TORAS AVIGDOR
AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PARSHAS VAYERA
WITH
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L
BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

AVRAHAM'S TEACHINGS

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Part I. Hashem's Kindness

Being Served at the Chasunah

In Mesichta Kiddushin (32b) an episode that took place at a certain wedding is related: מַעֲשֶׂה בְּרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְרַבִּי צָדוֹק שֶׁהָיוּ מְסוּבִּין בְּבֵית הַמִּשְׁתֶּה בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל – *It happened that three Chachomim were present at the wedding feast of the son of Rabban Gamliel.* The Nasi, Rabban Gamliel, was marrying off his son, and many of the great Tanaim, the *Chachmei Hamishna*, were there to participate in the *simcha.*

וְהָיָה רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל עוֹמֵד – *And when the festivities began Rabban Gamliel was standing over the Chachomim,* וּמְשַׁקֶּה עֲלֵיהֶן – *and he was pouring wine into their cups.* He was serving them. נָתַן הַכּוֹס לְר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְלֹא נְטָלוֹ – *But when he handed a cup of wine to Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Eliezer refused to take it.* He didn't feel it right that the Nasi should serve him. נְתָנוֹ לְר' יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְקִבְּלוֹ – *But when Rabban Gamliel poured for Rabbi Yehoshua, so unlike his friend Rabbi Eliezer, he accepted.*

אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר – *So Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Yehoshua,* "מָה זֶּה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ – *What is this Yehoshua?!* אָנוּ יוֹשְׁבִין וְרַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל עוֹמֵד וּמְשַׁקֶּה עָלֵינוּ – *We should sit and Rabban Gamliel should stand and serve us?*" After all, Rabban Gamliel was the leader of the whole Am Yisroel. And so Rabbi Eliezer was surprised at his *chaver*: "Yehoshua! Are you going to let the head of the Am Yisroel, the chief of the *Chachmei HaTorah*, stand over you and serve you?"

אָמַר לֵיהּ – *So Rabbi Yehoshua answered,* "*Why are you surprised?* מָצִינוּ גָּדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ שֶׁשִּׁמֵּשׁ – *We find an even greater man who served his guests.* אַבְרָהָם גָּדוֹל הַדּוֹר הָיָה – *Avraham was the greatest man in his generation,* וְכָתוּב בּוֹ – *And it's written about him that,* וְהוּא עוֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכֵלוּ – *he was standing over his guests under the tree, serving them as they reclined and ate'* (*ibid.* 18:8). So if Avraham Avinu could stand and serve his guests, then וְאָנוּ לֹא יְהֵא רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּרַבִּי עוֹמֵד וּמַשְׁקֶה עָלֵינוּ – *Why shouldn't Rabban Gamliel stand and pour into our cups?*"

Rabban Gamliel and Avraham

Now, the truth is that Rabbi Eliezer had a very good point. Was it right for Rabban Gamliel to demean himself like that? He had servants, waiters, who could have done it just fine. You say Avraham did it? So it's a question on Avraham too. Is it proper for a person who is superior, to be servile and make himself lowly before ordinary strangers?

Avraham's guests after all weren't, in his eyes, any virtuous people. Yes, we know they were *malachim*

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but לֹא נִרְמוּ לוֹ אֶלָּא לְעַרְבִיִים – they appeared to Avraham like ordinary Arab nomads. And he went all out for them!

And he didn't do it because he happened to see some poor wanderer and so he had no choice, like when a *meshulach* catches you in a corner and makes a holdup. No! Avraham went *looking* for them. Everybody knows the story. וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם – *When the day was hot, Avraham sat at the door of his tent*; and his eyes were peeled, looking for wayfarers whom he could take in and feed (Bereishis 18:1).

Grabbing Customers

And וַיַּרְא – *when he saw people passing by,* וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם– *he ran towards them to haul them in.* If you ever went shopping in the olden days on the East Side to buy a suit, so as you were walking into one store, the man next door ran to catch you. "Come to *my* store!" That's what they used to do. Maybe they still do it. "Come into my store. Have I got a deal for you!" So Avraham when he saw travelers he ran to meet them, to convince them to come into his tent.

