

# VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach  
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English



בס"ד

## One Who Engages in the Middah of Chesed is Emulating the Middos of Hashem!

### » Eliezer Tested Rivkah Only in the Area of Chesed!

**The pasuk** in this week's Parshah states (Bereishis 24:14): "And it will be that the girl to whom I will say: Please tilt your flask so that I may drink, and she will say: Drink and I will also give your camels to drink, she will be the one that You chose for Your servant Yitzchok, and with this I will know that You did kindness with my master." Eliezer made a sign for himself: If a girl will perform kindness, she is appropriate for Yitzchok.

**Rav Eliyahu Lopian zt"l** asks: This sign proves that she is kind and acts with alacrity, but how does that prove that she has *yiras shomayim*? Why didn't he make a *siman* for that? This question is even more troubling when one realizes that Avrohom was seeking a wife for Yitzchok to be the mother of the entire future nation of Klal Yisroel. It would seem that it is imperative that she have *yiras shomayim*. Why was there no *siman* for this?

**The** verse states further (ibid:22): "And the man gazed at her in wonderment, waiting quietly to know whether Hashem had granted success to his journey or not. And it was when the camels finished drinking, and the man took a nose ring of gold..."

**We** see that Eliezer only gave her the jewelry after the camels finished drinking. Why did he have to wait so long? He already clearly saw that she was kind after she gave him to drink and began giving the camels to drink? Why did he have to wait until the camels finished?

### » Why Didn't Lot's Hachnasas Orchim Protect Him?

**In** Parshas Vayera (19:29), the verse stated: "And it was when Hashem destroyed the cities of the plain and Hashem remembered Avrohom and he sent out Lot from the upheaval." Rashi says that the reason the verse says that Hashem remembered Avrohom is because Lot was aware that Sarah was Avrohom's wife, yet when they went to Mitzrayim and Avrohom said that she was his sister, Lot was silent and didn't reveal the

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secret. This was the merit that Hashem remembered.

**Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l** asks: Lot showed extreme *mesiras nefesh* when he allowed the *malachim* to stay in his home in Sodom. This act seems more meritorious than his silence in Mitzrayim. Not revealing that Sarah was Avrohom's wife was merely a *shev v'al ta'aseh*, a non-action, while this mitzvah was an action. Why didn't this *zechus* of *hachnasas orchim* serve as a merit to save him?

**The Avos D'Rav Nosson (Perek 7)** says that one's home should be open to the multitudes. This means that one's home should be open on all four sides. It says that we find this by Iyov. His home had four doors, one on each side, in order that poor people should be able to enter immediately and not have to walk around the house. The Avos D'Rav Nosson further states that when Iyov was struck with terrible suffering, he complained to Hashem: "Master of the World, did I not give food to the hungry? Did I not give drinks to the thirsty?"

**Hashem** answered: "You didn't even reach half of the *chesed* that Avrohom Avinu did. You sat in your house and waited for guests to come to you. When someone came who was accustomed to eating meat, you gave him meat. When someone came who was accustomed to drinking wine, you gave him wine. However, Avrohom didn't act like that. He traveled around and when he found guests, he brought them to his home. Even if the guest was unaccustomed to eating meat and drinking wine, he gave them meat and wine."

**We** may ask how exactly Avrohom was superior to Iyov? Iyov also had four open doors in his house and welcomed every guest. How was he inferior to Avrohom? improve

### » The Difference Between Chesed and Rachmanus

**Rav Rav Eliyahu Dessler zt"l** explains the difference between *chesed*, kindness, and *rachmanus*, mercy. He cites the Chovos Halevavos which says that when someone helps someone because he has mercy on him, he is in essence trying to help himself. He feels bad when he

sees that person's pain and he assists him in order to remove his own bad feelings. That is *rachmanus*, not *chesed*. Someone who does *chesed* has an essence of complete kindness. He doesn't help people simply because that person lacks something. Rather, a *ba'al chessed* wishes to do *chesed*. He wants to help people.

**This** is the difference between the *chesed* of Avrohom and the *chasadim* of Noach, Lot and Iyov. Iyov performed *chesed* to guests – but it was only out of *rachmanus*, only to still his own conscience. Thus, he only gave people what they really needed. Avrohom, on the other hand, gave people things that they didn't even need. This was because he was a *ba'al chessed* and he loved giving to others. He didn't just have mercy upon them. He truly wanted to do things for them. Therefore, he was greatly pained when he couldn't find guests and couldn't do anything to help anyone.

