After thirteen years he went forth from beneath the earth, speaking the holy language. The second trial was when he was put into prison for ten years—three years in Kuthi, seven years in Budri. After ten years they sent and brought him forth and cast him into the furnace of fire, and the King of Glory put forth His right hand and delivered him from the furnace of fire. The third trial was his migration from his father's house and from the land of his birth; and He brought him to Haran.. Migration is harder for man than for any other creature. The fourth trial (was the famine). From the day when the heavens and the earth were created, the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought into the world a famine but only in the days of Abraham, and not in any of the lands but only in the land of Canaan, in order to try him and to bring him down into Egypt. The fifth trial was when Sarah his wife was taken to Pharaoh to be (his) wife. And is there any man, who seeing his wife taken away to another man, would not rend his garments? THE sixth trial was (when) all the kings came against him to slay him., They said: Let us first begin with the house of his brother, and afterwards let us begin with him. THE seventh trial (was as follows): "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision ... Do not fear. THE eighth trial (was as follows): "And when Abram was ninety-nine years old" (Gen. 17:1), the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Until now thou hast not been perfect before Me; but circumcise the flesh of thy foreskin, and "walk before me, and be thou perfect". THE ninth trial (was as follows): Ishmael was born with (the prophecy of the) bow, and he grew up with the bow, ... He saw Isaac sitting by himself, and he shot an arrow at him to slay him. Sarah saw (this), and told Abraham. She said to him: Thus and thus has Ishmael done to Isaac, but (now) arise and write (a will in favour) of Isaac, (giving him) all that the Holy One has sworn to give | | to thee and to thy seed. The son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son, with Isaac. THE tenth trial was (as follows): "And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham He tried Abraham each time in order to know his heart, whether he would be able to persevere and keep all the commandments of the Torah or not, and whilst as yet the Torah had not been given, Abraham kept all the precepts of the Torah, as it is said, "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my Torah".

2. Bartenura on Pirkei Avot 5:3:1

Ten tests: One - Ur Kasdim, when Nimrod cast him into the fiery furnace; the second - "Go out from your land", the third - "and there was a famine"); the fourth - "and the woman was taken to the house of Pharaoh", the fifth - the war of the kings; the sixth - the stand between the pieces, where he was shown the subjugation of [his descendants by] the nations; the seventh - the circumcision; the eighth - "and Avimelekh sent... and he took Sarah", the ninth - "Expel this maidservant and her son"; the tenth - the binding [of Isaac].

3. Rambam on Pirkei Avot 5:3:1

The ten tests with which Abraham, our father, was tested are all [in] the words of Scripture. The first is his emigration by His statement, may He be blessed - "Go forth from your land, etc... ***The eighth is the expulsion of Hagar after his being built (having a child) from her. The ninth is the distancing of his son, Yishmael,*** and that is His, may He be blessed, saying, "Let not it be bad in your eyes about the youth, etc." (Genesis 21:12). And Scripture already testified how this thing was difficult in his eyes, in its stating, "And the thing was very bad in the eyes of Abraham". Yet he observed the commandment of God, may He be blessed, and expelled him. And the tenth is the binding of Yitzchak.

4. Rabbeinu Yonah on Pirkei Avot 5:3:1

With ten tests Abraham, our father, was tested - and he withstood them all: The tenth was the burial of Sarah. As it was stated to him (Genesis 13:17), "Get up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you"; but when his wife died, he could not find a place to bury her until he bought it - and he did not question.

5. Avot DeRabbi Natan 33:2

Abraham our forefather was tested with ten trials before the Holy Blessed One, and he emerged from each one complete. They are as follows: Two when God said to him, "Go forth!" Two with his two sons. Two with his two wives. One with the war of the kings. One at the Covenant of the Parts. One in Ur Kasdim. One with circumcision. (The Covenant of the Parts.) And why so many? So that when Abraham our forefather comes to take his reward, the angels will say: More than us, more than anyone, Abraham deserves his reward, as it says (Ecclesiastes 9:7), "Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart."

6. Midrash Tehilim 18

"The LORD is a shield." This means that the Lord refined Abraham through ten trials. These are: when he was thrown into the fiery furnace, as it says, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans" (Genesis 15:7); twice when God told him to go, and twice with Sarah, in Gerar when he said, "Come to my handmaid" (Genesis 16:2), with Ishmael when he sent away Hagar, and when he smote the kings (Genesis 14:14); and when God said to him, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). And during the latter trials, when he saw that the kingdoms were enslaving his descendants, and in Isaac, when God said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac" (Genesis 22:2). Therefore, you have said, "The LORD is a shield" for all who seek refuge in Him. The nations of the world ask, "Why did God love Abraham so much, that He saved him from the fiery furnace, from nine kings and populations, and from all the troubles that he experienced?" God replied, "I am saying to him, 'Sacrifice your son,' and he listens to me and trusts in me. Therefore, I shield him.

Test / Trial	Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer	Midrash Tehilim 18	Avot DeRabbi Natan 33	Rambam	Bartenura	Rabbeinu Yonah
1 Birth & Early Persecution – magicians seek to kill infant Abraham; hidden underground 13 years	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
2 Ur Kasdim – imprisoned and cast into fiery furnace by Nimrod	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
3 Lech Lecha – command to leave homeland and family	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 Famine in Canaan – despite Divine promise	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
5 Sarah Taken by Pharaoh – moral and emotional trial	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6 War of the Kings – Abraham fights to rescue Lot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7 Covenant Between the Pieces – prophecy of exile and suffering	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
8 Circumcision at Age 99	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9 Hagar & Ishmael – taking Hagar, later sending her and Ishmael away in obedience to G-d	✓	✓	✓ (8/9 tests)	✓ (8/9th tests)	✓ (8th test)	✓ (8th test)
10 Sarah & Avimelech – taken again by a foreign king	✗	✓	✓	✓ (7th test)	✓ (8th test)	✓ (7th test)
11 Binding of Isaac (Akeidah)	✓	✓	✓	✓ (10th test)	✓ (10th test)	✓ (9th test)
12 Burial of Sarah – must purchase a grave despite promise	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓ (10th test)

Rabbi Simon Jacobson (The Meaningful Life Centre):

To achieve greatness, every one of us needs to experience, in one form or another, these ten challenges. If you study your life and the life and history of your family, you will find glimpses of the ten different trials and tribulations, what we call "nisyonos." (They may or may not be in the same order as they occurred in the life of Avrohom).

1. The challenge of childhood
2. The challenge of commitment
3. The challenge of change
4. The challenge of deprivation
5. The challenge of intimacy
6. The challenge of confrontation
7. The challenge of suffering
8. The challenge of transformation
9. The challenge of discipline
10. The challenge of becoming Divine

These are the ten general challenges that we will all face in our lifetimes. How we will rise to these ten challenges will define our lives.