But not only convince them; he fell down on his face and he begged them, "אַל נָא תַּעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ – *please don't go away from your servant!*" Because that was Avraham's business! That was his store, to take people in off the road and feed them. And in case they were reluctant, so he cajoled them. "Only for a moment. יֻקַּח נָא מְעַט מַיִם – *Just a little bit of water take!* Sit down under my tree for a little while. Take a little rest, אַחַר תַּעֲבֹרוּ – *then you keep on going if you want.*"

A Tent of Chessed

And when they consented to stop in for a little while, so he went into action. Not his servants; he himself! וְאֶל הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם – *He ran to the cattle and began slaughtering cattle.* Now, to slaughter a big ox for a few guests means that the meat is going to go lost. There was no refrigeration in those days.

And Sarah got busy baking too: לוּשִׁי וַעֲשִׂי עֻגוֹת. Now Sarah, like Avraham, had very many servants; she had hundreds of female servants, but she wanted to do it with her own two hands. It's like the woman who has plenty of kosher bakeries to buy *challah*, but she wants to bake for Shabbos herself. She bakes her Shabbos *challos* herself. So this great couple got busy now getting their own hands dirty. And all because these random visitors consented to drop in for a minute.

That's a picture of Avraham's household. And he did that always; not just this one time. These *pessukim* in the beginning of our parsha are a picture of Avraham's daily activities. That's a guideline of understanding Torah; like it states in the Gemara in Yoma, יִלְמַד סָתוּם מִן הַמְפוֹרָשׁ – *you learn what's not explained from that which is explained.* It's not explained in the Torah what Avraham did every day. And so in one place where it does explain, that explains everything. He always did that. That's what he did to everybody.

Too Much Chessed?

That's *poshut pshat* in the Chumash, that Avraham went all out to do *chessed* all the time. And that's something that has to be explained. Avraham Avinu, after all, had very many things to do. He had to make himself busy doing *chessed* for nobodies? He had to spend his life in servile acts of *gemillas chassodim*, lowering himself in front of every Tom, Dick and Harry?

Avraham wasn't a liberal faker who just wants to assuage his guilt for being wealthier than others by helping the underprivileged—for that you can just make a token donation or write an editorial for the New York Times knocking the wealthy. That's enough to clear the conscience of a liberal. But that wasn't Avraham Avinu.

And so we have to understand the principle, the motive behind what Avraham did. We accept it because we learned it when we were children, but actually it's not a simple matter.

The Punchline at the Chasunah

So we go back to Rabban Gamliel's *chasunah* and we look at the end of the *beraisa*, the punchline of the

story. Because there was a third *chacham* sitting there, Rabbi Tzaddok, who had been silent until now. And when he saw that Rabbi Yehoshua was praising Avraham Avinu for standing over his guests and feeding them, אָמַר לָהֶם רַבִּי צָדוֹק – *so he spoke up and he said*, עַד מָתַי אַתֶּם מַנִּיחִים כְּבוֹדוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם – *How long will you neglect the honor of the Almighty*, וְאַתֶּם עוֹסְקִים בִּכְבוֹד הַבְּרִיּוֹת – *and you're busy with giving honor to human beings*?"

You're talking about the honor of Avraham, his greatness that he stood over his guests, and that Rabban Gamliel is imitating him. But there's a much more important subject. Why don't you mention Hakadosh Baruch Hu?! הקב"ה מַשִּׁיב רוּחוֹת וּמַעֲלֶה נְשִׂיאִים – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu causes winds to blow and He transports clouds*, וּמוֹרִיד מָטָר – *and from them He brings down rain*, וּמַצְמִיחַ אֶרֶמָה – *and He causes the earth to sprout with vegetation*, וְעוֹרֵךְ שׁוּלְחָן לִפְנֵי כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד – *and He sets a table before everyone in the world.* For us He does all of that and much more! וְאָנוּ לֹא יְהֵא רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּרִבִּי עוֹמֵד וּמַשְׁקֶה עָלֵינוּ – *So why shouldn't Rabban Gamliel stand over us and serve us too?*

At His Table

It means that in this world, everyone is seated at the table of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is serving him. And so why, Rabbi Yehoshua, do you have to go to Avraham Avinu for a precedent? You should go to Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. He was the first One, the first model of doing *chessed.*

Rabbi Tzadok was pointing out that it's not really Avraham that Rabban Gamliel was imitating. He was imitating Someone even greater than Avraham; he was imitating the Borei, the Creator of the World. And so if you want to defend Rabban Gamliel for standing over us and pouring wine for us, there you have it.

