

CHAPTER 6

# Chessed (Kindness)

---

## תּוֹנָה

Part I	The Ultimate Way to Emulate Hashem .....	3
Part II	Hidden Chessed: Being a True Giver .....	8
Part III	Seeking out Opportunities to Give .....	13
Part IV	No Chessed is Ever Too Small.....	19

# The Ultimate Way to Emulate Hashem

---

What would Hashem think of a person who learns Torah all day long, but never lifts a finger to help his friends?

The Gemara [1] shares quite a surprising and serious opinion on the matter: **“Anyone who learns Torah but does not do chessed (acts of kindness) is as if he doesn’t believe in G-d.”**

Wow, that sounds pretty harsh! Of course we all know it’s good to be a nice person, but why is doing chessed so very fundamental to Judaism? And what does acting kindly have to do with believing in G-d?

---

## THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

To answer this question, we must first understand a fundamental concept in the Torah.

As we explained earlier, the whole purpose of life is that we should recognize Hashem as our Creator, and come closer to Him. But we have a fundamental difficulty in achieving this goal: Hashem is not physical, and His essence is beyond human comprehension. **How can we possibly “come close” to Hashem or understand who He really is?**

The Sifsei Chaim [2] answers this question by differentiating between what “close” means in the physical world, versus what “close” means in the spiritual realm.

When it comes to the physical world, 2 objects are said to be “close” together when there is very little space between them. For example, if you hold an apple in one hand and an orange in your other hand, you can bring them closer together by lessening the physical space between them. But if you would have 2 identical tables that are 50 feet apart, we would say they are “not close” – even though they look exactly the same. The physical distance is what separates them.

By contrast, in the spiritual world, there is no such thing as physical space. So what does spiritual “closeness” mean? In the non-physical world, **“closeness” means similarity**. The more two things are similar, the closer they are. For example, imagine that Reuven, Shimon, and Levi are each standing 50 feet away from each other. Reuven is thinking “AAAA”; Shimon is thinking “AAAB”; and Levi is thinking “YE47.” Whose thoughts are closest? Clearly, Reuven’s thoughts are “closest” to Shimon’s thoughts,

because they are the most similar. The physical distance between Reuven and Shimon makes no difference when it comes to measuring closeness in the non-physical world (i.e. their thoughts).

Therefore, the Sifsei Chaim explains that if we want to become “close” to Hashem – who is not physical – the only way to do it is through becoming similar to Him. This is the tremendous mitzvah known as “*V’Halachta Bidrachav*” [3] – following in the ways of Hashem. The more we follow in the ways of Hashem, the more we will become close to Him. **The way to come close to Hashem is by imitating what Hashem does.**

---

### THE BEST WAY TO IMITATE HASHEM

So if we want to come closer to Hashem, we need to follow in His ways. But how should we do that? There are so many things Hashem does... Hashem lights up the world, sends down rain, gives us food, makes the plants grow... which of Hashem’s behaviors should we try to imitate?

Chazal [4] teach us that if you look around the world and try to understand: Who is my Creator? What is He like?... there is one thing that sticks out most blatantly and obviously in the world: “*Chessed Hashem Mal’ah HaAretz – Hashem’s kindnesses fill the earth.*” [5] If your eyes are open, you’ll clearly see that **the world is FULL of Hashem’s chessed!**

There are billions of examples we can give to highlight Hashem’s chessed, but here are a few: Instead of making us see the world in black and white, Hashem gave us the ability to see in color, which is so much more enjoyable. Instead of letting us eat tasteless grey mush for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Hashem created an awesome variety of foods and drinks for us to enjoy... food can be sweet, crunchy, mushy, salty, or any one of unlimited choices! Our bodies, too, are constant reminders of Hashem’s infinite kindness – every breath we take, every move we make, and every heartbeat is a chessed from Hashem! If you pause and try to think of how many acts of kindness Hashem is doing for you at this very moment, the number is unbelievable.

Why does Hashem do this? Why does Hashem take such good care of us, and give us so many pleasures? Chazal teach us that Hashem’s kindnesses are not just incidental; they are fundamental to who Hashem is and how He chooses to interact with the world. The Ramchal writes [6] that **Hashem created the world in order to do chessed; Hashem yearns to give us pleasure!** The ultimate place for us to experience this pleasure is in Olam Haba, but in this world, too, Hashem showers us with a constant stream of kindnesses and assistance whenever we need it.

Therefore, returning to our original point – if we want to come close to Hashem, the best way to do it is by becoming similar to Him, through imitating what He does. And what is the primary thing Hashem does all day long? **The main thing Hashem does**

**is acts of kindness**, as it says: “Chessed Keil Kol HaYom – Hashem does kindnesses all day long.” [7] So if we want to imitate Hashem, we, too, must do acts of kindness. The more we do acts of kindness, the more we will become similar – and therefore closer – to Hashem, which is the ultimate purpose of creation.

---

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHESSED AND EMUNAH

Now we can better understand the original quote from Chazal that said: “Anyone who learns Torah without doing chessed is as if he doesn’t believe in Hashem.”

The Sifsei Chaim [8] explains that a person cannot possibly recognize and appreciate who Hashem is, unless he develops Hashem’s middos within himself. Hashem loves to do chessed, so in order to understand Hashem, we, too, must do chessed! The more we do chessed on our own – and become giving, generous people – the more we can relate to Hashem – the ultimate Giver – and appreciate who He is. By contrast, a person who is lacking in the middah of chessed cannot possibly relate to Hashem; it’s as if he is lacking in basic emunah, lacking a basic understanding of who Hashem is.

