**ב"ה**

**Unit 4 –** חסד **– It’s all around you!**

על שלשה דברים העולם עומד – על תורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים

“The world stands upon three pillars – Torah, Avoda and Acts of Kindness” (Avot 1:2)

**Essential Questions:**

1. How can kindness be made into a habit?
2. How does giving affect the GIVER?

**EQ #1 - How can kindness be made into a habit?**

The opportunities for חסד are everywhere and yet many of us go days without consciously doing something for someone else. This is not because we don’t think it’s important, but often the opportunity does not seem to present itself. Let’s think about ways to make חסד a more regular part of our lives by seeing the opportunities all around us. Often the best way to learn this is by hearing examples of people who cultivated the sensitivity to others that the opportunities to do חסד were literally – endless!

**Story #1 – A lesson for life**

Rabbi Pam was giving a test to his class when he noticed one student copying from another. Instead of tearing up the student’s test, failing him for the class or sending him to the principal’s office, R. Pam went over to the young man and whispered: “If you don’t understand a question, please come up to my desk and I will explain it to you.”

Now this does not mean that a teacher should let a student cheat, how to handle it depends on the specific circumstances. In this case, R. Pam’s sensitivity helped him deal with this young man in a kind way and it was the right choice. As the young man himself told R. Pam many years later:

“Many of the things that you taught me, I have long forgotten, but what happened that day, I will never forget.” (*Rav Pam*, P. 145-146)

**Story #2 – Books, what books?**

There were two authors who lived on the same block. They were friendly and often spoke about what they were writing. Yehudah wrote very brilliant, scholarly works for experts while his friend Israel wrote popular novels for all types of people. Yehudah had just finished his first book and everyday he would go to the local bookstore to see if any of the three copies there had sold. Day after day, there were no sales – his books sat there gathering dust. Yehudah, very upset and depressed by the situation complained to his friend Israel; “Your books sell like hotcakes, and mine – not one!”

Later that week, Yehudah and his wife went out and left their son Amos at Israel’s house. Amos noticed that on the coffee table were four copies of his father’s book. One of them must have been a gift, but the other three, where did they come from?!Young Amos then realized that his father’s friend (who was a poor man) had bought all three copies of his father’s book! Israel noticed Amos looking at the books and quickly grabbed the three copies and put them away in a drawer like nothing had happened. He did not want anyone to realize what he had done.

(Based on *Tale of Love and Darkness* p. 133-135)

**Story #3 – New clothes for school**

It was a week before the start of the new school year and Benny was going into 6th grade. Like every year his mother took him shopping for some new school clothes. They entered Marshall’s and Benny’s mom told him: ‘Take the shopping cart and go pick out some new outfits, I will be in the Women’s section and we’ll meet at the checkout aisle in forty five minutes’. 45 minutes later Benny met his mother at the checkout with a shopping cart filled with clothes. ‘I see that you had some success’, she said with a smile. ‘Let’s have a look at what you found’. As she began picking up the clothes she exclaimed: ‘Benny, none of these are your size’! ‘I know ma’, Benny answered and then he went on to explain: ‘You see, there is this kid in my class that doesn’t have a lot of money. He wears more or less the same clothes for the entire week and they are pretty dirty and worn out. I already have a lot of clothes and I haven’t outgrown most of my stuff from last year, so I was thinking that we could put the money towards some clothes for him. I hope you are not mad. With tears in her eyes and a big smile on her face Benny’s mom replied – “How could I be mad…?”

**Text Study and Activity:**

In groups:

* Draw a line down the middle of a large poster board
* At the top of one column write:
  + “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” (Do to others what you would have done to yourself” (Vayikra 19:18)
  + At the top of the other column write: ﻿דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד"” - What you don’t like – Don’t do to another. (Shabbat 31a)
* Think of as many examples of each and put them in their proper columns.