And we'll see now that this is the answer to the puzzling behavior of Avraham. Because it's not a question of his dignity anymore. Certainly a man shouldn't lower himself just for the sake of nobodies. But when you're doing it because you want to emulate your Creator, so you're not doing it just for them—*you're doing it for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.* Avraham did it for a very great and sublime purpose. He did it because Hakadosh Baruch Hu did it! He saw a revelation from Hashem and was living according to what he saw.

Conclusion Number One

First of all, he discovered that this world didn't happen by accident. That's out of the question. Because when he studied the seeds and the plants and the sun and the clouds and the trees and the processes of the bodies and a thousand other things, the first conclusion that Avraham Avinu reached was that this is a purposeful world; that there is a Creator with an infinite intelligence Who is very much interested in His creations.

Whatever you hear in this place or whatever you read in a big science book is nothing compared to what Avraham Avinu discovered in the early years of his life—he saw a thousand times more than we see now. And that's when he was a child. As an adult he saw hundreds of thousand times as much as we see. And therefore, it became a strong conviction, an overwhelming and pressing awareness, that there is a Great Intelligence here, an Infinite Intelligence, that created the world.

Now that study of Avraham's, the Awareness of the Creator by means of His creations, is something that was spoken about here once and the subject won't be mentioned any further tonight. Because Avraham went a step beyond that and this step is even more important.

The Higher Step

Because when Avraham picked up an apple and looked at it he didn't just see Intelligence and Wisdom. He saw also how beautiful it was. It's like a glowing painting. It looks like water flowing, but it's painted in red. Like the water is flowing out of the sides of the apple, but it's in red. It even has air dots in it, all over. Air dots, like in flowing water. It looks so beautiful, you just want to bite into it.

Now, Avraham asked himself, "What was the purpose of the Creator in making apples so beautiful?

Had he made apples with the same color as potatoes, people also would eat them. What can you do if you have nothing better?"

Now, that's a *klutz kasheh* that most people would ignore, "it just happens that way". That's how the *klutz* thinks. But Avraham Avinu had a better head and so he pursued the subject. Why is it that the meat of the watermelon has a beautiful red color? And why do oranges have to become golden yellow? Why can't they remain colorless?

And Avraham understood when he studied the fruits that the purpose of Hakadosh Baruch Hu was *chessed*, kindliness, so that people should enjoy it more. Because anything that looks beautiful is more enjoyable to eat. What's the purpose? To make us happy.

A Well-Stocked World

Avraham noticed also that besides colors there were also fragrances, a variety of pleasant fragrances, connected with foods. And of course tastes. Thousands of various tastes! All fruits could have had one taste. Apples and cherries and watermelons and peaches could have all had one taste. But each one has a different taste, each one intended to make us happy; each one a different kind of happiness.

And so Avraham saw that this world was stocked with so many things that were planned for pleasure. He didn't see ten or twenty such phenomena. He noticed *hundreds of thousands* of them. And each and every one was intended as *chessed*, as kindness to us.

Now that's my poor little mind trying to retrace the footsteps of Avraham Avinu—one little footstep of a very great man. I'm sure it was much much more, but at least we should get into our little heads a little bit of what that great man had in his head. And there's no question that Avraham's head was filled with this ideal of Hashem's kindliness in the world.

Part II. Avraham's Kindness

Out of Hiding

Now, when Avraham saw that everything in the world is kindliness, he became obsessed with this model that Hashem was showing him. After all, Hashem is יוֹשֵׁב בַּסֵּתֶר – *He sits in concealment.* He's mysterious; entirely invisible. He doesn't show anything of Himself. But all of a sudden this one thing He *does* show.

