

Rabbi Shlomo Farhi.com

SPREADING LIGHT AND  
TORAH TO OUR AMAZING  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN  
AM YISRAEL

## Vayechi - True Kindness



## חֶסֶד שֶׁל אֱמֶת — Kindness That Needs Nothing Back

### Parashat Vayechi

There are moments in the Torah that are loud.

And there are moments that are quiet — but heavy.

Parashat Vayechi opens with one of those quiet moments.

**וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת**

The days of Yisrael drew near to die.

Yaakov Avinu is nearing the end of his life. He knows it. The Torah doesn't dramatize it, but it doesn't hide it either. There is no panic here. No chaos. Just awareness.

And what does a person do when they know they are nearing the end?

They don't speak about ideas.  
They speak about truth.

Yaakov calls Yosef.

Not all the sons.  
Not a gathering.  
Not a farewell speech.

Yosef.

And that alone already tells us something.

Yaakov is not choosing emotionally. He is choosing practically. Yosef is the one with power. Yosef is the one who can actually carry something out in the real world.

Because end-of-life requests are fragile things.

They are easy to promise.  
They are hard to fulfill.

Yaakov understands that.

And he asks Yosef for something very specific:

**אֵל-נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרַיִם**

Do not bury me in Egypt.

But then Yaakov does something that should make us stop reading and reread the pasuk.

He frames this request in a very strange way:

**וַעֲשֵׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת**

You shall do with me **chesed ve'emet**.

Why does Yaakov need to call burial **chesed**?

Why does he need to call it **truth**?

Why not just say, "Promise me"?

Why not say, "Swear to me"?

Why not say, "This is important"?

Why **chesed ve'emet**?

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## Rashi Stops the Reader Cold

Rashi explains:

**חֶסֶד שְׁעוֹשִׂין עִם הַמֵּתִים — הוּא  
חֶסֶד שֶׁל אֱמֶת**

Kindness done with the dead is called **chesed shel emet**.

Why?

Because the dead cannot repay you.

They cannot say thank you.

They cannot feel indebted.

They cannot return a favor.

They cannot even remember.

There is nothing coming back.

And that is exactly why it is **אמת**.

The Maharal explains that **אמת** is something that exists without dependence. If an action only exists because of what it will generate later — recognition, gratitude, leverage — then it is not **אמת**. It is conditional.

Chesed shel emet is kindness that survives the removal of self.

And that is terrifying.

Because it forces us to ask a question we don't usually like asking:

If nothing came back —  
would I still do this?

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## Why This Is So Rare

Most chesed in the world is not fake — but it is mixed.

We help people we like.

We help people who might help us later.

We help people who will remember.

We help people who will say thank you.

Even spiritually, we like to feel something in return.

A good feeling.

A sense of meaning.

A moment of validation.

But chesed shel emet offers none of that.

And that is why Yaakov insists on this language.

Because burial is the ultimate kindness with no audience.

Once the person is gone, there is no one left to impress.

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## אמת Is Written Into Death Itself

There is a Midrash that points out something subtle.

The word **אמת** itself hints to burial:

- ארון
- מיטה
- תכריכים

Coffin.

Bier.

Shrouds.

This is kindness that deals with the end of the body — but not the end of meaning.

Because even after death, dignity matters.  
Even after death, kavod matters.  
Even after death, the נשמה is still present.

And Yaakov Avinu is saying:

*When I am no longer here to benefit from anything, that is when this chesed becomes אמת.*

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## A Chesed That Waits 210 Years

There is something else happening beneath the surface of this request.

Yaakov asks Yosef to bury him in Eretz Yisrael.

Yosef promises.

And the Torah moves on.

Years later, Yosef himself is nearing death.

And what does Yosef say?

**אֲנִי מֵת וְאֱלֹקִים פֶּקֶד יִפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם**

I am going to die, and God will surely remember you.

**וְהֶעֱלִיתֶם אֶת־עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה**

And you will take my bones with you.

Yosef does for his father exactly what his father asked of him.

And yet — Yosef is not buried right away.

It takes **210 years**.

Two hundred and ten years of silence.

Two hundred and ten years where that promise just sits.

And eventually, Yosef is buried in Shechem.

This is chesed shel emet.

It doesn't expire.

It doesn't decay.

It doesn't get forgotten.

It waits.

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**חֶסֶד וְאֶמֶת נִפְגָּשׁוּ**

Tehillim says:

**חֶסֶד וְאֶמֶת נִפְגָּשׁוּ**

Chesed and emet met.

The word נִפְגָּשׁוּ is strange.

They met — as if they are not usually together.