Whenever we do an act of chessed, therefore, we are not just doing a simple nice thing. **Every act of chessed is an opportunity to emulate our Creator and fulfill the purpose of creation.**

Rav Avigdor Miller zt”l used to say [9] that whenever we do acts of kindness throughout the day, we should think about how we are emulating our Creator. For example, Rav Avigdor Miller writes that a mother who cleans her baby’s diaper should think about how she is emulating Hashem who washes the “diapers” of Jews who do sins (i.e. Hashem cleans us of our sins). Similarly, when someone goes to work to earn money to support his family, he should think that he is emulating Hashem who supports the entire universe.

Let’s practice noticing our opportunities for doing chessed, and thinking about how we are emulating Hashem by doing these acts of kindness. No act of chessed is too small to have a transformative effect on ourselves and on the entire universe.

---

## Takeaways

*One way to come close to Hashem is by becoming similar to Him.*

*The main thing Hashem does all day is acts of kindness, so the more we perform acts of kindness the more we will become similar to Him and the most we will become closer to Him.*

## Activity Challenge

While doing an act of kindness today, think of the fact that you are emulating Hashem.

For example:

- While serving food to a guest or family member, think of how Hashem, too, provides food for all of His creations.
- While helping someone who is not feeling well, think of how Hashem, too, cares for the sick.
- While doing any act of kindness, think of how Hashem is constantly doing acts of kindness for us all day long. (Try to think of 1 specific chessed Hashem did for you today.)

## Creativity Challenge

Write a rhyme or song about some of the kindnesses that Hashem does for you, and how you can emulate those kindnesses in your own interactions with other people.

## Torah Questions

1. The Gemara (Sotah 14a) explains that we are supposed to emulate Hashem by doing acts of kindness, such as providing clothing for people, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, and burying the dead. ...When did Hashem first **provide clothing** for people? (See Bereishis 3:21)
2. ...When did Hashem **visit the sick**? (See Bereishis 18:1)
3. ...When did Hashem **comfort a mourner**? (See Bereishis 25:11)
4. ...When did Hashem **bury the dead**? (See Devarim 34:5-6)
5. Why is taking care of dead bodies considered the ultimate chessed – “**Chessed Shel Emes**”? (See Rashi on Bereishis 47:29)
6. What Hebrew words do we say in Modim (in Shemoneh Esrei) that mean that Hashem is merciful and **His kindnesses never end**?

## Questions to Ponder

1. What are some of the kindnesses that Hashem does for you? What are some ways you can emulate Hashem's kindnesses?

2. The Tosefta (Pei'ah Chapter 4) says that Tzedakah and Chessed are equal to all other mitzvos. Why? How could that be? Is Chessed even equal to the mitzvah of learning Torah?

צדקה וגמילות חסדים שקולין כנגד כל מצוות שבתורה (תוספתא פאה פרק ד)

3. The Midrash Shochar Tov (Tehillim 52) says about anyone who is involved in Torah all day, that it's as if he is involved in "the chessed of Hashem" all day. What do you think that means?

"חסד א-ל כל היום" – זו התורה, שנאמר (משלי ל"א) ותורת חסד על לשונה... דבר אחר מצווין הן ישראל לעשות חסד לכל מי שיבא, חסד א-ל כל היום, אמר לו דוד לדואג, אדם שעוסק בחסד א-ל כל היום עושה דבר קשה, כביכול שכל מי עוסק בתורה כאילו עושה חסד א-ל כל היום... (מדרש שוחר טוב תהלים נב)

4. Rav Hirsch says that Hashem's chessed is different from chessed done by human beings, because Hashem's chessed is always good, whereas man's chessed isn't always perfectly good. What do you think it means that man's kindnesses are not always good? Can you think of a time when you (or someone else) tried to do a chessed but it didn't turn out to be good?

"טוב חסדך" – מה שניתן בחסדך הוא תמיד לטובה, מה שאינו כן בחסד אדם. (רש"י הירש תהלים סז יז)

5. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 8:5) says that when Hashem was going to create Adam, some of the angels argued against his creation. The "Chessed" group said to yes create man, since man will do acts of kindness. But the "Emes" (truth) group said don't create man, because man is sometimes full of lies. Why do you think the Emes group was positioned here to represent the opposite of Chessed?

אמר רבי סימון: בשעה שבא הקב"ה לבראות את אדם הראשון, נעשו מלאכי השרת כיתים כיתים וחבורות חבורות. מהם אומרים אל יברא, ומהם אומרים יברא. הדא הוא דכתיב: 'חסד ואמת נפגשו, צדק ושלוש נשקו'. חסד אומר: יברא, שהוא גומל חסדים; ואמת אומר: אל יברא, שכולו שקרים; צדק אומר: יברא, שהוא עושה צדקות; שלום אומר: אל יברא, דכוליה קטטה. מה עשה הקב"ה? נטל אמת והשליכו לארץ. הדא הוא דכתיב: 'ותשלך אמת ארצה'. אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב"ה: ריבון העולמים, מה אתה מבזה תכסיס אלטיכסייה שלך? – תעלה אמת מן הארץ! הדא הוא דכתיב: 'אמת מארץ תצמח' (בראשית רבה פרשה ח ה)

## Hidden Chessed: Being a True Giver

---

In the last section, we explained that doing chessed is not just about “being a nice guy.” Whenever we do a chessed, we are actually emulating Hashem, because Hashem does chessed all day long. The more we emulate Hashem by doing chessed, the more similar – and closer – we will become to Him, thereby fulfilling the purpose of our creation.