And not a little bit. He shows by tens of thousands of examples that He wishes to make people happy, to give them enjoyment. He gives us red apples and golden bananas. He gives us bread to eat. He gives us milk to drink. He gives us watermelon to relish. He gives us fresh water and fresh air. He gives us fingers that bend and eyes that are better than the best color cameras. All good things He gives us.

The whole world is עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבָּנֶה; it's built for the purpose of *chessed*! You want to be convinced? Just walk outside in the street and what do you see wherever you look? Soil! A remarkable material! Soil is a *ness*! Go out and try to make soil. You can't create it.

Now, there's no soil on the moon. There's no soil on Mars. But here, on Earth, Hashem laid down a layer of soil for our benefit, so that we'd always have food. From this soil, הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ – *He takes out for us bread and everything else to eat.* It's *kulo chessed*, a wonderful material.

Chessed in the Depths

And when you come to the end of the soil, you see the sea, the oceans. Oceans also are nothing but *chessed.* Why do we have oceans? Pass by a fish store and you'll see why there are oceans. You see in the window fat juicy fish lying there; carp, salmon, trout. The world lives off of fish. Hundreds of thousands of tons of fish are harvested from the sea just like they harvest crops from the land. Every day more than a billion fish are being taken out for people to eat. Not million—billion with a b. A thousand millions!

You know, Rabbeinu Saadya Gaon says in *Sefer Emunos Vedeos* that the whole world is made for

eating. Hashem made all creation for food; to make us happy, to make our stomachs happy. And we are all taking Hashem up on the challenge; we're all busy eating.

But not only food. The whole world, all of Hashem's creation, is supplying for mankind their needs. Cotton is always growing. Linen is growing. The sheep are constantly producing wool for us. The cows are producing leather exactly suited to our needs. The forests are replanting themselves, and the trees are giving us lumber, furniture, paper.

Chessed in the Air

Even the air is a made-to-order *chessed* material. Air is a cocktail; it's not just one thing. It's a mixture. If you want to make a cocktail—I never did it, but I imagine you have to have a certain amount of alcohol, a certain amount of fruit juices to flavor it, and whatever else you put in and you mix it. That's what air is, a cocktail mixture. It's about 20% oxygen—had it been more, you would have become intoxicated when you breathe. You would become dizzy and drunk. So Hashem puts it in a base of nitrogen, an inert gas. It's like when they make a medicine cream. The medicine itself is a very small percentage; it's in a base of petroleum jelly. If you didn't have petroleum jelly, just the medicine itself, it would burn a hole through your skin. So the medicine is put in petroleum jelly so it has the effect on you that you want, but not too much. And so the air is just 20% oxygen. That's what you need. And the rest is almost all nitrogen.

Now not only that. In that cocktail is mixed a little bit of carbon dioxide to give it a tang; just three parts in 10,000. Carbon dioxide stimulates your breathing; a tiny little bit of carbon dioxide mixed in. And there are other gases too, traces of other gases. It's the perfect cocktail.

That's why if you're ever discouraged—pay attention; I want you all to hear this following advice—if you ever feel discouraged, open up a window. Don't think of jumping out. No. Open up the window and breathe deeply as much as you can. It's a special mixture, a lifesaver. Breathe deeply and enjoy this great gift. Fresh air is a medicine that's going to change your attitude.

And it's not a rare item that you have to go to the drug store to find. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the great Chemist, the great Apothecary, has mixed it to make us happy. That's what it's for. And you have two hundred miles of it straight up. The whole world is under a mantle of two hundred miles of *chessed*, two hundred miles of air!

An Ingrate Guest

Now, I just began the list. The world is stocked with all good things and that's what Hashem is showing us of Him, a whole world of nothing but *chessed*. You don't think so? What is it my fault if your mind and your senses have been dulled because of a lack of thinking? If we drink water and don't remember that it's Hashem pouring it down our throats, so you're stifling your awareness and your happiness. And the wind and the sun and the air and everything else, the fact you're an ingrate and fail to notice them, whose fault is it?

It's like the man who comes into a restaurant where they serve him the best—a big menu of all delicacies they give him—and he leans back and says, "Feh! It's a rotten menu they have here." Whose fault is it that he has ruined his appetite; he maybe ruined his health, his teeth, and he's not capable of appreciating what they're serving him. And therefore, whatever you think, the truth is that there's nothing in the world more conspicuous than this demonstration that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wishes to do kindness to mankind!

