



From the desk of  
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## Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad \* Batei Hora'ah \* Religious Services \* Marriage Licensing \* Kashrut \* Mikvaot \* Eiruvim

### TORAT

### Parashat Vayeira

### HAMELECH

#### Avraham – The *Chessed* Man

Avraham Avinu was well known for his *hachnasat orchim*, his generous hospitality. "He planted an *ishel* in Be'er Sheva" (Bereishit 21:33). He built large buildings where wayfarers could find food and drink and anything they could want (Avot de Rabbi Natan, chap. 7).

Although he practiced *chessed* his whole life, we specifically find him rewarded for the act of *hachnasat orchim* towards the three angels who visited him at the beginning of the *parashah*. Says Rav Yehuda says Rav: Whatever Avraham did for the angels on his own, Hashem paid back to Avraham's descendants Himself. What he did through a messenger, Hashem paid back through an intermediary. Avraham ran to serve them beef, so in the *midbar*, Hashem sent quail. Avraham served them bread and butter, so in the *midbar*, Hashem sent man-bread down from Heaven. Avraham stood above them as they reclined under the tree, so Hashem stood for them by the rock. Avraham escorted them along the continuation of their journey, so Hashem escorted us with Clouds of Glory. Avraham sent a

lad to bring them a bit of water, so Hashem sent water from the rock. (Bava Metsia 86b).

Why was this act of *chessed* given so much attention and compensation? Perhaps because it came with pain and effort. Avraham was three days after Brit Milah and he was no youngster at the time! These days, Brit Milah for adults are done in a hospital setting with anesthesia at least local. Avraham was 99 years old at the time and he was his own *Mohel*! The third day following the *Milah* is most painful. (Bereishit 34:25) Hashem wanted to spare Avraham the need to host guests as he was recovering from this procedure. So Hashem made it especially hot, He "took the sun out of its encasement" so no guests would wander around. But Avraham was not satisfied. He sought guests. He sent Eliezer to look for guests. Eliezer reported back, "Sorry, no guests today."

Avraham said, "I don't believe you! I'll go look for myself!"

With that, the 99 year-old, 3 days after surgery, went out into the desert on a boiling hot day. Hashem saw how much it meant to him so



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Hashem sent *malachim* to visit him so that Avraham could do *hachnasat orchim*.

When Avraham saw these three “men”, he was so excited! He got up and ran towards them and begged them to dine by him. He then proceeded to slaughter three calves just so that he could serve each guest an entire tongue!

So there are two ways you can say it. Either this occasion was exceptional and since it came with pain and effort, that is why it earned him special reward. Or this occasion is delineated in detail and it gives us a glimpse of Avraham’s *chessed* standards. It is merely one example, but he did this all the time.

### Lot’s Hospitality

Lot also did *hachnasat orchim* in the *parashah*, but we do not find him rewarded handsomely for that. Lot even endangered his life to host guests and to save them from the townspeople. Nonetheless, his *chessed* is not viewed as being so exceptional. It was just something he picked up from Avraham’s home, and it was misbalanced. For example, Avraham made sure that his guests would wash their feet, so as not to bring their i-phones into his home. (Those days,

they kept their i-phones on their feet.) Lot did not bother. He let them bring their dust of idolatry into his home, saying that he’ll take care of the idol-dust tomorrow. Additionally, Lot went a bit overboard for his guests. When the townspeople wanted him to send them out so that they could get to “know” them better, Lot offered them his daughters, “Do to them as you wish; just don’t do anything to my guests whom I barely know and just met today for the very first time.”

Ramban calls this very misplaced, very uncouth behavior, revealing to us that Lot was not at all sensitive to matters of indecency.

### Where to Put in Effort

Let’s go back to Avraham’s *chessed*. There are several reasons why a person would do *chessed*. Sometimes, how he does the *chessed* tells us his motive.

Some do *chessed* for the sake of honor. They want the publicity. Avraham, when he did *chessed* had no idea that the Torah would publicize his deeds. And if he would have, he would have intended for others to learn from him to similarly follow Hashem’s benevolent ways.



