

### THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

### The Gifts of God Flow Through You: Grace, Gratitude, and Generosity in Judaism

Wexner Heritage Alumni Series session 1, January 12, 2022

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Source 1: Psalm 100:3

ָדְעוּ כִּי־יְקוָק הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עֶשָׂנוּ (וּלֹא) [וְלוֹ] אֲנַחְנוּ עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מַרְעִיתוֹ:

Acknowledge that the LORD is God; He made us and we are His, His people, the flock He tends.

#### Source 2: Genesis Rabbah 100:1

#### בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת ויחי פרשה ק

(תהלים ק) דעו כי ה' הוא האלהים, רבי יהודה בר סימון ורבי אחא, רבי יהודה בר סימון אמר דעו כי ה' הוא האלהים הוא עשנו ולא אנחנו בראנו את נפשנו, לא כפרעה שאמר (יחזקאל כט) לי יאורי ואני עשיתני, ורבי אחא אמר דעו כי ה' הוא האלהים הוא עשנו ולו אנו משלימים את נפשותינו...

"Acknowledge that the Lord is God" (Psalm 100:3). Rabbi Yehudah bar Simon and Rabbi Aha—Rabbi Yehudah b. Simon said, "Acknowledge that the Lord is God, God made us and we did not create our souls, unlike Pharoah, who said, 'The Nile is mine; I created myself' (Ezekiel 29:3). But Rabbi Aha said, "Acknowledge that the Lord of God, God made us and we give our souls to God...

#### Source 3: Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, 3:53

כבר בארנו בפירוש אבות שחסד ענינו ההפלגה באי זה דבר שמפליגים בו, ושמשו בו בהפלגת גמילות הטוב יותר, וידוע שגמילות הטוב כולל שני ענינים. האחד מהם לגמול טוב מי שאין לו חק עליך כלל. והשני להטיב למי שראוי לטובה יותר ממה שהיו ראוי. ורוב שמוש ספרי הנבואה במלת חסד הוא בהטבה למי שאין לו חק עליך כלל, ומפני זה כל טובה שתגיעך מאתו ית' תקרא חסד, חסדי ה' אזכיר, ובעבור זה המציאות כלו ר"ל המצאת הש"י אותו, הוא חסד, אמר אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה, ענינו בנין העולם חסד הוא, ואמר בספור מדותיו יתב', ורב חסד.





We have already explained in the *Commentary on Avot* that the meaning of <u>h</u>esed is excess in whatever matter excess is practiced. In most cases, however, it is applied to excess in beneficence. Now it is known that beneficence includes two notions: one of them consisting in the exercise of beneficence toward one who has no right at all to claim this from you, and the other consisting in the exercise of beneficence toward one who deserves it, but in a greater measure than he deserves it. In most cases, the prophetic books use the word <u>h</u>esed in the sense of practicing beneficence toward one who has no right at all to claim this from you. Therefore every benefit that comes from Him, may He be exalted, is called <u>h</u>esed. Thus it says: "I will make mention of the graces (<u>h</u>asdei) of the Lord" (Isaiah 63:7). Hence this reality as a whole—I mean that He, may He be exalted, has brought it into being—is <u>h</u>esed. Thus it says: "The world is built up on grace (<u>h</u>esed)" (Psalm 89:3), the meaning of which is: the building-up of the world is grace. And He, may He be exalted, says in an enumeration of His attributes: "And abundant in lovingkindness (grace)" (Exodus 34:6).

# Source 4: R. Shimon Shkop (1860-1939), *Sha'arei Yosher*, Introduction כל מה שברא ויצר היה רצונו יתברך רק להיטיב עם הנבראים

God's only purpose in creating and forming was to do good for God's creations.

#### Source 5: Genesis Rabbah 14:9

ר' לוי בשם ר' חנינא אמר על כל נשימה ונשימה שאדם נושם צריך לקלס לבורא מ"ט (תהילים קנ) כל הנשמה תהלל יה כל הנשימה תהלל יה.

R. Levi in the name of R. <u>H</u>anina said: 'For every single breath that a human being takes, he should offer praise to the Creator.' What is the reason? Scripture says, 'Let every soul (*neshamah*) praise God' (Psalm 150:6)—let every breath (*neshimah*) praise God.

## Source 6: A.D.M. Walker, "Gratefulness and Gratitude," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, vol. 81 (1980-1981), p. 49

Pleasure at being favored, however undiluted, does not amount to gratefulness in the absence of any desire to make a return... What distinguishes being grateful from being (merely) pleased or glad is the grateful person's desire to make a return. More precisely, he wants to favor another because he has been favored himself.