Avraham's Important Conclusion

And Avraham concluded that if this is the most prominent thing we can see of Hashem— if Hakadosh Baruch Hu shows nothing of Himself except strawberries and blueberries and gooseberries and cherries and oranges and apples and peaches and thousands of other *chassodim*, so that demonstrates that this is what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to know about Him.

Some people, I know, want to know more about Hashem; they want to know secrets. But it won't help us to know more about Him because we're not capable of understanding more. Only this one fact, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is intent on giving everyone the things that make him happy, that we *are* capable of understanding. And that fact is the most important for us to know: פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת יָדֶיךָ וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רָצוֹן – *You satiate every living thing with what he desires.* You give him his desires! That's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to know about Him more than anything else; that He's a *chofetz chessed*, that He desires to do kindliness.

Choosing a Monument

And when Avraham Avinu came to this conclusion, so he made a revolutionary decision—in order to demonstrate the *chessed* Hashem, *zecher l'chasdei haMakom*, Avraham wanted to set up a monument in honor of the kindliness of Hashem

Now, how do you set up a monument? Suppose there was a general on horseback who led his soldiers in a charge that conquered the enemy. And now you want to build a monument to honor him. So you won't make a bronze statue of him, let's say, sitting behind a desk with a typewriter—even if he does that too once in a while, that's not what the statue will be. If you want to memorialize his greatness you'll put him on a horse, galloping into battle. That's the pose in which he was when he accomplished his great feat.

And so Avraham said, "I'm going to make a monument of what Hashem does *most* in this world." And he planted an orchard in which all beautiful and luscious fruits grew. Avraham spent time on it. וְיִטַּע אֶשֶׁל – *Avraham planted a garden* (Bereishis 21:33). An orchard doesn't fall from the sky; it doesn't grow by itself. Avraham gave part of his life, a lot of time and attention, to develop that orchard.

A Benison of Kindliness

And then he invited people into his garden, that famous garden of delights, and they lay on the grass under a tree to relax. Avraham had studied already the *chessed* of a tree and he understood that Hashem intended a tree as a shady blessing. On hot days especially, a shady tree is a benison of kindliness. And so Avraham imitated what he saw, the *chessed Hashem* he saw in nature and he said, "הִשָּׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ – *Sit down and lean against the trunk and relax in the shade of the tree*" (*ibid.* 18:4).

And as they reclined there there was grass too. The grass is a green carpet, with a deep pile; it's a pleasure to lie on grass. That's what it's for! Grass is not only for goats. That's a good thing too—if goats eat grass they can turn it into milk and butter and cream and cheese, it's also good; it's also *chessed* Hashem. But humans can also use grass in other ways—they can recline on the green carpet.

And so Avraham's guests rested there and looked up at the beautiful blue sky—like you're looking in a fancy dining room at an expensive ceiling— and as they're enjoying the view Avraham was plucking delicious fruit for them and serving them. And he slaughtered oxen for them and also gave them the best wines.

The Garden of this World

And after they had had their fill and they got up to proceed on their journey so they said to Avraham, "We must thank you our host for all that you bestowed upon us."

"But I'm not the host."

"What?! Who's the host?"

So Avraham said, "There's a Master of this great banquet hall. The One Who made a blue ceiling for you and He hung the great light that shines down on you and warms you. And He is the One Who gave us these trees and this carpet. Only that I looked at what He did in the world and I'm just emulating Him. So instead of thanking me, thank Him."

And that was Avraham's accomplishment; that's what he wanted from his orchard. It was a demonstration. Of what? It was a demonstration of the kindness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. That was

Avraham's purpose in life: to demonstrate the *chessed* Hashem in the world.

Desiring Kindness

Now you understand why when Avraham Avinu looked out of his doorway on a very hot day and he saw that it was impossible for any wayfarers to be out on the roads, so he became very dispirited. He felt his life was being wasted because his purpose in life was to do kindness and thereby teach mankind this principle: that just like Hashem is a *chofetz chessed*, the One Who desires *chessed*, He wants us to do the same—we make a monument for Hashem by making people happy.

And therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu had pity on Avraham and He sent him the only travelers who could brave that terrible heat—three *malachim*. But they appeared like ordinary persons and when Avraham saw ordinary travelers he was overjoyed because it was another opportunity to practice emulating Hashem. "That's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu shows us most about Himself," Avraham said, "and the biggest compliment I can give to Hashem is to imitate Him." וְהָלַכְתָּ בִּדְרָכָיו – If you emulate His ways, that's the biggest form of serving Hashem. And therefore Avraham said, "That's going to be my job in life; to walk in His ways by doing kindness to the world."

Part III. Our Kindness

Back at the Chasunah...

And so we come back now to our story that we began with tonight. You remember how the *Chachomim* were sitting at the table at the *chasunah*, and the question was raised, "Is it proper to allow such a great man as Rabban Gamliel, the leader of the Am Yisroel, to be a waiter for us?"

So Rabbi Eliezer, who was a man of strict principles, he said, "Nothing doing. I won't let Rabban Gamliel stand over me and pour wine into my cup." And it could be that at the end he also refused; he stuck by his principles.

But Rabbi Yehoshua said, "If Rabban Gamliel is serving us, you have to know he's doing it for an important reason. He wants to demonstrate the greatness of our father Avraham, and he's doing that by walking in his ways. He's creating a monument to Avraham Avinu, to his life of *chessed*, of standing over anyone who came by and pouring them to drink and giving them to eat."

Isn't that a beautiful thing? Here is a wedding, and the *nasi* steps forward. He's the most wealthy and powerful man in the nation, besides being the *reish mesivta* too, and he is going from table to table pouring wine for everyone because he wants to demonstrate who our father Avraham Avinu was. "That's what Avraham Avinu did," said Rabbi Yehoshua. "He stood over lesser people than him, and he poured wine into their cups. He was the original, the pioneer, of doing *chessed* in this world, and we should walk in his ways. "

The Main Purpose

But now the old sage Rabbi Tzaddok opened his mouth and said, "Rabbi Yehoshua, you're right. There's no question about it that we have to memorialize the greatness of our Avos. But in the meantime, you're neglecting the main idea! You're neglecting the main purpose that Avraham Avinu understood, the reason *why* he did it. He was doing it to emulate Hashem! How long will you forsake the glory of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and busy yourself with the glory of men?"

Now, the truth is, it's not wrong. The glory of people like Avraham Avinu *is* the glory of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. But that's only if you understand what you're doing. If you'll sit in the shul and hear the *kriyas haTorah*, and you're thinking about what Avraham did and you realize that it's all a demonstration, a proclamation of *kavod Shamayim*, that's something else, yes. But to just think it's a story about Avraham Avinu—even if you think it's a story about Avraham's greatness in *chessed*—but if you'll forget that he did everything because he was emulating the original *chofetz chessed*, so you're forsaking the *kavod haMakom*.

That's what Rabbi Tzaddok said to them. "Always go back to the first cause! Remember why you're doing it!"

Losing the Plot

Isn't it a pity that human beings get lost, they get involved in secondary things? It's important, of course, *gemilas chassodim.* It's one of the pillars that supports the world, absolutely. And it should be the goal of every *frum* Jew, to always strive to become better and better at doing *chessed* for his fellow Jews! But never forget the first cause, the One Who introduced *chessed* in creation: *Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself*!

You know, concepts are also something you have to create. Not only the world was created by Hashem; the whole ideal of *chessed*, He created. Hashem is the One Who started the whole concept of kindliness. And therefore Rabbi Tzaddok said, "Let's remember the real purpose of why Rabban Gamliel is doing *chessed*. When he stands over us and he pours wine, it's really a memorial to Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who is standing over us all the time, וְעוֹרֵךְ שׁוּלְחָן לִפְנֵי כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד – *and setting a table before each one of us.* Rabban Gamliel is only advertising the great principle that this world was made for the purpose of bestowing kindness on all the inhabitants of this world."