Because they aren't.

Most kindness in the world is not pure truth.  
Most truth in the world is not kind.

But when chesed is stripped of self-interest,  
something shifts in reality.

צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ

Justice and peace kiss.

That doesn't happen often.

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Thank you. I've read the **entire uploaded document carefully, line by line**, and I see exactly what went wrong earlier.

Below is a **clean, faithful restoration** of the story — **no ideas added, no compression, no meaning altered**.

I have only done **light editorial polishing** (grammar, flow, clarity) while **preserving the voice, sequence, and message exactly as in the original text**.

Everything here is drawn **only** from your uploaded document .

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## A Story That Explains Everything — Without Explaining

There was a yeshiva in Far Rockaway called **Darchei**.

Rabbi Grossman once told a story that he himself witnessed.

An elderly man named **Mr. Acker** walked into the school holding a letter.

"This," he said, "is my most precious possession."

Before reading it, he told a story.

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There was a woman named **Henny** living in **Eretz Yisrael**.

It was a time when the economy in Israel was doing very, very poorly. Jobs were extremely hard to find. Still, Henny had managed to secure a job in an office, and she was deeply grateful for it — especially because her husband had been unemployed for six months, desperately searching for work. Her brother also lived with them, and he too was unable to find a job. There simply were no opportunities available in their area.

Henny was the sole breadwinner.

As difficult as things already were, she grew increasingly anxious because she was nearing the end of her pregnancy. Soon, she would give birth to her first child. She knew she would need maternity leave, and she was terrified that during her absence, she might be replaced. In such a fragile job market, there was no guarantee her position would still exist when she returned.

Every day, she came into work nervous, but determined. She worked hard. She did her best.



One evening, the office held a dinner — a get-to-know-you event. Employees shared about their work and their lives. The owner of the company was present.

People spoke about their gratitude for their jobs and about challenges at home. When it was Henny's turn, she said how thankful she was to work there. She explained that soon she would need to take time off, and that her husband and brother were both unemployed. She didn't know what would happen.

The boss listened sympathetically. He didn't promise anything. He didn't obligate himself. He simply listened.

Then he stopped her.

"Are you from East Flatbush?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

"Where exactly?"

She told him.

"Who's your father?" he asked.

She answered.

"Did he pray in such-and-such a shul?"

"Yes."

"What years did you live there?"

She told him.

The boss suddenly excused himself and left the room.

A few minutes later, he returned — his eyes red from crying.

"Henny," he said, "I need to tell you a story."

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"When I was young, my father was an electrician in East Flatbush. There was another electrician in the neighborhood who was part of the union. Union electricians received steady work. My father was not able to get into the union.

"The other electrician was always busy. My father had to go from store to store, begging for work — even charging less than he should — just to support our family.

"It was very difficult.

"Sometimes, they would walk home together and talk shop.

"When I was a young boy, my father passed away.

"That other electrician came to our house for the shiva. He asked my mother how she was doing, whether we had what we needed. She told him everything was fine.

"He didn't believe her.

"He walked into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator. It was empty. We were starving.

"He said nothing.

"He went to the grocery store and bought milk, bread, eggs, fruits, vegetables, meat, chicken — everything you can imagine. He returned with bags and stocked the refrigerator and the cabinets.

"My mother protested. She was embarrassed. The house was full of people, and she didn't argue.

"The next day — and the next — and throughout the entire shiva, this man returned, making sure we always had food.

“When the shiva ended, my mother felt terrible. She called him and said:  
‘My husband left behind decades of tools — wires, nails, drills, hammers, saws, breakers, fuses — everything. I have no use for it. Take it all. Give me a hundred dollars, and at least we’ll have something to live on.’

“He agreed.

“He came to the house and went down to the basement. For three weeks, he organized everything — wires here, tools there, boxes, bags — meticulously sorting every item.

“Then he told all his electrician friends that there would be a sale. Good equipment. Cheap prices.

“After the sale, he came back to my mother with the money.

“‘I don’t need it,’ he said. ‘This is what everything sold for.’

“It came to almost **three-and-a-half thousand dollars**.

“What this man did saved my family. He saved my mother and my siblings.”

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The boss looked at Henny and said:

“That electrician was **your grandfather**.

“Don’t worry about your job. You will always have a job here.

“And tell your husband and your brother to come tomorrow. I’ll find work for them too.”

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**Chesed v’Emes.**

True kindness — done when the other person has nothing to give back.  
The children couldn’t repay him. The widow couldn’t repay him.

But **Hashem remembered**.

That night, Henny went home and wrote a letter to her grandfather.

Mr. Acker held it up before the students.

