



*This week's Daf is
dedicated*
זכר נשמת ברכה בת ר' משה

THE HAKUK EDITION
ENGLISH TOPICS ON THE DAF

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Chagigah Daf 7

The **Gemara** mentions the well-known Mishnah recited daily as part of Birkas Hatorah and begins with the statement, “these are the things that have no measure.” One of the listed items is “acts of kindness.” Tosfos quote the Yerushalmi which explains that the reference to "acts of kindness" is referring only to physical acts; however, when it comes to money spent on such acts of kindness there *is* a measure, i.e., a tenth of one’s assets, and at times up to a fifth.

When it comes to physical acts of kindness what are the parameters of the mitzvah? If it has no measure, does that mean we have to do it constantly, all day long?

Rabbi Nissim Karelitz zt”l wondered about this, as printed in Chut Shani (Vol. 3 p. 507), and he cited various sources to try to clarify it. The Turei Even here classifies chessed along with Talmud Torah as indeed boundless, as opposed to the other mitzvos in the list of “elu devarim.” He says that just like one must learn Torah whenever he has the opportunity, so too he is enjoined to do chessed at every chance. The Chayei Odom

deliberates if one needs to go to another city in order to do chessed, if none is available where he is. (He concludes that he is not obligated to do so.)

The **Chofetz Chaim** (Ahavas Chessed 1:1:4) notes that tzedaka has a defined limit – a fifth of one’s possessions – but other types of chessed may not. He thus asks what the rule is about lending money to those in need, a very big act of chessed. On one hand, perhaps tzedaka is limited to a fifth because you don’t get it back, but money lent is returned, so maybe there is no such limit. On the other hand, we can’t force a person to give *all* his money for loans, for then he cannot invest in anything. He ends off that each person should do as much as he is able.

The Chofetz Chaim cites the **Sefer Hachinuch** (Mitzvah 66) that one should lend to needy people according to the demand – again, if he is able; the Chinuch emphasizes that lending is a bigger mitzvah than simply giving tzedaka, since it is not as embarrassing for a person to borrow money than it is to take a handout. This is another example of chessed exceeding limitations of parallel mitzvos.

An exact quota for chessed is often quoted from **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein** zt”l. In Igros Moshe (E.H. 4:26) he instructs that Torah scholars should “donate” from their learning time to assist others in their learning. He proves it from the Gemara that tells of Rabbi Preida, who had a student who did not understand the lesson until he was taught it 400 times! Obviously, we would not say that R’ Preida was derelict in his own studies by giving up so much time for others. R’ Moshe opines that this obligation to help others is similar to “maaser” – a tenth of produce or earnings. “A tenth of the time he has in which to learn; perhaps he can add until a fifth [like maaser kesafim]...”

Let us conclude this discussion with the powerful words of the **Alter of Slabodka** that chessed should not be constrained by any limits. He traces the trait of chessed to that of the Creator, as one of the Thirteen Traits of Mercy. Hashem’s chessed is certainly infinite, as is everything about Him, and we ought to emulate Him as much as possible. Avraham Aveinu pondered deeply about the universe, and saw in it Hashem’s endless

kindness, and personified it to legendary heights. He prostrated to Arab wayfarers, waited upon them and served them to his utmost!

Now, continues the Alter, this is all concerning chessed done to people. Where is a source to be kind even to *animals*?

He said, “Chessed should fill and overflow the soul and mind of man, until he becomes a flowing spring of kindness, toward every one of Hashem’s creations. And even to the Creator, k’viyachol, he does chessed, by fulfilling His will – because that is what Hashem has instructed us...”
(Sichos HaSaba MiSlabodka p. 513)