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Some people like the easy way out when it comes to *mitzvot*. They are overjoyed at an opportunity to skip *tachunun*. When a *chattan* or *Baal Brit* comes to shul, they are happier at the omission of *tachunun* than with the actual *simcha*!

When coming to a meal, they try to avoid washing and *bentshing*. They need not be bothered with that long *nusach* of *Birkat Hamazon*, they'd rather just eat something which only requires *Al Hamichya* or *Borei Nefashot*.

The same with other *mitzvot*. They order a cheap pair of *tefillin*, a ready-made set of *arba minim* and Chanukah candles in pre-prepared glasses. The easy way out – that's their logo. They'd sooner pack up and go to a hotel for Pesach than clean their house properly and conduct a real, thorough *bedikat chametz*.

When it comes to earning money, there they spend the time and effort. There they say – effort breeds results. They work overtime and lose sleep and other comforts for the sake of earning a living or two.

The truth is the opposite. When it comes to *mitzvot*, each iota of effort is rewarded handsomely. When it comes to earning money,

that is set and established on Rosh Hashana. It has already been decided exactly how much you will earn this year. So why work so hard to get more of it all at once? Why work so hard to earn more than your allotted share, only to lose it from an unexpected turn of events, so that your account will be evened out by Hashem to match the predestined allotment?

### With Whom and How

There are other aspects of *tsedakah* and *chessed* which are indicative of how noble these actions really are. As stated, those who do *tsedakah* and *chessed* just for honor and publicity, do so in the limelight, with the camera flashing. In the confines of their own home, they may be atrocious. They may never lift a finger to help clean the dishes or the floor, go shopping or smile and offer kind words of endorsement and encouragement.

The truth is that *chessed* begins at home. We must give precedence to family members. A spouse is quite high on the Halachic list of *chessed* prioritizing. Let us not forget that. In many cases, in addition to *chessed* obligations, it is a marital obligation as well, to tend to their needs and wants.



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And as opposed to our *chessed* for Honor's Sake mentality, a much higher form of *chessed* is the *matan beseiter*, the hidden gift. Give without being noticed. The recipient will be spared of embarrassment. That is a much higher form of *chessed* and accomplishes a lot more in Heaven.

It is so sincere and earnest, it earns the benefactor protection even when danger lurks.

In the event that *tsedakah* and *chessed* are done in the presence of the recipient, as is usually the case with *hachnasat orchim*, one cannot compare such an act done with a smile to one done with an angry demeanor. One who gives with an upset face, just about loses his entire merit. Whereas one who gives with a smile, his *mitzvah* is multiplied, together with the reward.

### Come on Time ... or Before!

Until now, we spoke of *chessed*. The truth is that many of these lessons extend to other areas as well. For example, we spoke of expending effort to do *mitzvot*. One example is coming early to prayers. You can't compare the man who just makes it to shul to the man who comes early and davens with devotion. Each will be rewarded, but the one who makes an *eisek* – a big deal – about his prayers – he is on a different level entirely.

Our Sages have great things to say about one who gets to shul early to prayers (not to schmooze, of course, but to prepare properly and say each word meticulously). He will merit longevity. His main reward is in the world to come, but he will enjoy many "perks" here in this world. He put in the extra effort. Hashem takes note of that and pays handsomely.

So let us learn from our forefathers, they showed us the way. As we read, hear and learn these Parshiot once again, let them not just go in one ear and out the other, but in two ears, down to the heart and mind, and out through improved actions, deeds and attitudes! Let's follow in their noble footsteps, cling to their cloaks and apron strings and thereby become better people.

Let us realize that Hashem pays in response to the effort put in. Let us invest where it is truly prosperous.

B'birkat Hatzlacho Raba, Derech Tzeleicha on your journey to greatness as you tread in your forefathers' footsteps.

**Shabbat Shalom,**  
**Mordechai Malka**