

# The Jewish Heart: Kindness and Compassion

(Chessed: Acts of Loving Kindness)



*There was a poor man who lived in the community of the sage, Mar Ukva. Mar Ukva would slip 4 zuz (a currency of the time) under this man's door every week. The man decided that he was going to discover who his anonymous benefactor was and waited in hiding to see who would come to his door. That day, Mar Ukva happened to be walking with his wife, and when they slipped the money under the door, they noticed the poor man trying to come toward them and meet them in person. In order to avoid embarrassing him, they ran away!*

*The poor man gave chase and so they turned down an alley looking for a place to hide. All they saw was a large oven, which was currently not in use. They both jumped in. The oven was still warm, though, and the heat was burning the bottom of Mar Ukva's feet. His wife was not in any pain, and told him to place his feet on hers. She saw that he was disturbed, for it seemed that G-d felt her merit was very great, for she did not suffer from the heat: 'Why,' he asked himself, 'am I not also worthy of not having to be pained by the heat of the oven floor? Have I sinned in some way?'*

*His wife, seeing his downtrodden face, said that he should not be disheartened. She explained that she had the special merit of not only giving charity to the poor, but actually feeding them food when they came to her door. Her giving immediately filled their needs and so she merited extra protection!*

- The Talmud Tractate Ksubos (67b)

## Part 1: Avraham's Legacy

### 1. Avraham and His Guests

(1) G-d appeared to him [Avraham] in the groves of Mamrei and he was sitting at the door of the tent in the heat of the day.

(2) He lifted his eyes and saw, and behold three men were standing near him. He saw [them], and ran from the door of the

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(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְדֹוֹד בְּאַלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם:

<p>tent to greet them, and he bowed down to the earth.</p> <p>(3) He said, "My L-rd, if I have found favor in Your eyes, please do not bypass your servant."</p> <p>(4) "Let a bit of water be brought and wash your feet. Rest yourselves under the tree.</p> <p>(5) I will get bread and you will sustain your hearts. Afterwards you will continue on your way, because it is for this reason that you have passed by your servant." They said, "Fine, do as you have said."</p> <p>(6) Avraham hurried to Sarah's tent and said, "Hurry! [take] three measures of the finest flour; knead it and make cake-rolls."</p> <p>(7) Avraham ran to the cattle, and took a tender, choice calf. He gave it to the lad, and hurried to prepare it.</p> <p>(8) He took butter, milk, and the calf he had prepared, and set it before them. He stood over them under the tree, and they ate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Genesis 18:1-8</p>	<p>(ב) וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיִּרְץ לִקְרֹאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה:</p> <p>(ג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם נָא מִצְּאֹתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵל נָא תֵּעָבֶר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ:</p> <p>(ד) יִקַּח נָא מֵעֵט מִים וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ:</p> <p>(ה) וְאָקְחָה פֶתַח לֶחֶם וְסִעְדּוּ לְבַבְכֶם אַחֵר תֵּעָבְרוּ כִּי עַל פֶּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:</p> <p>(ו) וַיָּמַהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֹהֶלָה אֶל שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מַהֲרִי שְׁלֵשׁ סָאִים קָמַח סֹלֶת לֹשֵׁי וְעֵשִׂי עֲגוֹת:</p> <p>(ז) וְאֵל הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן בָּקָר רֶדֶד וְטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל הַנַּעַר וַיָּמַהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ:</p> <p>(ח) וַיִּקַּח חֲמָאָה וְחֶלֶב וַיִּבֶן הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנִיָּהּ וְהוּא עֹמֵד עָלֶיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ:</p>
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## 2. Avraham's Anguish

<p>“In the heat of the day” – G-d made it extremely hot in order to prevent [Avraham] being disturbed by visitors When [G-d] saw that Avraham was troubled that he didn't have guests, He sent angels [to Avraham] in the guise of people</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Rashi (ibid)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>רש"י שם</b></p> <p>כחום היום - (ב"מ פו) הוציא הקב"ה חמה מנרתיקה שלא להטריחו באורחים ולפי שראהו מצטער שלא היו אורחים באים הביא המלאכים עליו בדמות אנשים:</p>
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Avraham was troubled to the point where he was *anguished* by his inability to perform *Chessed*, until G-d sent him what he so strongly desired – a chance to give!

## 3. Greater Than Talking to G-d!

<p>Said Rav Yehudah in the Name of Rav; Greater is the welcoming of guests than the greating of the Divine Presence. As the verse says, “My L-rd, if I have found favor in Your eyes, please do not bypass your servant”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>- Talmud Trac Shabbos 127a</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קכז/א</b></p> <p>אמר רב יהודה אמר רב גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה דכתיב ויאמר (ה') [אדני] אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר וגו</p>
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How did Avraham know?!

## 4. The Opposing Culture

- Sodom & Gemorrah – and the story of the charitable girl
- Were they INSANE!?
- Why were they wrong
- Nevertheless Avraham ‘Negotiates’ for their survival!

### 5. How do Avraham's actions affect our lives?

<p>(19) For I have given him special attention because he commands his children, and his household after him, and they will preserve the way of Gd, doing charity and justice, so that Gd will bring upon Avraham all that which He has spoken of him. Genesis (18:19)</p>	<p>ספר בראשית פרק יח (יט) כִּי יִדְעֵתִיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יַצְוֶה אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶרֶךְ יְדוּד לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הִבִּיא יְדוּד עַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלָיו:</p>
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### 6. Did He Succeed?