Let's Get Practical

And that's our purpose whenever we do something of kindness: יַכִּירוּ וְיֵדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵּבֵל – Let everybody recognize that Hashem is pouring drinks into our mouths. Let everyone recognize that Hashem is feeding us. Let everyone recognize that Hashem is doing *chessed* to us every minute of every day!

Absolutely, we have to become people of *chessed.* But when we do kindliness, we should always try to keep in mind that we're doing it to emulate Hashem, *zeicher l'chasdei haMakom.* Whenever we bestow a favor on anybody, it's important for us to keep in mind that we want to advertise that Hashem is a *tov u'meitiv*, that that's His only purpose and that's why He created the world.

And so let's say somebody comes from Eretz Yisroel; he's collecting money. It's not enough that you give him a nice donation. It's not enough if you ask him to sit down—if your husband is home of course—and give him something to eat, something to drink. Now, he probably won't eat in your house. He wouldn't trust your *kashrus* but he'll take a glass of water. Maybe he'll even take an apple from you, a glatt kosher apple you can give him. You're *machnis orach!* A wonderful thing if you can do that.

But it's not enough. You have to think in your mind, "I am doing this because I am emulating Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who shows us in all of His creation that He is a *chofetz chesed.*"

Kindness Plus

Even if you can't give much. Let's say you're in shul and someone is collecting, but you only have a dollar or two to give him. But still, you can give him a nice handshake. You can honor him. You can smile at him. All day long he trudges from one synagogue to another. Not always is he received with such a friendly face. So you'll go all out with your kind words of encouragement. Very good! All that is included in *chessed.*

But don't stop there. It matters very much what's in your mind! What are you doing more than anything else? You are praising Hashem! I'm doing it because that's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires most. כִּי חָפֵץ חֶסֶד הוּא – Hashem desires kindliness and I'm just imitating Him in my own little way. I'm creating a monument for Hashem!

And so whatever you do to your fellow man—let's say a mother is extending a spoon full of food to her baby, but she was here tonight at the lecture and therefore she's ready. From now on, when she extends the bottle to the baby or the spoon full of food so she is thinking, "Just like Hakadosh Baruch Hu is פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת יָדֶיךָ — *He opens up His hand*, וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רָצוֹן – *and He satiates the desire of every living thing*, I also stretch out my hand to my child and satiate him."

A father can also do it when he gets up in the middle of the night sometimes. It's a good idea by the

way. Sometimes the father should get up in the middle of the night when the baby is crying—let the wife sleep a little bit—and as he's standing there pushing the nipple of the bottle into the baby's mouth let him think, "My hand is the hand of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Because He is doing it to me too. I don't see the nipple when He is feeding me, but it's no less. He is feeding me with His hand. I am eating out of His hand. And therefore that's why my baby is eating out of my hand because I am emulating Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

Don't be a Gentile

Now, if you don't think that, I'm not saying it's nothing. If people are kindhearted without thinking of Hashem, they're going to get a reward anyhow. But that kind of kindliness is not the fulfillment of Hashem's purpose. It's something, but it's not *avodas Hashem.*

If you're feeding your baby just like anybody else among the nations feeds their babies, it's a pity. After all, Mrs. Morreti, the Italian neighbor down the block, she also feeds her children. But you came into this world not to be an Italian mother.

So hurry up and add this one ingredient: "I'm doing it because Hakadosh Baruch Hu wishes to feed the world and therefore I'm his emissary." Otherwise it's a pity. You're wasting your *chessed*; you're wasting your life! It's only when it's done because we believe in a Borei Who is a *chofetz chessed*; it's only when we say מָה הוּא רַחוּם אַף אַתָּה רַחוּם, just as He is so are we, then it has meaning.

Expanding the Program

Now we have to apply this to all the things we do, anything of kindness should be done *l'sheim Shamayim*; you're emulating Hakadosh Baruch Hu. After all, Avraham practiced kindliness to everybody in all types of ways. *Chessed* means many things—it means being polite and kindly and caring and compassionate and forgiving. *Chessed* means also, no *ona'as devarim.* Don't say wrong words, hurt people's feelings. No *lashon hara* either—that's a lack of *chessed.*

Make it a habit to encourage people. מְעוֹדֵד עֲנָוִים ה' – Hakadosh Baruch Hu encourages people (Tehillim 147:6) in all types of ways, so we should too. Avraham Avinu learned how to encourage people, to make them feel good, to make them happy. Wherever Avraham was, it was עֹז וְחֶדְוָה בִּמְקוֹמוֹ – courage and *simchah* like in the place of Hashem.