There are endless ways to do chessed – smiling at another person, lending a helping hand, or giving money to those in need. **If we want to emulate Hashem’s chessed, what is the best way to do it?** What form of chessed is most similar to Hashem’s chessed?

The answer perhaps lies in understanding the phrase **“Chessed Shel Emes – True Kindness.”**

What is “Chessed Shel Emes”? Many times in the Torah, “Chessed Shel Emes” refers to burying a dead body. For example, when Yaakov Avinu realized the end of his life was near, he called to his son Yosef and asked him to do “Chessed V’Emes – kindness and truth” by promising to bury his body in Israel (instead of in Egypt). [1]

Why is burying the dead considered “true chessed”? Rashi [2] explains that the person burying the dead **does not expect to get anything in return.** The dead person can never repay him for the kindness he did. The purest form of kindness is when you do chessed just for the sake of giving or helping another person, without expecting anything in return.

Sometimes, when we do acts of kindness for others, we really have ulterior motives deep down. Instead of being motivated by a true desire to give, we sometimes have an element of “taking” mixed in, too.

For example: Your neighbor asks if you have a few eggs to spare, because she’s in the middle of a recipe and just ran out of eggs. You graciously agree – partly because you’d like to help her out, but also partly because you’d like to feel like she is indebted to you, so that next time you run out of an ingredient yourself, she will be more likely to lend it to you. If you give her the eggs now, she will be more likely to be generous toward you in the future. So when you give her the eggs, part of you wants to give, but part of you wants to take.

Having mixed motivations when you give to other people is very normal and fine. But



if we want to develop the our middah of chessed in the most pure way, then we need to sometimes practice giving – just for the sake of giving.

This is the meaning of “Chessed Shel Emes – True Kindness.” **The purest form of chessed is when you give just for the sake of giving – without expecting to get anything back.**

The Shelah HaKadosh [3] writes that if we do chessed because we are expecting any sort of payback, then we are really like a merchant who sells goods in exchange for money. But if we want to be true givers, we need to do chessed without expecting anything back in return.

---

### EMULATING HASHEM

Giving just for the sake of giving is really the highest form of emulating Hashem. As we explained in the previous section, Hashem created this entire world in order to give us pleasure. **Hashem doesn’t need to take anything back from us – Hashem wants to give, just for the sake of giving.**

So in order to emulate Hashem – who gives purely for the sake of giving – we, too, can strive to give just for the sake of giving, without expecting any payback.

But how can we do that? We often have mixed feelings when we give... part of us wants to give, but part of us is also hoping to gain some benefit in return. How can we practice giving in a way that is purely motivated by a desire to give?

---

### HIDDEN CHESSED

One way to develop a truly giving nature is to practice doing **hidden acts of kindness.**

If you wash all the dishes and then tell your mother/spouse what you did, they will feel gratitude and indebted to you for your kindness. But if you’re walking on the street and pick a piece of litter off the floor – no one will know about your kind deed. The recipients of your kindness – i.e. the other people walking on the street – wont know about your chessed, and therefore wont even realize to pay you back for it. Doing hidden acts of kindness like this will be doing chessed in a way that does not result in payback. this is the purest form of chessed and this is how we practice being true Givers.

**When we do chessed in a hidden way, we are showing that we are purely interested in doing good for the recipient;** we are not doing it in order to receive payback.

(In fact, doing 1 hidden act of kindness each day is one of R’ Avigdor Miller’s famous “10 Steps to Greatness.” Rav Avigdor Miller writes that no one other than Hashem should know about what you did.)



Let's practice doing hidden acts of chessed to experience what it means to be a true Giver like Hashem.

---

## Takeaways

*Sometimes, when we do acts of kindness, we have ulterior motives.*

*The most pure form of chessed is when you can do an act of kindness just for the sake of giving – without expecting to get anything back in return. This is what Hashem does – He gives so much to us, just because He loves to give.*

*One way to practice giving for the sake of giving is by doing hidden acts of kindness without expecting to receive any payback for our actions.*

---

### Activity Challenge

**Once a day, do a hidden act of kindness. No one (besides Hashem!) should know about what you did.**

For example:

- Pick a piece of garbage off the floor or street.
- Tidy up your house or take out the garbage.
- Wash some dishes.
- Fix something on a shelf in a store.
- Give tzedakah.
- Daven for something that another person needs. (Davening for other people is a huge chessed, and a very effective way to help them!)
- Put an extra umbrella somewhere with a sign saying that anyone can use it if they're stuck.
- Notice what someone needs and leave it by their door, desk, or cabinet.
- Drop off money by someone who needs it.
- Donate your old shoes or clothing to the poor.
- Hang up an inspirational quote somewhere where other people will see it.
- Send an anonymous card, letter, or email to someone, telling them how much their hard work is appreciated.

## Creativity Challenge

Write a rhyme or song about some of the hidden kindnesses that Hashem does for you, or that you can do for other people.

