

Lesson 1: Welcoming the Traveler

Time needed: 30 minutes

Recommended age range: 5th-12th grade

Objectives:

- Students will explore the fundamental value of welcome and inclusion
- Students will consider the challenges and benefits of caretaking the stranger

Materials: Copies of the text, one per each pair of students

Lesson 1, Text Study 1

1. בראשית פרק יח

(א) וירא אליו יקוק באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום: (ב) וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה (ג) ויאמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל עבדך: (ד) יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם והשענו תחת העץ: (ה) ואקחה פת לחם וסעדו לבכם אחר תעברו כי על כן עברתם על עבדכם ויאמרו כן תעשה כאשר דברת: (ו) וימהר אברהם האהלה אל שרה ויאמר מהרי שלש סאים קמח סלת לושי ועשי עגות: (ז) ואל הבקר רץ אברהם ויקח בן בקר רך וטוב ויתן אל הנער וימהר לעשות אתו: (ח) ויקח חמאה וחלב ובן הבקר אשר עשה ויתן לפניהם והוא עמד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו:

1. Genesis Chapter 18

And the Lord 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 lord, 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.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What do you imagine is the travelers' experience as they pass by the tent? What do you imagine is on their minds?
- 2 Do we know if the travelers are wealthy or poor? Does that impact their situation? What might it mean to be in need due to circumstance rather than due to lack of wealth?
- 3 What does this text tell us about what it means to construct a welcoming tent?
- 4 What details stand out to you in this text? What implications do these details have about the text's overall meaning?

Lesson 1, Text Study 2

2. תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קכז עמוד א

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה, דכתיב (בראשית יח) ויאמר (ה') [אדני] אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר וגו'.

2. BT Shabbat 127a

Rab Judah said in Rab's name: Hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the presence of the Shechinah, for it is written, And he said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away,

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In your life, what are the challenges that make caring for others difficult?
- 2 What is the preoccupation that threatens to distract Abraham from caring for others?
- 3 Until this point in the text, Abraham has *heard* G-d, but has not *seen* G-d. What does it mean for Abraham to finally have a vision of G-d, and then walk away from it to serve the travelers?
- 4 What does Abraham discover about himself in this moment?
- 5 What does he discover about G-d?

This text study was created by Rabbi Steve Greenberg for Keshet. We encourage you to download this resource and share it with others, as long as you credit Rabbi Steve Greenberg and Keshet.