

## Topic: Tzedakah is more important than Gimilut Chasadim

### Gimilut Chasadim Text Sheet

גמילות comes from the root ל.ג.ל. meaning “to pay back”

חֶסֶד comes from the root כ.ס.ח. meaning “kindness”

Pirkei Avot 1:2	The world stands on three things: on Torah ( <i>Torah</i> ), on Worship ( <i>Avodah</i> ) and on Acts of lovingkindness ( <i>gimilut chasadim</i> ).
Babylonian Talmud Sukkot 49b	Our Rabbis taught, In three respects is <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> superior to <i>Tzedakah</i> : <i>Tzedakah</i> can be done only with one's money, but <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> can be done with one's person and one's money. <i>Tzedakah</i> can be given only to the poor, <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> both to the rich and the poor. <i>Tzedakah</i> can be given to the living only, <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> can be done both to the living and to the dead.
Babylonian Talmud Sukkot 49b	R. Hama b. Papa stated, Every man who is endowed with <i>chesed</i> is without doubt a God-fearing man, for it is said “ <b>but the <i>chesed</i> of God is for all eternity toward those who fear God.</b> ” R. Eleazar further stated, What is the purpose of what was written, “ <b>Her mouth is full of wisdom, her tongue with a Torah of <i>chesed</i></b> ”? Are there then a Torah of <i>chesed</i> and a Torah which is not of <i>chesed</i> ? But the fact is that Torah [which is studied] for its own sake is a Torah of <i>chesed</i> , whereas Torah [which is studied] for an ulterior motive is a Torah which is not of <i>chesed</i> .
Babylonian Talmud Sota 14a	R. Simlai expounded: Torah begins with an act of <i>gimilut chasadim</i> and ends with an act of <i>gimilut chasadim</i> . It begins with an act of benevolence, for it is written: “ <b>And God made garments of skin for Adam his wife, and clothed them</b> ”; and it ends with an act of benevolence, for it is written: “ <b>And He buried him in the valley.</b> ”
Mishna Pe'eh 1:1	The following are the things for which no definite quantity is prescribed: the corners [of the field for the poor and the stranger to gather]. First fruits, [the offerings brought] on appearing [before God at the three Pilgrim Festivals]. The practice of <i>gimilut chasadim</i> (more than mere charity and denoting personal service to all men of all classes), and the study of the Torah.

### Additional Facts

The word “*gemilut*” signals that these acts of *gimilut chasadim* are done in the context of a relationship where the act is returned. This immediately differentiates our tradition from those that emphasize the selflessness of service.

The word “*chesed*” appears in the Torah to communicate God's kindness and love toward humanity as well as human kindness and love toward each other. *Chesed* emerges as one of the essential ways humanity engages with God to sustain creation.

### Guiding Questions

Why is *gimilut chasadim* important in Judaism?

How do your acts of *gimilut chasadim* relate to these sources?

What does it mean to do *gimilut chasadim* today?

What do you now know about *gimilut chasadim* that you didn't know before?

## Topic: Tzedakah is more important than Gemilut Chasadim

### Tzedakah Text Sheet

תְּדָקָה comes from the root ק.ד.צ. meaning “Justice” or “Righteousness”

Deuteronomy 15:4	There shall be no needy among you.
Deuteronomy 16:20	Justice, justice shall you pursue ( <i>Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof</i> )
Babylonian Talmud Sukkot 49b	Our Rabbis taught, In three respects is <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> superior to <i>Tzedakah</i> : <i>Tzedakah</i> can be done only with one's money, but <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> can be done with one's person and one's money. <i>Tzedakah</i> can be given only to the poor, <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> both to the rich and the poor. <i>Tzedakah</i> can be given to the living only, <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> can be done both to the living and to the dead.
Babylonian Talmud Sukkot 49b	R. Eleazar stated, Greater is he who performs <i>tzedakah</i> than [he who offers] all the sacrifices, for it is said, <b>“To do <i>tzedakah</i> and justice is more acceptable to God than sacrifice.”</b>
Babylonian Talmud Sukkot 49b	R. Eleazar said, What is the implication of the text <b>“It has been told you, O man, what is good, and what God requires of you: Only to do justly (<i>tzedek</i>), and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God”</b> ? To do justly means [to act in accordance with] justice; to love mercy refers to acts of <i>chesed</i> and to walk humbly with your God refers to attending to funerals and dowering a bride for her wedding [humbly and privately].
Babylonian Talmud Sukkot 49b	R. Eleazar stated, He who executes <i>tzedakah</i> and justice is regarded as though he had filled the entire world with kindness, for it is said, <b>“He loves what is right and just; the earth is full of God’s faithful care.”</b> But if you say that whoever wishes to do good succeeds without difficulty, Scripture expressly says, <b>“How precious is Your <i>chesed</i>, O God”</b> As one might say that this applies also to a man who fears God, Scripture expressly says, <b>“But the <i>chesed</i> of God is for all eternity toward those who fear God and God’s <i>tzedek</i> is for the children’s children of those who keep God’s covenant and observe his laws.”</b>

### Additional Facts

The giving of *tzedakah* is a *mitzvah*.

The Book of the Prophets (the 2nd of 3 books of the Hebrew bible) the reasoning given for bad things happening to the Jewish people is their lack of *tzedakah*.

### Guiding Questions

Why is *tzedakah* important in Judaism?

How do your acts of *tzedakah* relate to these sources?

What does it mean to do *tzedakah* today?

What do you now know about *tzedakah* that you didn’t know before?