#### Source 7: Leviticus 7:15

וּבְשַׂר זֶבַח תּוֹדַת שָׁלָמָיו בִּיוֹם קָרְבָּנוֹ יֵאָכֵל לֹא־יַנִּיחַ מְמֶנוּ עַד־בּקֵר:

And the flesh of his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being shall be eaten on the day that it is offered; none of it shall be set aside until morning.

#### Source 8: R. Yitzhak Hutner (1906-1980), Pahad Yitzhak, Rosh Hashanah, #3

When a person receives a benefit from his fellow, a seed of <u>h</u>esed is planted in his world. If the nature of <u>h</u>esed is functioning healthily and properly, this seed cannot but give rise to additional <u>h</u>esed. But if the person is an ingrate, it is as if he uproots the sproutings of <u>h</u>esed with his bare hands. Without a doubt, uprooting a planting of <u>h</u>esed is even more antithetical to the essence of <u>h</u>esed than is simply being uninvolved in matters of <u>h</u>esed... An ingrate damages and destroys the very attribute of <u>h</u>esed.

העדר החזקת טובה לחבירו אינו מצב של שב ועל תעשה שאינו עושה חסד עם חבירו לשלם לו כגמולו, אלא שהיא עובדא בקום ועשה שכופר ומכלה את חסדו של חבירו . . . .שהוא כאילו כופר בטובתו של מקום, מפני שאין הכפירה מתייחסת אל מעשה החסד הפרטי אלא שהיא מתייחסת אל מדת החסד בכלל.

Lack of gratitude to one's fellow is not a matter of passive failure to reciprocate her  $\underline{h}$  esed by performing  $\underline{h}$  esed for her, but is rather an active rejection and destruction of her  $\underline{h}$  esed... One who is ungrateful to his fellow in this way, it is as if he is ungrateful to God, because his denial (ke firah) is a response not (just) to the particular act of  $\underline{h}$  esed that was done for him, but (also) to the attribute of  $\underline{h}$  esed in the broadest sense.

בתוכה של קבלת החסד מקופל הוא ההכרח הרוחני של חסד-גמול ושל החזרת הגדולין לבעל הנטיעה.

Enfolded in the reception of <u>h</u>esed is the spiritual necessity to reciprocate and return the sproutings to the one who planted them.





### Source 9: Miroslav Volf, Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace (2005)

God gives so that we can exist and flourish, but not only for that. God gives so that we can help others exist and flourish as well. God's gifts aim at making us generous givers, not just fortunate receivers. God gives so that we, in human measure, can be givers too (p. 47).

The same double blessing is given to us: If we just enjoy good things without passing them on, if we are blessed without being a blessing, then we fail in our purposes as channels. We are givers because we were made that way, and if we don't give, we are at odds with ourselves (p. 60).

We are not simply the final destination in the flow of God's gifts. Rather, we find ourselves midstream, so to speak. The gifts flow into us, and they flow on from us... We are not just the intended recipients of God's gifts; we are also their channels... As channels, we exist not just to enjoy things but [also] to pass them on. Our purpose is twofold: To flourish and to help others flourish.

#### Source 10: R. Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953), "Kuntres HaHesed"

כאשר ברא אלוהים את האדם, עשהו לנותן ונוטל. <u>כח הנתינה הוא כח עליון ממדות יוצר הכל ברוך הוא</u> "שהוא מרחם ומטיב ונותן, מבלי קבל דבר בתמורה; הן לא יחסר לו כלום, ככתוב: "אם צדקת מה תתן לו (איוב ל"ה, ז) רק שאנו מביעים את תודתנו, אשר זה שורש עבודתנו לו <u>וככה עשה את האדם, ככתוב: "בצלם אלוהים עשה את האדם, כי יוכל לרחם ולהיטיב וליתן".</u>

When the Almighty created human beings, He made them capable of both giving and taking. The faculty of giving is a sublime power; it is one of the attributes of the blessed Creator of all things. He is the Giver par excellence; His mercy, His bounty, and His goodness extend to all His creatures. His giving is pure giving for He takes nothing in return. He can take nothing for He lacks nothing, as the verse says, "If you are righteous what do you give to him?" (Job 35:7) Our service to Him is not for His need but for our own, since we need a means of expressing our gratitude to Him. Man has been granted this sublime power of giving, enabling him to to be merciful, to bestow happiness, to give of himself, as it is written, "God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:26).

