

Week 6 Primary Source Text

Tomer Devorah ch. 1

הו' - כי חפץ חסד הוא - הלא כבר פרשנו במקומו שיש בהיכל ידוע מלאכים ממנים לקבל גמילות חסד שאדם עושה בעולם הזה, וכאשר מדת הדין מקטרגת על ישראל, מיד אתם המלאכים מראים החסד ההוא והקדוש ברוך הוא מרחם על ישראל מפני שהוא חפץ בחסד, ועם היות שהם חייבים אם הם גומלים חסד זה לזה - מרחם עליהם... והטעם מפני מדה זו כי חפץ חסד הוא רוצה במה שישראל גומלים חסד ואותו צד מזכיר להם עם היות שאינם כשרים בצד אחר.

אם כן בסדר זה ראוי לאדם להתנהג אף אם ראה שאדם עושה לו רע ומכעיסו אם יש בו צד טובה שמטיב לאחרים או מדה טובה שמתנהג כשורה יספיק לו צד זה לבטל כעסו מעליו וירצה לבו עמו ויחפץ חסד ויאמר די לי בטובה זו שיש לו וכל שכן באשתו כדפרשו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (יבמות סג, א) דינו שמגדלות את בנינו ומצילות אותנו מן החטא, כה יאמר על כל אדם די לי בטובה פלונית שעשה לי או שעשה עם פלוני או מדה טובה פלונית שיש לו יהיה חפץ חסד.

The sixth [Divine trait]: "For God desires¹ loving-kindness" - we have explained in its place that there are angels appointed in the known [Heavenly] chamber to receive the [accumulated goodness] of the loving-kindness that a person does in this world. And when the trait of judgement lays claim against Israel, these angels immediately show this loving-kindness [to God], and the Holy Blessed One shows compassion/mercy upon Israel, since God **desires loving-kindness**. And even with their being accountable [for wrongs they have done], if they bestow loving-kindness to one another, God has mercy upon them... And the reason is because of this trait – since God is One Who **desires loving-kindness**, and delights in when Israel does kindness [one to the other]. And God recalls that side for them [and shows mercy], even as they are not worthy from another side.

If so, it is fitting for a person to act in this way. Even when one sees a person is doing wrong (lit., evil, *rah*) to them and angering them - if there is a good side to [that person]; that the person does good to others or [has] a good trait that the person practices in the proper way, that [positive] side should suffice to nullify the anger from upon you, one's heart [should] be pleased with the person; and one [should] **desire loving-kindness** and say, "It is enough for me this goodness that this person possesses." And this is especially true regarding one's spouse/partner; as our Rabbis explained (Yevamot 63a), "It is enough that they raise our children, and save us from sin." So should one say about every person, "It is enough for me with such and such

¹ The Hebrew *chafetz* literally translated to 'desires' but has the connotation of 'delights in' as well.

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Tzelem Elokim – The Likeness of God

goodness that the person did for me," or "that they did with so and so" or "a positive trait that the person has." [In this way one will be modeling God] and be **desiring loving-kindness**.

Michah 7:18

מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עוֹן וְעִבֵּר עַל־פְּשָׁע לְשִׂאֲרֵית נִחַלְתָּנוּ לֹא־הִחַזְקֵנוּ לְעַד אֲפֹ כִי־נִפְּץ נֶחֱסֵנוּ
הוא.

Who is a Power like You,
Forgiving iniquity²
And passing over transgression;
Against the remnant of His people,
[God] does not hold on to fury forever
Because **God desires/delights in loving-kindness!**

Study Questions:

1. How can you see yourself emulating *HaShem's* desiring/delighting in loving-kindness in your relationship with others? What is necessary for you to emulate God's *ayin tova*, to cultivate the ability of seeing goodness in others?
2. Rabbi Cordovero reminds us that: 'delighting in loving-kindness' is especially important to cultivate regarding one's spouse/partner; as our Rabbis explained (Yevamot 63a), "*It is enough that they raise our children, and save us from sin.*" The Talmud's reference to saving us from sin can be understood as our partner actively and intentionally realigning us after we have been led astray and have missed the mark in our thoughts, words or behavior. What does this idea bring up for you?
3. As we understand from the text, God is a true lover of *chesed*, and delights in seeing the good that people do. How can you cultivate greater joy and happiness in your own deeds of *chesed* in a way that allows you to be true to your inner self and to your relationship with the Divine?
4. How do you understand your Mussar practice during this month of Elul as an opportunity to cultivate the practice of *ayin tova* with others?

² We skipped this trait, which is very close to the next trait of "passing over transgression."