**This** was also the difference between Avrohom and Noach. Noach did *chesed* in the *teivah* by feeding the animals. However, he only gave them what they needed to live. He had *rachmanus* on them since they were dependent on his kindness for their survival. Avrohom did *chesed* because his entire essence was that of a *ba'al chessed* – not because it was incumbent upon him to do it and not because anyone was depending upon him.

**This** is also the reason why Lot wasn't saved because of his *hachnasas orchim*. Lot only did this act because of *rachmanus*, as he couldn't stand to see their pain when they had nowhere to stay. This act was not sufficient to save him. Therefore, he had to rely upon the *zechus* of Avrohom.

### »» *Through Chesed, One Can Rectify All Middos!*

**We** see that genuine *chesed* means more than just giving something to another person. It means having a true desire to help him and searching for ways to benefit him. With this in mind, we can understand the famous words of Rav Eliyahu Dessler that one spark of genuine *chesed* can save one from jealousy, hate, haughtiness, and even from desire.

**Chesed** and jealousy are fundamentally opposite. When one becomes strong in one of these attributes, the other becomes weak. The same is true with hatred. When *chesed* becomes instilled in one's heart, he automatically becomes bereft of hatred. The same is true of haughtiness. When one seeks to help others in any way he can, his ego will lessen. So too, his desires will lessen

when he busies himself with *chesed*.

**It** is also true that *chesed* helps one attain the mitzvos between man and G-d, as Chazal say (Zohar Devarim, beginning of Perek Aleph): The only righteous man is he who does *chesed* with his Creator. When we work to improve in *chesed*, our avodah will improve drastically beyond all boundaries.

**This** also helps us understand Chazal's words on the *pasuk* (Devarim 28:9): "*V'halacha b'drachav*. (And you shall walk in His ways." Chazal say: "Just like He is merciful (*rachum*), you should be merciful." It does not say that Hashem does acts of mercy; rather, it says that He is merciful, and it tells us to emulate this trait. The intent may be that we are not meant merely to learn to do acts of mercy; rather, we are meant to turn ourselves into merciful people. We are meant to strive to emulate Hashem by becoming merciful beings.

**Rav** Elchonon Wasserman *zt"l* translates the verse (Koheles 12:13): "The final word after all is heard, you shall fear Hashem and observe his mitzvos, for this is the entirety of man", to mean that no man should think that *yiras shomayim* is a positive attribute that some people have, yet, even if he lacks *yiras shomayim*, he can still be an upright person. The verse teaches us that this is not so. If one has no *yiras shomayim*, he isn't even considered a person. He is an animal.

**A** man's status as a person depends upon how much *yiras shomayim* he has. A man with a lot of *yiras shomayim* is a big person. One with a small amount of *yiras shomayim* is a small person.

**Rav** Wasserman cites the verse in Bereishis that relates that Hashem said: "Let us make a man". The Zohar Hakadosh says that Hashem told the entire creation that every entity should work together to create man. Every creature, such as the lion and the snake, will give man something from its being and structure. Thus, man is embellished with the qualities

of every wild animal.

**The** Zohar says: "How many chains would be needed to restrain such a hybrid wild animal? Hashem restrains him with just one chain – the chain of *yiras shomayim*."

**Only** *yiras shomayim* has the ability to stop a person from acting like a wild animal. Even a brilliant philosopher like Aristotle couldn't hold himself back from base desires without it. This is what Avrohom told Avimelech (Bereishis 20:11): "Only, there is no *yiras Hashem* in this place and you

*"...The only way to know if someone has true yiras shomayim is if we he loves to do chesed. If one loves helping others, we can discern that he has emulated Hashem and has instilled chesed into his being. We know that he has the strength to overcome all negative attributes..."*

will kill me because of the matter of my wife.” If there is no *yiras shomayim*, no amount of wisdom can help. (This same explanation is found in the Malbim.)

**With** this, we can understand how *chesed* helps a person overcome all bad *middos*. If a man emulates Hashem and becomes a man of *chesed*, he will have the strength to overcome the *yeitzer hara*. All his natural actions will be actions of mercy and *chesed* and he will be able to banish all negative *middos*.

