

PARASHAT VAYEIRA

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHESSED

The main theme of Parashat Vayeira is the major attribute of Avraham Avinu- Chesed. We are familiar with a Baal Chesed/a Gomer Chesed. But that's not enough because the truth is if you look in the Shmonei Esreh we ask G-d in "Sim Shalom" to give us "Torat Chayim" and "Ahavat Chesed". You have to love Chesed. A person has to imitate Hashem. As Dovid Hamelech says, "the world is built through Chesed." Hashem created this world to do Chesed to people. When people don't do chesed the world is destroyed. Sodom was opposed to Chesed and it was destroyed. There is no point of living if there is no Chesed. What's the difference between Ahavat Chesed and Ahavat Yisrael? Ahavat Yisrael you love people, while Ahavat Chesed you have a certain mode of thinking, you love to give. You have to love everyone- even an atheist secular Israeli. The 3 things that the Jewish people are known for is that they are (rachmanim) merciful, (bayshanim) shameful and (gomlei chasadim) do chesed. Hashem chose Avraham because of his tzdekkah and chesed. There is an inyan of chesed on an individual, communal and universal level. A Jew should be devoted to the cause of kindness to non Jews and animals. (Visiting people in hospitals, shlepning boxes, hachnasat orchim, working at HASC.) All acts of kindness a person has to participate in. Try to do 10 acts of chesed a day. A Jew has to be a giver, not a taker. Jealousy, honor and desire take a person out of the world- they are all about taking. Just look at the difference between Halloween and Purim. Both holidays people dress up, but on Halloween people go "trick or treating" (collecting for themselves), while on Purim people give "matanot le-evyonim" to other people.

They asked Aristotle, how come when someone does chesed to another person, the giver becomes more attached to the receiver than vice versa? Aristotle said because the taker is only receiving physical kindness, but the giver is getting much more- he is becoming a greater person. But for the Jew it's much more. Avraham, when he went after the angels, it was like they were doing him the biggest favor in the world! You are growing as a slave of Hashem because you are taking care of his children. The more you do this, the more you are fulfilling your mission in life. Ahavat Chesed creates Ahavat Yisrael/Ahavat Habriyot. There is a good chance you are making the taker into a better person because he feels he has to give.

How do we do Ahavat Chesed? (1)Receive everyone with a pleasant facial expression. Rav Avraham Grodinski lived during the Holocaust. When he would walk through the concentration camps

he was always smiling. Through all the horrible tragedies, he was still smiling. Someone once asked him, why he smiled so much through such a terrible times? He said that for 3 years he was working to develop the right smile. (2) You have to start speaking to people and you have to mean it. Everyone likes to work with the popular guy. It's a much bigger mitzvah to work with the not so popular guy. (3)The way you respond to people- try to make them feel good. (Rav Yitzchak Elchonon was trying to get one of his students out of the Russian army. Because in those days, if you went to the Russian Army, you were basically finished. So Rav Elchonon was sitting in the Beis Din and taking care of a very important case, when one person walks in and tells him that this student of his doesn't have to go to the army. Immediately he jumps up with joy and hugs the person, thanks him for coming and telling him the news. In the next 20 minutes, 5 people come in and tell him the same exact news. For each person, he had the same exact expression. Why? Because when each person came to tell him the news, they wanted to be the first ones to tell the Rebbe. They wanted to make their Rebbe happy, and if he told them he already heard the news, they would be downtrodden. SO in order to make them feel good, he gave them each the same expression. A baal chesed has to create opportunities to do the chesed in the best way possible. Rav Moshe Feinstein says that a person needs to give at least 1/10th of his time to someone who needs your help. (4)Listening emphatically- listening and identifying with the person's pain. People need to be heard. You have to ask yourself, how can I help out my community? Klal Yisrael? You have to have the right intention. Are you becoming a doctor/lawyer to help people or just make money? We are here for others. Avraham Avino prayed for Sedom. He prayed for a bunch of reshaim. It doesn't matter who you are doing chesed, as long as your are constantly giving. When someone matures, he becomes less selfish. In order to have a good marriage, you have to work on chesed. The more you give over in Torah, the more you grow. The world stands on 3 pillars- torah, avodah and gemilot chasadim. It's no coincidence that the founder of the Jewish Nation was the biggest baal chesed. If G-d blessed you, it's for you to give over to others because you never know how far the chesed will go.