## Torah Questions

1. When did Avraham do chessed for someone who didn't even need it? (See Bereishis 18:8)
2. How did Hashem reward Avraham's descendants (the Jewish people) for his acts of kindness? Give at least 2 answers. (See Vayikra Rabbah 34:8 or Bava Metzia 86b)
3. What *kal v'chomer* does the Midrash learn from here? (See Vayikra Rabbah 34:8)
4. Fill in the blanks: Pirkei Avos 1:2 says that the world stands on 3 things: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and acts of kindness.
5. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 34:8) says there was someone in the Torah who did a chessed for someone else whom he was anyway obligated to repay. Who was supposed to repay a kindness to whom? (See Shemos Chapter 2)

## Questions to Ponder

1. What are some examples of hidden acts of kindness you can do?
2. What do you think it means to be a "true giver"?
3. When you do acts of kindness, do you ever feel like you have other motivations mixed in with your desire to give?
4. As we explained, one way to practice being a true giver is to do hidden acts of chessed. Can you think of any other ways to practice giving in a more pure way?
5. The Yalkut Shimoni says that Hashem repays our acts of chessed forever, but repays acts of tzedakah only for up to 3 generations. Why? What do you think is the difference between tzedakah and chessed?

”חסד ה' מעולם עד עולם” – אמר רבי יוחנן יוחנן החסד מן העולם ועד העולם, אבל הצדקה עד שלשה דורות, שנאמר וצדקתו לבני בנים. (ילקוט שמעוני תהלים ק"ג תתנט)

6. The Yalkut Shimoni says that anyone who does chessed is as if he demonstrates his belief in all the miracles that Hashem ever did... and anyone who does not do chessed, is as if he doesn't believe in Hashem at all. Why do you think that

is true?

ולא זכרו בני ישראל את ה', למה, שלא עשו חסד עם בית ירובעל, הוי כל מי שהוא עושה חסד כאילו מודה בכל הנסים שעשה הקב"ה מיום שיצאו ישראל ממצרים, וכל מי שאינו עושה חסד כאילו כופר. (ילקוט שמעוני שופטים פרק ח, סד)

7. The Talmud Yerushalmi says that rain comes to this world in the merit of 3 things: Chessed, the earth, and the hardships that we endure. Why do you think our chessed has an impact on the rain? Why would our chessed have an more of an impact on rain levels than any other mitzvos we do (like keeping Shabbos)?

בזכות ג' דברים הגשמים יורדים, בזכות הארץ, בזכות החסד בזכות היסורין, ושלשתן בפסוק אחד, אם לשבט אם לארצו אם לחסד ימצאהו... (תלמוד ירושלמי תענית יד ב)

# Seeking Out Opportunities to Give

---

So far, we have explained that chessed is not just about being a nice guy – it’s about emulating Hashem. Hashem is the ultimate Giver because He gives just for the sake of giving, without expecting to receive anything in return. By doing hidden acts of kindness, we, too, can act as true givers. Doing chessed in private ensures that the recipient of our chessed will be unaware of what we did for them, so they won’t feel obligated to pay us back for our kindnesses.

Indeed, doing chessed without expecting payback is part of the Malbim’s definition of an “Ish Chessed (man of chessed).” The Malbim [1] writes that a “man of chessed” is someone who regularly does chessed for all types of people – (a) without expecting payback; and (b) without being motivated by feelings of mercy or compassion.

In the previous section, we focused on the first part of this definition – not expecting payback for your acts of kindness. But what does the second part mean? **What does it mean that a true “man of chessed” is not motivated by mercy?** Aren’t mercy and compassion good things to feel?

Perhaps this Malbim can be understood in light of what the Torah tells us about Avraham Avinu, our role model for Chessed.

---

## THE CHESED OF AVRAHAM AVINU

Chazal teach us that each of our 3 Avos excelled in a particular middah: Avraham excelled in Chessed; Yitzchak was the master of Gevurah (restraint); and Yaakov represented Emes (truth/balance). What story does the Torah use to illustrate Avraham’s amazing chessed?

You might think the Torah would tell of some desperate person who was in dire need of something to save his life, and Avraham heroically came to the rescue. But no. Avraham’s story of chessed is nothing like that! Rather, Avraham’s primary story of chessed is about when he acted kindly toward people who didn’t even need his help!

It was the third day after Avraham’s bris milah, and he was in a lot of pain. It was scorchingly hot outside, yet Avraham was sitting outside of his tent, looking for guests to invite into his home. Hashem saw how much Avraham wanted to do the chessed of hachnosas orchim (hosting guests), so He sent 3 angels (disguised as human travelers) to pass by his tent. Avraham was so excited to see them that he ran out to greet them and served them a very fancy and delicious meal.

Of course it's very impressive that Avraham hosted guests when he was in so much pain, yet there is something else very surprising about this story: Angels are spiritual beings who don't need food! Why did Hashem send them to Avraham to eat a meal?

Why is this story used as the role model story for chessed, if the angels didn't even need Avrahams help?

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein [2] explains that the Torah is trying to teach us a very important lesson: Chessed is not just about helping people when they desperately need it. **Chessed is not just about filling a lack.** Rather, the highest level of chessed is when you yearn so much to do chessed that you actively seek out new opportunities to do chessed.

The Ohr HaTzafun [3] explains: Hashem wanted to test Avraham to see how much he wanted to do chessed. What did Hashem do? He made it so very hot outside that no people would dare walk around outdoors. Since no people were traveling outside, no one would need Avraham's help. There were no ready opportunities for Avraham to do the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim; it was completely unnecessary. Avraham could have said: "Oh well... there are no travelers outside, so I'm free for today. No one needs my help."