As a class:

* Create a mural with pictures of many of the ideas on the lists. Each group can choose their top five and be given one area of the banner to illustrate.
* Discuss – Was it easier to find “Do’s” (ואהבת...) or “Don’ts (What you don’t like..) – Why do you think that is?

**Overlooked Acts of Chesed:**

The following is a list of questions that relate to our attitude and sensitivity towards other people:

* Do I help others succeed?
* Do I help others fulfill their unique potential?
* If someone I know succeeds in something am I happy for him/her?
* Do I really celebrate at my friends שמחות?
* Do I praise and speak positively about others?
* Do I praise others when they deserve it?
* Am I generous with my time if someone else needs it?
* Do I smile at all people and greet them kindly?
* Do I protect others from possible embarrassment or ridicule?
* Do I cheer people up when they are down?
* Do I listen well and show that I care when others are speaking to me?
* Do I daven for others when they need help?
* Do I share my belongings with others?
* Do I have stuff that I don’t use that others can benefit from?
* Do I do my best to make others feel comfortable when they are around me?
* Do I support and backup another person who is picked on or bullied? Even if they are not my age or my friend?
* Do I daven for others even when they are not in need – Just hoping that ה' blesses them with all good?

**Quote :**

“How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment before making the world better. We can start now slowly changing the world!....You can always, always give something even if it is only kindness. Give, give again, don’t loose courage. Keep it up and go on giving.”

(Anne Frank , March 1944)

**Text Study**

“Our Rabbis taught: Acts of chesed are greater than tzedaka in three ways. Tzedaka can be accomplished only with money; acts of chesed can be accomplished with one’s body (by doing something) as well as with money. Tzedaka can be given only to the poor; acts of chesed can be done for both poor and rich. Tzedaka applies only to the living; acts of chesed apply to both the living and the dead.” (Sukah 49b)

**Activity:**

As we see from the list above there are so many ways to give! Ways that often go unnoticed. Consider some of the questions above and focus on three questions that you think you could improve in. Under each question write two ways that you can improve in a certain area. Be as specific as possible.

**EQ #2 - How does giving affect the GIVER?**

1. For the One Who Receives…

**Story – I can wait…**

R. Shlomo Carlebach was a very popular sought after singer, counselor and speaker. He was sitting at the gate waiting to catch a flight from Toronto to New York when an announcement came over the loudspeaker: “There are two people that have medical emergencies and need to get back to New York immediately. We are asking for two volunteers to give up their seats and they will be put on the next flight out (three hours later). If you are willing, please see a representative at the ticket counter immediately.” R’ Shlomo, despite his demanding schedule immediately got up and approached the ticket counter to happily give up his seat. (Based on *Holy Brother* P.160)

**Video Clip – The people must be paid!**

[Aaron Feuerstein](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YcWLXBXaD8)

**Video Clip – The Greatest Gift of All**

[Liviu Librescu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEHm64RnjAs)

**Discussion Questions:**

After watching the clips and/or reading the story, consider the following questions:

* How do you think the people who benefited from the kind deed felt?
* Do you think it changed the way they viewed the world?
* Will it change the way they treat others?
* How would the world be different if others followed their example?
* If you were in their shoes do you think you would have done the same thing?
* Who inspired you most? What lesson can you take from his example?

1. For the one who gives….

It is fairly obvious that the receiver of a kind deed benefits from the act. Perhaps overlooked is how giving affects the one doing the deed! Below we will consider several sources that illustrate how perhaps the giver is the one who receives most!

**Story – The Gift of Love.**

“It was past midnight. I was walking through the deserted city to my hotel on the other side of the river. The night was dark and foggy and I couldn't get a taxi. As I approached the bridge, I noticed a shabby figure leaning over the parapet. A "down-and-out," I thought. Then he disappeared. I heard a splash. My God, I thought, he's done it. A suicide! I ran back under the bridge, onto the embankment, and waded into the river, grabbing him as he came past, borne by the current. I dragged him up onto the embankment. He was quite a young guy. He was still breathing. A couple of people noticed and I shouted to them to get an ambulance. They managed to stop a taxi, and between us we half dragged, half carried the man into the taxi...I got in and told the driver to drive to the nearest hospital emergency room. I waited until

the man was admitted, gave my report and got a taxi to my hotel at last.