It began:

**“Dear Grandpa,  
I am so proud to be your  
granddaughter.”**

He treasured that letter for years.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu saw a man who cared for children that were not his own — when no one else could. And He ensured that when this man’s descendants would one day have no options, they would be cared for in the most beautiful and elaborate way.

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## **Chesed Shel Emet With the Living**

There are forms of chesed shel emet even with people who are alive.

A wealthy man in Eretz Yisrael would go to small neighborhood grocery stores.

He would ask for the largest unpaid bill.

He would pay it.

Families would come later and hear: “Your balance is zero.”

They never knew who paid.

That is kindness without an audience.

That is אמת.

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## The Question That Doesn't Go Away

Before we do something kind, we should ask ourselves:

If no one knew —  
would I still do it?

If no one thanked me —  
would I still do it?

If nothing came back —  
would I still do it?

That question doesn't accuse us.  
It clarifies us.

Because chesed shel emet doesn't  
announce itself.

It waits.

And one day —  
when we least expect it —  
it stands up and protects us.

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## Takeaway

Parashat Vayechi teaches that the highest form of kindness is not measured by how it feels, how it looks, or what it produces —

but by whether it exists without needing anything in return.

חסד של אמת is kindness stripped of leverage.

It is chesed performed when gratitude is impossible, recognition is absent, and repayment will never come.

That is why Yaakov frames his final request not as a favor, but as **truth**.

Most kindness in the world is sincere — but mixed.

Mixed with ego.

Mixed with expectation.

Mixed with the hope that something will come back.

Chesed shel emet asks a harder question:

*If nothing ever returned — would this still matter to me?*

Those acts do not disappear.

They do not decay.

They wait.

And when the moment comes — often years later, often unseen — they stand up and protect the one who gave them.

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## Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

### 1 Why does Yaakov call burial “chesed ve’emet”?

Why is burial framed as kindness at all — and why does Yaakov insist on calling it *truth*?

What does that teach us about how the Torah defines real chesed?

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**2 What makes chesed shel emet different from ordinary kindness?**

Is the difference about the act itself, or about the *absence* of expectation?

Can an act still be chesed if the giver is hoping for something in return?

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**3 Why is kindness toward the dead considered the purest form of chesed?**

What does the inability to repay reveal about the giver more than the receiver?

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**4 Yosef's burial takes 210 years — what does that teach us?**

Why does the Torah emphasize such a long delay?

What does this say about acts of chesed that seem forgotten or unresolved?

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**5 “חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת יִפְגְּשׁוּ” — why do chesed and emet need to “meet”?**

Why are they described as separate forces?

What prevents them from naturally living together?

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**6 Can chesed shel emet exist with the living?**

The blog describes kindness done anonymously, without credit or recognition.

What makes those acts closer to *חַסָּד* than public generosity?

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**7 What is harder: giving without money, or giving without recognition?**

Which do you think is more challenging — sacrificing resources, or sacrificing ego? Why?

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**8 How do we know if our kindness is mixed or pure?**

Is it wrong to feel good after helping someone?

Where is the line between healthy satisfaction and expectation?

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**9 Why do acts of chesed shel emet “wait” instead of paying back immediately?**

Why doesn't the Torah promise instant reward for this kind of kindness?

What kind of trust does it require?

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**10 Personal reflection (optional, quiet question)**

Is there one act of kindness I could do this week that:

- no one would know about,
- no one could repay,
- and no one would ever connect back to me?

What makes that hard?

## WHO ARE YOU KIND TO WHEN IT CAN'T COME BACK?

The ultimate test is simple:

Who do you show up for  
when nothing can return to you?

No gratitude.

No leverage.

No future benefit.

That's the kindness  
that reaches Heaven—  
because it never tried  
to stay on earth.

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## THE FINAL REQUEST REVEALS THE TRUTH

At the end of life,  
people don't ask for power.  
They don't ask for honor.

**They ask for truth.**

Yaakov's final request  
was not emotional closure—  
it was moral clarity.

Bury me with truth.  
Not convenience.  
Not politics.  
Not delay.

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## WHEN KINDNESS COSTS YOU

Real **חסד** is expensive.

It costs pride.

It costs comfort.

It costs the need to be understood.

If it feels easy,  
if it feels rewarding,  
if it feeds your image—

it may be kindness,

but it is not yet

**חסד טל אמת.**

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## TRUE KINDNESS HAS NO AUDIENCE

True kindness is not what you do  
when someone can thank you.

It's what you do  
when no gratitude is possible,  
no recognition will come,  
and no story will ever be told.

That's why it's **אמת**

Because nothing false survives  
when no one is watching.

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