But what did Avraham do? He sat at the opening of his tent, waiting, yearning for the opportunity to invite guests into his home.

In this way, Avraham passed his test with flying colors. Hashem wanted to see: Does Avraham only do chessed when it's absolutely necessary? Or does he yearn to be a giving person? **By eagerly waiting outside his tent for the opportunity to do hachnosas orchim, Avraham showed that he was a true giver.** As a reward for his deep desire to chessed, Hashem sent angels – who didn't even need his help! – so as to give Avraham the opportunity to do the chessed that he so desired.

A true giver is someone who yearns to do chessed even when it's not needed.

---

## EMULATING HASHEM

How did Avraham know to do this type of chessed? Where did he learn it from? The Ohr HaTzfun explains that Avraham learned it from Hashem.

As the Ramchal explains [4], Hashem created this world in order to do chessed. Before this world existed, there were no opportunities for Hashem to give to others. Who could Hashem possibly help, if Hashem is the only One who exists in the entire universe? But Hashem wasn't satisfied being the only Existence. Hashem yearned to do chessed – to give pleasure to others – so He created human beings to be recipients for His acts of kindness.

The entire universe – and all that is contained within – were created only in order to

house mankind. The whole purpose of our existence is to be the recipients of Hashem's chessed.

Avraham Avinu looked around the world, and through deep contemplation arrived at this conclusion: **Hashem yearns to do chessed.** Since it is man's responsibility to emulate his Creator [5], Avraham realized that he, too, must yearn for opportunities to give. That's why he sat outside his tent in the scorching heat, looking for guests, even when there was no need yet for doing hachnosas orchim.

---

### **BEING A TRUE "MAN OF CHESSSED"**

We can now understand what the Malbim meant that the ultimate "Man of Chessed" is someone who does acts of kindness that are "not motivated by feelings of mercy or compassion."

Imagine you are walking down the street and notice a homeless man. It's freezing cold outside and the poor man has only a flimsy blanket to cover himself with. Naturally, your heart is filled with pity for this poor person, and you might give him some food or money. Your chessed in this case was motivated by your feelings of pity.

Now imagine a different scenario: You are waiting in line at the grocery store and you see your neighbor waiting in line behind you. She has her toddler with her, and both mother and child look like they're doing just fine.

Do you think: "She looks like she's doing OK and doesn't need my help. I'll mind my own business and keep to myself"? Or do you think: **"Here is an opportunity to do chessed! How can I brighten this person's day?"** If you are actively seeking out ways to do chessed, you might choose to give her a big smile, a compliment, or a kind word.

A true "man of chessed" is someone who actively seeks out opportunities to give to others and make them happy. His chessed is motivated by a deep desire to give pleasure to other people; he doesn't just wait for his mercy to be aroused by needy people.

Let's practice keeping our eyes open for new opportunities to do chessed. Instead of waiting for someone to ask for our help, let's try to think proactively what we can do to enhance someone else's life or give them a small pick-me-up.

When we do chessed on this high level, we will be emulating Hashem's chessed and will become closer to Him, thereby fulfilling the purpose of our creation.

---

## Takeaways

*The highest level of chessed is when you yearn so much to do chessed that you actively seek out new opportunities to do chessed.*

*Hashem created this world because He yearns to do chessed. When we proactively seek out opportunities to do chessed, we are emulating Hashem's chessed and will become closer to Him, thereby fulfilling the purpose of our creation.*

---

### Activity Challenge

Once a day, do an “extra” chessed for another person – something that’s not obviously necessary.

For example:

- Give someone a big smile when you see them.
- Leave someone a little note, cookie, candy, or something else they enjoy... just because.
- Compliment someone in front of their boss, parent, spouse, or kids.
- Send a card or flowers to someone who would appreciate it.
- Let someone else have a parking spot you were going to take.
- Let someone else go ahead of you in line.
- When you're on the checkout line at a store, and someone has just 1 or 2 items behind you, let them go ahead of you.
- Hold the door open for someone or hold the elevator waiting.
- Say thank you to a doorman or worker.
- Give up your seat to someone else on the bus or subway.

### Creativity Challenge

Write a rhyme or song about some of the ways you can give an extra boost to someone else's day. Where can you find new opportunities for doing chessed in your life that are not so obvious?



## Torah Questions

1. Which one of the **4 Imahos** was chosen to marry one of the Avos because of the chessed that she did? (See Bereishis 24)
2. **What chessed** did she do?
3. According to Mishlei 16:6, what will happen to someone who practices **Chessed and Emes** (kindness and truth)?
4. The Gemara (Yevamos 79a) says that there are **3 qualities** shared by all Jews. One is that we do acts of kindness. What are the other 2 qualities?
5. According to Avodah Zara 5b, what **benefit** does a person get if he involves himself in **Torah** and **acts of kindness**?

## Questions to Ponder

1. What are some examples of “extra” acts of kindness that you can do? (i.e. a chessed that gives help or pleasure to another person, but is not totally necessary)
2. The Gemara says that chessed is one of the 3 qualities shared by all Jews. Why are these 3 qualities singled out as being unique to all Jews? What about other good qualities that Jews demonstrate, like being honest or determined?

אמר, שלשה סימנים באומה זו, הרחמנים, הביישנים, וגומלי חסדים... דכתיב למען אשר יצוה את בני ואת ביתו אחריו וגו', כל שיש בו שלשה סימנים הללו ראוי להדבק באומה זו. (יבמות עט א)

3. The Midrash says that anyone who does chessed for one of the Gedolei Yisroel, it's as if he did chessed for the entire Jewish people. Why?

רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר בה שיטה חורי, מי הוא שעשה חסד עם מי שחייב לו, יתרו עם משה, קראן לו ויאכל לחם, רבי סימון אומר בשכרו האכילו, דכתיב וגם דלה דלה לנו... ואימתי פרע לו הקב"ה שכרו, רבי יוחנן בשם רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר בימי שאול, הדא הוא דכתיב ויאמר שאול אל הקיני לכו סורו וגו', וכי עם כל ישראל עשה חסד, והלא לא עשה אלא עם משה לבדו, אלא ללמדך שכל מי שעושה חסד עם אחד מגדולי ישראל מעלין עליו כאילו עושה חסד עם כל ישראל... (ויקרא רבה לד ח)

4. The Gemara says that the second Beis Hamikdash was destroyed due to Sinas Chinam (baseless hatred), even though the Jews at the time were involved in Torah, mitzvos, and acts of kindness. But if the Jews were doing acts of kindness, how could it be that they had Sinas Chinam? Wouldn't you think the people who hate each other would not do chessed for each other?

אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב? מפני שהיתה בו שנאת...

5. The Sefer Haikkarim (4:17) writes that Hashem's chessed is superior to any chessed that a human being can do, for 4 reasons. What are the 4 reasons why Hashem's chessed is always better?

כל מיני החסד מושפעים ונמשכים מהשי"ת, ואין נמצא אחר זולתו שיוכל להשפיע חסד גמור על שום נמצא, וזה לפי שאי אפשר שיקוה חסד גמור משום נמצא, אלא אם כן נמצאו במשפיע ההוא ד' תארים, האחד שיהיה המשפיע בלתי משתנה, שאם היה משתנה אי אפשר שיהיה החסד הנמשך ממנו חסד גמור וקיים, ואין נמצא זולת ה' שלא ישתנה, והב' שיהיה המשפיע ההוא בלתי צריך אל עזר אחר זולתו בהשפעת החסד, שאם יהיה צריך אל עזר זולתו, לא יהיה בטוח מקבל החסד שיתמיד החסד ההוא... והשלישי שיהיה המשפיע ההוא יכול על ב' הפכים בשוה, שבזולת זה לא יוכל המקבל להשיג חפצו בכל עת, שפעמים יצטרך האדם אל דבר ולפעמים אל הפכו, והוא ידוע מהכחות העליונות, שהכוכב המורה על המלחמה לא יורה על השלום... ואין בעולם שיהיה יכול על זה אלא השי"ת, והד' שיהיה המשפיע ההוא בצד שלא יהיה נמצא שום נמצא אחר יכול לעכב על ידו מלעשות רצונו... ואחר שאין נמצא זולת השי"ת שימצאו בו יחד אלו הד' תנאים, הוא מבואר שאין ראוי שיבוקש או יקווה חסד משום נמצא זולתו... (ספר העקרים מאמר ד פרק יז)

# No Chessed is Ever Too Small

---

In this chapter, we have been focusing on the middah of Chessed. We learned that doing acts of kindness is the best way to emulate our Creator, because Hashem does acts of kindness all day long, as it says, “*Chessed Keil Kol Hayom.*” [1]

We then explored how if we want to emulate Hashem in the deepest way, we must strive to be “true givers” who yearn to give and help other people, without expecting payback. Furthermore, just as Hashem created this world just so that He could give us pleasure, we, too, should seek out opportunities to give to other people even if it’s just a small boost in their day.

Indeed, the Shelah HaKadosh [2] says we should never let a day go by without doing an act of kindness.

Does this sound like a tall order?

It’s actually pretty easy, because **Hashem treasures even the smallest acts of kindness.**

For example, Chazal [3] praise Boaz for simply giving Rus some tiny roasted kernels to eat. The Sifsei Chaim [4] writes that Chazal chose to highlight this seemingly insignificant act of kindness to teach us that no chessed is ever too small. Chessed is not measured by the size of the act; rather, it is measured by how much you care about the other person and treat them with the respect they deserve.

We are reminded of this concept every morning in davening, when we say: “*Eilu D’varim She’ain Lahem Shiur* – These are the things that have no measure...” and we include gemilus chassadim (acts of kindness) in that list. Chessed has no measure. There is no upper limit to the amount of chessed you can do, and there is no lower limit, either. Chessed has no minimum. Every tiny act of chessed has tremendous value.

Not only is chessed so easy to do, but the Pele Yo’eitz [5] adds that every time we help another person, we are fulfilling the mitzvah d’oraisah of *V’Ohavta Li’Rei’acha Kamocha*, loving our fellow Jews. Whether you open the door for someone, give someone a big smile, or simply pass the salt... there are so many easy ways to fulfill this mitzvah all day long!

As we go through our daily lives, let’s practice **keeping our eyes out for opportunities to do chessed** – no matter how small they may seem.

---

# Takeaways

*Hashem treasures even the smallest acts of kindness.*

*No chessed is ever too small!*

*Every time we do an act of kindness, we are fulfilling the positive commandment of “V’Ohavta L’rei’acha Kamocha.”*

---

## Long-Term Challenge

**Do 1 act of kindness each day, no matter how small it may seem.**

(Want to record your acts of chessed in a special journal? Find out about Rabbi Paysach Krohn’s “Kindness a Day” Journal – visit [www.chessedchallenge.com](http://www.chessedchallenge.com).)

