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The Abilities of Compassion and Love

In the first blessing of Shemoneh Esrei, we say **גומל חסדים טובים** .

Previously, we have explained what it means to be **“gomel” chessed** – to want to be kind to others, because what’s ours is not really meant to be ours; all that we have is meant for us to use it to benefit others. But what is the meaning of the word **“chassadim”** “kindnesses”?

It means to have **compassion** (*rachamim*) on others. The Sages say that *chessed* can be done either with the poor or with the wealthy. How can one do *chessed* with the wealthy, if he doesn’t need our kindness? The simple answer would be that even though we can’t give physical benefits to a wealthy man, we can still give him spiritual kindness – to benefit him in a spiritual way.

But on a deeper understanding, even *chessed* is toward the wealthy, because Hashem created the entire world only in order to benefit everyone, including the wealthy. So even if there wouldn’t be people on the world, Hashem would still have a desire to bestow His kindness.

Therefore, the true perspective is that we should be kind to others **not** because others **need** us, but because **that is the way the world is supposed to be** – we are supposed to be looking to benefit others.

When we are kind to the poor, we have compassion on them and give them what they need. But when we are kind to the wealthy, it is a deeper recognition of kindness: because we want to be givers; that we have an inner longing to do good for others.

From where does this human ability come from? Why do people have a longing to benefit others? This comes from the power of *lev tov* in a person – to have a “good heart.” Also, it can be because a person has compassion on others, and this awakens in a person a longing to do good for others.

Most of the kindness we find in the world today is toward the poor. This is kindness that comes from our compassion on others. It can also be a pure form of kindness – a kindness that is *lishmah*. But there is another kind of kindness – a desire to be good to others, to have a *lev tov* toward them. This is the inner ability in a person to love others.

What is the difference between compassion (*rachamim*) and love (*ahavah*)?

With compassion, sometimes a person feels sorry for others and sometimes not. But when a person

loves others, the love is always there - it doesn't need a reason.

Why? Because this love is part of one's intrinsic existence. (Although it can take hard work to reveal this power, once it is revealed, it is always there.) By contrast, compassion needs to be aroused. Compassion is sometimes revealed on this world. But love isn't so revealed on this world; only a few people have revealed it. Compassion and love are actually two opposing forces. Love doesn't need a reason, while compassion needs a reason.

Inner Love - The Root Power of A Jew's Soul

The inner love for others is not present in the kind of "people-lovers" that are in the world, and it is not either merely "to have good *middos*." There are people who by nature are very good-hearted, but this is not the inner kind of love we are talking about. We are talking about the inner essence of the soul - which is a pure, total love. It is not one of the *middos*, nor is it a trait of the soul. It is the very *root* of the soul.

We can find non-Jews as well who are good-natured and have a love for people, but this is not the inner kind of love that a Jew's soul has. A Jew's soul has an inner kind of love that comes from Avraham Avinu - which the non-Jews did not get. This love, the root of the soul, is also the root of all good *middos*.

Revealing The Inner Love

How can one reveal his inner love for others?

The Jewish people are called *raishis*, the "beginning" of the world [See *Rashi* to *Beraishis* 1:1]. The fact that we are endeared to Hashem as the beginning of the nations is not just a fact of history, but it shows us that we have a power in our soul called *raishis* -- the "beginning". When a person reveals his "beginning" - in other words, when he reveals the root of his soul - then he reveals his love for others.

Anything else other than this kind of love is a superficial love which comes from one's body. When a person thinks of himself as only a body, he looks at love like any of the other *middos*. Maybe he learns Torah and works on his *middos*, and perhaps he even helps others work on their *middos*, but his entire love is from his body's viewpoint! He doesn't yet have the inner love.

But if a Jew has developed even minimal feelings for holiness, he can understand that there is such a thing as Torah learning and good *middos* which only come from the body, and that there is a deeper level of Torah learning and good *middos*, which come from the soul.

The *chassidah* (stork) is a bird which does kindness to its friends, but its kindness is superficial, because it only acts kind to its friends. [For this reason, the Torah says it is a non-kosher bird, even though it has the good trait of acting kind, because it is only kind with its own type, and not to other birds]. Similarly, there are people who are very nice to their friends - but only to their friends, and no one else. Such kindness comes from the body.

We have been influenced by our body since we were born and thus we naturally act based on our body's viewpoint. But at some point, we need to open up our heart more, and instead reveal a new source for doing kindness with others, a kindness that comes from our soul.

In order to reveal true love and kindness for others, we need to receive it as a gift from Hashem; we need to *daven* for this - "*Open up my heart to Your Torah.*"

When People Live Superficially

If a person's heart isn't opened yet to uncovering more depth to his *middos*, then he views even Torah, *middos* and matters of *Avodas Hashem* only from his body's understanding, which is superficial. We need to uncover the inner essence behind everything - we need to adapt a totally new attitude, just like a convert who is like a child born anew.

There are people who can learn a lot of Torah and *mussar*, and they have even written many *sefarim* - but their understanding is still very superficial! They haven't yet uncovered more depth to their souls, and all of their understanding comes from their *nefesh habehamis*, the lowest part of the soul. They don't really know anything about life; all of their learning is just copying others.

We can find two people having a conversation, yet their words are kind of dead. They aren't talking from their essence - they are missing the life that is supposed to be found even in ordinary conversation. They are lacking "*The words of G-d are life*" and "*The Torah of kindness on her lips*" in their conversations.

Only when a person reaches his inner essence can he really teach Torah to others, and of him it can be said, "*The Torah of kindness on her lips.*"

To be a *gomel chassadim tovim* means that one is kind to others because he has an inner love for them - he loves others *without any reason*. He reveals an unconditional love for others.

In this world that we live in, we are living in a very cold world! There is no true, inner love to be found.

There are all sorts of wonderful thoughts and ideas found in the Torah, but this is not enough to help us understand what life is about. We have to reveal the inner essence of our soul. We need to reveal our power of inner love for other souls, which is in each and every Jewish soul.

We should be *zoche* to remove ourselves from our bodies and come to reveal the true source of love that is found within us.^[1] ^[1]

^[1] ^[2] To learn more about how to reveal the power of unconditional love, see **Getting To Know Your Feelings** (Part 2 Chapter 7).

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-021-inner-love>

Links

[1] file:///C:/Users/MYRAHELLER/Desktop/NEWNEW/Tefillah%20021.%20Inner%20Love.%20V3.docx#_ftn1

[2] file:///C:/Users/MYRAHELLER/Desktop/NEWNEW/Tefillah%20021.%20Inner%20Love.%20V3.docx#_ftnref1