**The** Sforno and Malbim explain that the reason Eliezer waited to give Rivkah the ornaments until after the camels finished drinking was because he wanted to make sure that she would ask for no compensation. Since she asked for nothing, this proved that her very essence was *chesed* and she had nothing else in mind.

**Eliezer** made a *siman* for *chesed*, and not for *yiras shomayim*, because the only way to know if someone has true *yiras shomayim* is if we see that he loves to do *chesed*. If one loves helping others, we can discern that he has emulated Hashem and has instilled *chesed* into his very being. We thus know that he has the strength and ability to overcome all negative attributes. This is the greatest *siman* that he has *yiras shomayim*.

### » The Greatness of Chesed and Hachnasas Orchim

**Chazal** say amazing things about the greatness of *hachnasas orchim*:

**The** Gemara in Sanhedrin (103B) states: “Rav Yochanan says in the name of Rav Yosi ben Kisma: Great is eating (Rashi explains that this is referring to feeding guests), as it distanced two clans from the Jewish people, as it is stated (Devarim 23:4-5) ‘An Amoni or a Moavi shall not enter into the assembly of Hashem... because they met you neither with bread nor with water.’”

**The** Gemara adds that *hachnasas orchim* “distances the near, and draws near the distant, and averts eyes from the wicked, and causes the Shechinah to rest on the prophets of Baal, and to make an unintentional transgression considered an intentional transgression.”

**The** Gemara explains each statement, one by one. It says that we see that it distances the near from Amon and Moav. They were close relatives of the Jewish people – as they descend from Lot – but since they failed to provide Klal Yisroel with food, they were distanced and it became forbidden to allow them into the nation. If this is how severe we are with a non-Jew who does not feed his guests, one can only imagine what type of complaint this would be against a Jew.

**The** fact that it draws near the distant is derived from Yisro, as Rav Yochanan says that in reward for Yisro telling his daughters (Shemos 2:20): “Call him (Moshe Rabenu), that he may eat bread” his descendants were privileged to sit with the Sanhedrin in the Lishchas Hagazis.

**The** fact that it averts eyes from the wicked is derived from Micha, who was not severely punished, because he provided bread to passersby.

**Micha’s** story is truly astounding. Moshe Rabenu was looking for the *aron* of Yosef in the Nile. In order to make it rise, he wrote a name of Hashem and placed it in the river. Micha took this name and used it to make an idol.

**This** is obviously an indescribably terrible act. At this lofty time of Kriyas Yam Suf, when the entire Klal Yisroel merited a revelation of the Shechinah to such a tremendous extent that even a maidservant by the sea saw more than Yechezkel ben Buzi did in his prophecies, this man was busy creating an idol!

**Micha** would certainly have been punished greatly for this awful sin. He would have lost his portion in Olam Haba. However, he was not punished so greatly because he provided food to passersby.

**The** Gemara also says that the smoke from the Mishkan and the smoke from the idol of Micha merged together, which led the Malachei Hashareis to want to push it away. Hashem told them, however, “Leave it because he provides bread to guests.”

**To** avoid any misconception, this doesn’t mean that Micha wasn’t punished at all. It means that he wasn’t punished as severely as he otherwise would have been because he did *chesed* and provided for his guests.

**The** fact that it causes the Shechinah to rest on the prophets of the Baal is derived from the friend of Ido Hanavi. The story (found in 1 Malachim 13:20) in short is that Hashem commanded Ido to go to King Yeravam, who was bringing offerings to idols in Bethel, and to prophesize to him. Hashem also told Ido not to eat any bread or drink any water while he was there, and not to return on the road he used to go there. At that time, great miracles occurred to Ido.

**The** son of a false prophet told his father all about what happened, and the father went to Ido and invited him to eat with him. Ido said that he couldn’t, as Hashem had told him not to eat anything. The false prophet then lied and claimed that he too had received a prophecy in which Hashem told him that he should bring Ido to his house for a meal.

**Ido** believed him because this man had once been known as a true prophet. Therefore, he went with him to eat. He was later punished for this and killed by a lion.

The *pasuk* says that since this man gave Ido a meal, he was rewarded with a true prophecy from Hashem. This is mindboggling! He was a false prophet who lied and tricked Ido, and ultimately caused his death, but he still was rewarded greatly for feeding him.

**From** all this, we see what incredible rewards one receives for the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*.