<p>There are three distinctive signs of this [the Jewish] Nation. They are merciful, discreet, and doers of <i>Chessed</i>. <i>Yevamos 79a</i></p>	<p>שלשה סימנים יש באומה זו הרחמנים והביישנים וגומלי חסדים</p>
<p>... one who shows no pity for fellow creatures is assuredly not the seed of Avraham, our father. <i>Beitzah 32b</i></p>	<p>וכל מי שאינו מרחם על הבריות בידוע שאינו מזרעו של אברהם אבינו</p>

## Part 2: The Depth of Chessed:

### 1. Creation:

<p>The world from its inception was only created through <i>Chessed</i>, as it says, "For I said, 'a world of <i>Chessed</i> shall be built...'" (Psalms 89). <i>Avos D'Reb Nosson 4:5</i></p>	<p>העולם מתחלה לא נברא אלא בחסד שנאמר (תהלים פט) כי אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה</p>
<p>The point of creation was for Him to give of His Goodness to another... <i>Derech G-d Part I Chapter 2 #1</i></p>	<p>א. הנה התכלית בבריאה היה להטיב מטובו יתברך לזולתו...</p>

### 2. The Torah:

<p>Rabbi Simluy expounded; The Torah's start [deals with] acts of <i>Chessed</i> and it's end [deals with] acts of <i>Chessed</i>. It starts with acts of <i>Chessed</i>, as the verse says, "And Hashem, the L-rd made for man and his wife garments of skin"<sup>1</sup>. It ends with acts of <i>Chessed</i>, as it says "He (i.e. Hashem) buried him (i.e. Moses) in the cleft... <i>Talmud Bavli Sota 14a</i></p>	<p>דרש ר' שמלאי תורה תחלתה גמילות חסדים וסופה גמילות חסדים תחילתה גמילות חסדים דכתיב ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם וסופה גמילות חסדים דכתיב ויקבר אותו בגיא</p>
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### 3. Existence:

<p>Simon the Just was one of the last remaining members of the Men of the Great Assembly. He used to say, "On three pillars the world stands; Torah, Divine Service, and acts of <i>Chessed</i>"! <i>Avos 1:2</i></p>	<p>אב, שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם עומד--על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים</p>
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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:21

## Part 3: The Commandment(s) of Kindness

### 1. **Commandment #1**

<p>You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall <i>love your neighbor as yourself</i>: I am Hashem.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Leviticus 19:18</p>	<p><b>ספר ויקרא פרק יט</b></p> <p>(יח) לא תקם ולא תטור את בני עמך ואהבת לרעך כמוך אני דוד:</p>
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### 2. **Maimonides explains...**

<p>We were commanded to love each other as we love ourselves, [which means] that my mercy and love for my brethren should be like my mercy and love of myself; whether with respect to his money or his person, or what's in his possession or what he is striving to get. And anything I want for myself, I should want for him. And if I would hate it for myself, I should hate it for him. And this is what is said, 'And you shall love your neighbor as yourself'</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Maimonides Positive Commandment # 206</i></p>	<p>מצוה רו - היא שזונו לאהוב קצתנו את קצתנו כמו שנאהב עצמנו ושתהיה חמלתי ואהבתי לאחי כחמלתי ואהבתי לעצמי בממונו וגופו וכל מה שיהיה ברשותו או ירצה אותו וכל מה שארצה לעצמי ארצה לו כמוהו וכל מה שאשנא לעצמי או למי שידבק בי אשנא לו כמוהו והוא אמרו ית' ואהבת לרעך כמוך</p>
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### 3. **Commandment #2...**

<p>Hashem will establish you as a holy people unto Himself, as He has sworn unto you; if you will keep the commandments of Hashem your G-d, <u>and walk in His ways</u>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Deuteronomy 28:9</p>	<p><b>ספר דברים פרק כח</b></p> <p>(ט) וקימך דוד לו לעם קדוש פאשר נשבע לך כי תשמר את מצות דוד אלהיך והלכת בדרכיו:</p>
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### 4. **Note how Maimonides explains this commandment:**

<p>We were commanded to imitate G-d as much as we can, as it is said '<u>and walk in His ways</u>.' Included in this is:          Just as G-d is Gracious, so you should be gracious          Just as G-d is Righteous, so you should be righteous          Just as G-d is Giving, so you should be giving</p> <p>Also included is that we should be similar to Him in the good acts and character traits with which He is described...</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Maimonides Positive Commandment # 8</i></p>	<p>מצוה ח - היא שזונו להדמות בו ית' לפי יכולתנו והוא אמרו והלכת בדרכיו וכבר כפל צווי זה ואמר ללכת בכל דרכיו ובא בפירוש זה מה הקדוש ברוך הוא נקרא רחום אף אתה היה רחום מה הקב"ה נקרא חנון אף אתה היה חנון מה הקב"ה נקרא צדיק אף אתה היה צדיק מה הקב"ה נקרא חסיד אף אתה היה חסיד ... ובא בפירוש גם כן שעלינו להדמות בפעולות הטובות והמדות החשובות שיתואר בהם האל ית'</p>
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### 5. **Why have two commandments?**

*Depends on where you are coming from...*