**Acts of Loving Kindness**

**#1**

**Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers) 1:2**

*The world stands on three things: on Torah, on service, and on deeds of loving kindness.*

**#2**

**Questions:**

* **What makes you happier – to receive a gift, or to give a gift to your friend? Why?**
* **What is your initial response when someone asks you for a favor?**
* **Do you enjoy lending your possessions, or do you only lend things because of various pressures?**

**Science Supports the Benefits of Giving, Harvard Business Journal**

**Feeling Good about Giving: The Benefits (and Costs) of Self-Interested Charitable Behavior**

For example, research by social psychologist Liz Dunn and her colleagues appearing in the journal Science shows that people's sense of happiness is greater when they spend relatively more on others than on themselves.

**Talmud**

*More than the rich benefactor does for the poor, the recipient does for the benefactor.*

**#3**

**Talmud Shabbos 127a**

 *Inviting guests into one's home is a greater than receiving the Divine presence.*

**Questions:**

* **If you had the choice to host guests or to receive prophecy (in other words, to connect and interact with G-d, to experience the highest level of revelation with your Creator, to connect with the source of your purpose, meaning, and blessing) – which would you choose?**
* **Why would our Sages suggest that spending time doing acts of kindness is more important than spending time with G-d?**

**#4**

**Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), Yoreh De'ah 251:3**

*One who gives to his adult sons or daughters ... or one who gives gifts to his father and they (all the aforementioned recipients) need it, this is a form of charity, and one should give precedence to them over others. Even if the person is not an immediate relative, but they are related, one should give precedence to them over others.*

**Panim Yafos, Devarim 15:7, Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Hurvitz**

*One's family supersedes others even if the needs of others are more pressing.*

**Question: Some people may be overflowing with kindness to friends but forget about sufficiently caring for their own family. What could be the reason for this?**

**#5**

**On Jewish Character, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

*There is a fascinating feature of the geography of the land of Israel. It contains two seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life. The Dead Sea, as its name implies, is not. Yet they are fed by the same river, the Jordan. The difference is that the Sea of Galilee receives water and gives water. The Dead Sea receives but does not give. To receive but not to give is, in Jewish geography as well as Jewish psychology, simply not life.*

**Questions:**

* **When would you refuse to do acts of kindness for others? Why?**
* **What prevents people from doing more kindness?**

**#6**

**American Jews and charitable giving: An enduring tradition by Hanna Shaul Bar Nissim**

Even though only about one in 50 Americans is Jewish, U.S. Jews donate at high levels, both as individuals and as a community. As a scholar who studies community philanthropy, I am doing research to discover what accounts for this outsized generosity and why Jews play such a big role in American philanthropy...

Some 76 percent of American Jews gave to charity in 2012, compared with 63 percent among non-Jewish Americans.

**On Jewish Character, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

*The common factor was generosity. Jews may not always make the right choices in what they give to, but they give.*

**Talmud, Yevamos 79a**

*Kindness is one of the three distinguishing marks of the Jew.*

**Rambam, Laws of Gifts to the poor, 10:1-2**

*We must be more meticulous about the mitzvah of charity than about any of the other positive commandments. Charity is the trademark of the righteous descendants of Abraham, our forefather ...*

*Someone who is cruel and shows no compassion casts doubt upon his Jewish ancestry …*

**Questions:**

* **What motivates people to do acts of kindness?**
* **What would motivate people to be kinder?**
* **What routine or daily acts do you presently do that you could elevate by focusing on the kindness you are actually performing with your behavior?**
* **Right at this moment, what two acts of kindness that you might not otherwise have done can you think of doing?**

**Exercise**

1) When you are not feeling great about yourself, mindfully do an act of kindness. Reflect on how the act of kindness changed your mood.

2) Take an act of kindness you are already doing for someone. Try to elevate the act and channel energy into by doing the kindness for less payback and with the consciousness that you are emulating G-d.

3) Make it a habit to notice if anyone looks new or lost, and to see if there is anything you can do to help them, or if they need directions.