For example:

- Give someone your full attention while listening to them.
- Compliment someone or offer words of praise.
- Say a sincere thank you, or tell someone how much you appreciate what they did for you.
- Hold the door or elevator open for someone behind you.
- Daven for something you know your friend needs.
- Say extra tehillim in the z’chus of helping someone in need.
- Give tzedaka.
- Call someone who needs chizuk (words of encouragement).
- Say “Good morning!” with enthusiasm or a big smile.
- Try to think of a shidduch for a single boy or girl you know.
- Make a phone call to network on behalf of a single boy or girl you know.
- Give directions to someone who is lost.
- Explain a difficult concept to someone who is confused.
- Pay the toll for the driver behind you.
- Make a visit or phone call to check in on a lonely or sick person.
- Volunteer for an organization that helps people in need.

# Answers to the Torah Questions

## PART I

1. The Gemara (Sotah 14a) explains that we are supposed to emulate Hashem by doing acts of kindness, such as providing clothing for people, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, and burying the dead.

### ...When did Hashem first provide clothing for people? (See Bereishis 3:21)

Hashem made clothing for Adam and Chavah after they sinned.

ויעש ה' אלקים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם (בראשית ג:כא)

2. ...When did Hashem visit the sick? (See Bereishis 18:1)

Hashem visited Avraham on the third day after Avraham's circumcision, when he was weak.

וירא אליו ה' באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום (בראשית יח:א)  
"וירא אליו" – לבקר את החולה (ב"מ פו) אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא: יום שלישי למילתו היה ובא הקב"ה ושאל בשלמו (רש"י)

3. ...When did Hashem comfort a mourner? (See Bereishis 25:11)

Hashem comforted Yitzchok after his father, Avraham, passed away.

ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך אלקים את יצחק בנו (בראשית כה:יא)

4. ...When did Hashem bury the dead? (See Devarim 34:5-6)

Hashem buried Moshe Rabbeinu.

וימת שם משה עבד ה' בארץ מואב על פי ה'. ויקבר אתו בגי בארץ מואב מול בית פעור (דברים לד:ה-ו)

5. Why is taking care of dead bodies considered the ultimate chessed – "Chessed Shel Emes"? (See Rashi on Bereishis 47:29)

Because you don't expect to be paid back (by the dead person) for the kindness you did for them.

חסד ואמת – חסד שעושין עם המתים הוא חסד של אמת, שאינו מצפה לתשלום גמול. (רש"י על בראשית מז:כט)

6. What Hebrew words do we say in Modim (in Shemoneh Esrei) that mean that Hashem is merciful and His kindnesses never end?

"HaMeracheim, Ki Lo Samu Chasadecha – The Merciful One, for Your kindnesses never end."

המרחם – כי לא תמו חסדיך...

---

## PART II

---

### 1. When did Avraham do chessed for someone who didn't even need it? (See Bereishis 18:8)

Avraham gave food to the 3 angels (disguised as travelers) who came to visit him, even though angels do not need to eat physical food. The angels made it look as if they were eating the food, but they didn't really eat it.

רבי סימון בשם רבי אליעזר אמר בה ד' שיטין: מי הוא שעשה חסד עם מי שלא היו צריכין חסד? אברהם עם מלאכי השרת, כתיב (בראשית יח:ח) "והוא עומד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו" – וכי אוכלין היו? אמר רבי יודן: נראין כאוכלין ושותין וראשון ראשון מסתלק. (ויקרא רבה לד ח)

### 2. How did Hashem reward Avraham's descendants (the Jewish people) for his acts of kindness? Give at least 2 answers. (See Vayikra Rabbah 34:8 or Bava Metzia 86b)

As a reward for Avraham's acts of kindness, Hashem gave the Jewish people the Mon (manna), the well, the Slav (quail), the Ananei HaKavod (clouds of glory), and the Amud Ha'Anan (pillar of cloud) in the desert.

ומה פרע הקב"ה לבניו, המן ירד להם, והבאר עולה להן, והשליז מצוי להם, וענני כבוד מקיפין אותם, ועמוד הענן נוסע לפניהם. (ויקרא רבה לד:ח)

...אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: כל מה שעשה אברהם למלאכי השרת בעצמו עשה הקב"ה לבניו בעצמו וכל [מה] שעשה אברהם ע"י שליח עשה הקב"ה לבניו ע"י שליח (בראשית יח, ז) "ואל הבקר רץ אברהם" (במדבר יא, לא) "ורוח נסע מאת ה'" "ויקח חמאה וחלב" (שמות טז, ד) "הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים" (בראשית יח, ח) "והוא עומד עליהם תחת העץ" (שמות יז, ו) "הנני עומד לפניך שם על הצור" [וגו'] (בראשית יח, טז) "ואברהם הולך עמם לשלחם" (שמות יג, כא) "וה' הולך לפניו יומם" (בראשית יח, ד) "ויקח נא מעט מים" (שמות יז, ו) "והכית בצור ויצאו ממנו מים ושתה העם" ... בשכר שלשה זכו לשלשה – בשכר "חמאה וחלב" זכו למן, בשכר "והוא עומד עליהם" זכו לעמוד הענן, בשכר "ויקח נא מעט מים" זכו לבארה של מרים... (בבא מציעא פו ב)

### 3. What kal vechomer does the Midrash learn from here? (See Vayikra Rabbah 34:8)

If Hashem rewarded the descendants of Avraham – who did chessed for those who did **not** need it – all the more so will Hashem reward you if you do chessed for someone who **does** need it.

