

# *Loving Kindness in Judaism*

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

- Print this document and post/place the sheets around the room.
- Invite everyone to mill about and read all the pieces of text.
- Then ask everyone to find a text with which they resonate and stand next to/near it.
- With a partner (someone standing at that sign or someone nearby) share why it resonated and then answer/discuss the discussion questions on the sheet.
- Then ask everyone to find a text that feels challenging or troubling. Stand next to/near it.
- With a partner (someone standing at that sign or someone nearby) share why it is challenging and then answer/discuss the discussion questions on the sheet.
- It is recommended to engage in some quiet reflective activity after engaging with these texts. Perhaps ask participants to write or draw a thought or image that is sticking with them after the activity.

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## **Mishneh Torah, Mourning 14:1**

It is a positive commandment to visit the sick, comfort the mourning, to remove the dead, to bring in the bride, to escort guests, and to occupy oneself with all the needs of burial; carrying [the coffin] on one's shoulder, to walk in front of him, to eulogize, to dig, and to bury. As well to make the bride and groom happy, and to take care of all their needs. **And these are 'Gemillut Chasadim' (acts of loving kindness)** that are done with one's body, that have no limit/measurement. Although all these are rabbinic laws they are included under "Love Your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), meaning that all things that you would like others to do for you, you should do for your brother.

## **Discussion Questions:**

Why do you think these actions of the body have no limit/measurement?  
In what ways do you "Love your neighbor as yourself"?



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## **Psalm 92**

It is good to give thanks to God; [it is good] to sing  
out to Your exalted name.

**To declare in the morning of Your loving  
kindness;** [to tell] of Your faithfulness in the nights.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Where/when in your life do you feel loving kindness and/or faithfulness?  
How might it change/affect your day if you speak of loving kindness in the  
morning and faithfulness in the evening?

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## **Sukkah 49b**

Rabbi Elazar further stated: **Acts of loving kindness (gemilut hasadim) are greater than charity (tzedakah)**, for it is said, "Sow to yourselves according to your charity (tzedakah), but reap according to your loving kindness (hesed)" (Hosea 10: 12); when one sows, it is doubtful whether he will eat [the harvest] or not, but when one reaps, he will certainly eat.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Why do you think they are using a farming/planting metaphor to talk about charity and loving kindness?

Why do you think acts of loving kindness are greater than acts of charity? How are they similar/different?



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## **Guide for the Perplexed, Part 353**

[We] have explained the expression *hesed* (loving kindness) as denoting an excess [in some moral quality]. It is especially used of extraordinary kindness. Loving kindness is practised in two ways: first, we show kindness to those who have no claim whatever upon us; secondly, we are kind to those to whom it is due, in a greater measure than is due to them.

### **Discussion Questions:**

When have you experienced an extraordinary kindness?  
When have you offered an extraordinary kindness to someone else?



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## **Guide for the Perplexed, Part 353**

[The] very act of the creation is an act of God's loving-kindness. "I have said, The Universe is built up in loving-kindness" (Ps. 89:3); i.e., the building up of the Universe is an act of loving-kindness.

### **Discussion Questions:**

How does your view of the world change (if at all) when you think about the Universe being built upon loving kindness?

How does this text impact the way you think about creative acts?



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## **Psalm 94**

If I said my feet have stumbled; the loving kindness  
of God will steady me.

### **Discussion Questions:**

How might loving kindness be the remedy in moments of  
stumbling or instability?

When have you been steadied by loving kindness?