I had ruined a good suit and knew I would have a terrible cold in the morning. I could feel it coming on. But anyway I had saved a life. I had a hot bath and got into bed but it still worried me. Such a young man! Why had he done it? The next morning as soon as I was free, I bought a large bunch of grapes and set off for the hospital. I was determined to find out what was behind this matter. Maybe I could help. Why was I so interested in the guy? In this great city there were at least half a dozen would-be suicides every night. Their plight did not touch me. Then it dawned on me. Of course. First you give, then you care. I had given quite a lot. I had risked my life and gotten a bad cold in the bargain. I had invested something of myself in that man. Now my love and care were aroused. That's how it goes. First we give, then we come to love.

(Aryeh Carmell, Masterplan : Judaism: Its Program, Meanings, Goals)

**Video Clip – Acting with love creates love, even if you are just “acting”!**

[See Trailer here](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSXFE3W7tBc)

If you will be using the full clip please email me for the file.

**Text Study**

**﻿**מְחוֹנֵן עֲנָיִים [עֲנָוִים] אַשְׁרָיו (משלי י"ד:כ"א)

“One who acts kindly with those who are less fortunate – his reward is happiness.”

**Text Study**

﻿אמר מר זוטרא: אפי׳ עני המתפרנס מן הצדקה יעשה צדקה.

“Even a poor man who himself survives on tzedaka should also give tzedaka.” (Gittin 7b)

**Text Study**

﻿תני ר׳ יהושע יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני העני עושה עם בעל הבית

(ויקרא רבה ל"ד:ח')

“More than the rich man does for the poor man, the poor man does for the rich man.”

(Midrash Rabba Vayikra 34:8)

**Text Study**

**﻿**Turnus rufus (a wealthy, but unkind Roman) asked Rabbi Akiva: "If your God loves the poor, why doesn't He feed them?" Rabbi Akiva said to him: “ ה' allows them to remain poor in order to give us the merit of giving them tzedaka, which will protect us”. (Bava Batra 10a)

**Text Study**

פרנסני – “ Please help me!" came the woman's cry, as she approached Benyamin (who was in charge of giving out tzedaka from the community tzedaka fund). Unfortunately, there was a terrible famine and times were very bad. "I swear in the name of the Holy Temple that there is nothing left in the tzedaka fund," Benyamin sadly told her. But the woman persisted and told him of her horrible situation, saying that if he could not help her "me and my seven sons will die!" Benyamin decided to give her money from his own pocket (of which he had very little).

Years later when Benyamin was very ill and near death, a מלאך arose in the heavenly courts and argued on his behalf: "If a person saves one life, it is as if he saved the whole world. Now, Benyamin saved this woman and her seven children! How can this man's life be cut so short?!" The decree was cancelled and 22 years were added to Benyamin's life. (Based on Bava Batra 11a)

**Video – “**Give Life get Life”

[Cartoon Video Clip](http://www.chabad.org/multimedia/kabbala_toons/default_cdo/aid/1050432/jewish/Give-Life-Get-Life.htm)

**Text Study**

The Giving of Tzedaka benefits the entire world:

מרבה צדקה מרבה שלום (אבות ב':ז') הוא היה אומר:

(Hillel) would say: “The more Tzedaka you give the more peace you create!” (Avot 2:7)

**Video Clip**

An idea – A world where people help each other, not to be paid back, but to pass it on!

[Pay it Forward](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn06FQbIRGU&feature=related) – First 5 minutes or so ONLY!

**Concluding Video –** [**“We are the World”**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Glny4jSciVI&feature=related)

(There is קול אשה and teacher should deem whether appropriate)

צדקה is a concept which Jews introduced to the world thousands of years ago. As we see from the music video it is now a foundation of our human society – for Jew and Non-Jew Alike.