והרי דברים קל וחומר, ומה אם מי שעושה חסד עם מי שאינו צריך לחסד פרע הקב"ה לבניו, מי שעושה חסד עם מי שצריך על אחת כמה וכמה... (ויקרא רבה לד ח)

### 4. Fill in the blanks: Pirkei Avos 1:2 says that the world stands on 3 things: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and acts of kindness.

The world stands on Torah, Avodah (sacrifices/prayer), and Gemilus Chassadim (acts of kindness).

שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי כנסת הגדולה, הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים. (אבות א:ב)

### 5. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 34:8) says there was someone in the Torah who did a chessed for someone else whom he was anyway obligated to repay. Who was

## supposed to repay a kindness to whom? (See Shemos Chapter 2)

Moshe Rabbeinu drew water from the well to help out Yisro's daughters. Later, Yisro hosted Moshe in his home and fed him a meal.

רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר בה שיטה חורי, מי הוא שעשה חסד עם מי שחייב לו? יתרו עם משה, "קראן לו ויאכל לחם," רבי סימון אומר בשכרו האכילו, דכתיב "וגם דלה דלה לנו..." ואימתי פרע לו הקב"ה שכרו, רבי יוחנן בשם רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר בימי שאול, הדא הוא דכתיב ויאמר שאול אל הקיני לכו סורו וגו', וכי עם כל ישראל עשה חסד, והלא לא עשה אלא עם משה לבדו, אלא ללמדך שכל מי שעושה חסד עם אחד מגדולי ישראל מעלין עליו כאילו עושה חסד עם כל ישראל... (ויקרא רבה לד:ח)

## PART III

### 1. Which one of the 4 Imahos was chosen to marry one of the Avos because of the chessed that she did? (See Bereishis 24)

Rivka. (See next question.)

### 2. What chessed did she do?

Rivka was identified as the one to marry Yitzchok because she gave water to Eliezer and his camels.

והיה הנער אשר אמר אליה הטי נא כדף ואשתה ואמרה שתה וגם גמליך אשקה אתה הכחת לעבדך ליעקב ובה אדע כי עשית חסד עם אדני. (בראשית כד:יד)

ותאמר שתה אדני ותמהר ותד כדה על ידה ותשקהו ותכל להשקותו ותאמר גם לגמליך אשאב עד אם פלו לשותת. ותמהר ותער כדה אל השקת ותריך עוד אל הבאר לשאב ותשאב לכל גמליו. (בראשית כד:יח-כ)

### 3. According to Mishlei 16:6, what will happen to someone who practices Chessed and Emes (kindness and truth)?

His sins will be forgiven.

בחסד ואמת יכפר עון וביראת ה' סור מרע. (משלי טז:ו)

הנה מי שיתנהג ביושר ובאמת בגמילות חסדים יכופר לו העונש שהיה ראוי לבא עליו. (רלב"ג)

### 4. The Gemara (Yevamos 79a) says that there are 3 qualities shared by all Jews. One is that we do acts of kindness. What are the other 2 qualities?

The other 2 qualities are that Jews are Rachmanim (merciful) and Bayshanim (feel shame).

שלשה סימנין באומה זו: הרחמנים, הביישנים, וגומלי חסדים... (יבמות עט א)

### 5. According to Avodah Zara 5b, what benefit does a person get if he involves himself in Torah and acts of kindness?

He will be able to control his yetzer hara.

אשריהם ישראל, בזמן שעוסקין בתורה ובגמילות חסדים יצרם מסור בידם, ואין הם מסורים ביד יצרם, שנאמר "אשריכם זורעי על כל מים" – ואין זריעה אלא צדקה, שנאמר "זרעו לכם לצדקה וקצרו לפי חסד..." (עבודה זרה ה ב)



---

# Sources

---

## **Part I**

1. Avodah Zarah 17b
2. Sifsei Chaim: Emunah U'Bechirah Vol. II. pgs. 63-64
3. Devarim 28:9
4. As explained by Rabbi Daniel Glatstein in the shiur entitled "Parshas Vayeira: The Astounding Chesed of Avraham"
5. Tehillim 33:5
6. Derech Hashem Vol. I. Chp. 2
7. Tehillim 52:3
8. Sifsei Chaim: Middos V'Avodas Hashem Vol. I. pg. 296
9. Rabbi Avigdor Miller Speaks, Vol. II. pg. 215

## **Part II**

1. Bereishis 47:29
2. Rashi, ibid.
3. Shelah HaKadosh, Vol II. Vayechi pg. 69

## **Part III**

1. Mishlei 11:17
2. Parashat Vayeira: The Astounding Chesed Of Avraham – Emulating Hashem
3. Ohr HaTzafun Vol. 1 pg. 237-238
4. Derech Hashem Vol. I. Chapter 2
5. Devarim 28:9 and Sotah 14a

## **Part IV**

1. Tehillim 52:3
2. Shelah HaKadosh Vol. II. Pesachim Gemilus Chassadim pg. 27
3. Vayikra Rabbah 25:39
4. Sifsei Chaim: Middos V'Avodas Hashem, Vol. 1 pg. 314
5. Pele Yo'eitz on Chessed