Avraham smiled at people too! But he did it because He understood that Hashem was smiling at him! The sunlight, Avraham knew, was a smile of kindness from Hashem. A light breeze was another smile. And so just like יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, we imitate Him and smile at others. Avraham learned that. He learned all the details, all the subdivisions of *chessed.* It's a very great subject, a whole Shas of *chessed*, and Avraham learned it from the *briyah.*

Kindness of Carefulness

Chessed, for instance, will include; you have to be careful with other people and their money too. If you're going to open a window in somebody's house, you'll be careful not to break the windowpane. That's *chessed.* You have to be careful if you're sitting here, don't stick your foot out into the aisle. Someone might fall over your foot. That's *chessed. Chessed* means you are being careful not to cause injury to people.

Or if somebody lost something. Let's say your fellow man's garbage can fell into the street. Soon, a car will come and flatten it out.

So you keep on walking; you "don't care". What do you mean you don't care? Walk out in the street and put it back. It's *hashavas aveidah.* That's *chessed.*

Avraham learned these *dinim.* He was a practitioner of *chessed* because he learned from Hakadosh Baruch Hu; he learned *chessed* and all the *toldos* of *chessed*, all the subdivisions of *chessed.* He learned them from the *briyah*, and he became a *gadol baTorah* in all the *dinim* of *chessed.*

Avraham's Greatest Teaching

And that's what we have to do. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, הַבִּיטוּ אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיכֶם – look at your forefather Avraham (Yeshayha 51:1). Look at him! That's why the

story of Avraham sitting by his tent looking out for wayfarers is told. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is telling us, "*Habitu*! Look at your forefather. Always study that! Always think about how he lived!"

"And if you adopt this as a career in life, if you walk in the ways of Avraham," says Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "and you do it for the same reason he did, because he was walking in My ways, that's the person I'm waiting for! That's true greatness. You're the person who's becoming great in this world. Because it's not the spectacular deeds that I'm waiting for; it's the ordinary deeds of kindness that are accompanied with the devotion of the mind that truly makes a man great."

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Learning From Avraham Avinu

This week we learned that Avraham Avinu became the master of *chessed* by studying the world and discovering that Hashem fills it with endless kindness. Every act of goodness Avraham did was a declaration that Hashem is a *chofetz chessed* — that the Creator loves to do good.

This week I will *bli neder* do at least one act of *chessed* each day — whether it's helping someone, giving encouragement, or even offering a smile — with the thought that *I am doing it to emulate Hashem's kindness*. Just as Hashem opens His hand to feed and care for all His creations, I will train myself to open my hand and heart to others, remembering that every small kindness becomes a living monument proclaiming Hashem's goodness in the world.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:
96 – Avraham's Teachings | **371 –** A Happy World
E–156 – Avraham Utilized His Lifetime
E–164 – In The Days of Avraham

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QUESTION

How does one cure the problem of nervousness, of nerves?

ANSWER

Many people come to me with nervousness and I tell them, "You know what the cause of your nervousness is? Are you sleeping?" They don't sleep enough. Number one, to sleep eight hours a night; that is the first medicine. And most people don't want to take that medicine. You have to sleep eight hours. If you're nervous, sleep eight hours every night for a long time. Little by little, it will go away. You get sick right away but you won't get well right away; so sleep eight hours every night for a long time and you'll see it will change.

And so you don't have to go to any specialists in psychology, people who have tricks and ways of making money from you. You come again and again, each time they collect big fees for giving nothing at all to you except words and words. Better to start sleeping eight hours a night.

Now it doesn't mean that by sleeping once you are going to be healed. It's easy to get sick; it takes a long time to become healed. But if you sleep for a long time, eight hours every night, I guarantee you that your nervousness will decrease and maybe disappear entirely. It is of the utmost importance to get enough sleep.

August 13, 1998