

**Date:** 19 Iyar 5786 (May 6, 2026)

**Torah Portion:** Behar / Bechukotei

**Topic:** Four Revelations About Kindness

The Midrash presents four distinct lessons on the nature of kindness. Yet all of them share a single underlying principle: the Torah's understanding of kindness diverges sharply from the conventional human perspective. Where people tend to evaluate kindness through visible outcomes and practical benefit, the Torah measures it through deeper, often hidden dimensions—intention, character, and spiritual alignment.

First, there is the question of how to measure the value of a kindly act. In ordinary thinking, the worth of kindness is determined by its result: how much the recipient actually gains. However, the Midrashic exposition concerning Avraham teaches otherwise. Avraham prepared and served a meal to three ministering angels—beings who neither required nor benefited from physical sustenance. From a purely practical standpoint, his act achieved nothing. Yet the Divine response was extraordinary: Hashem repaid this gesture with the manna, the Well of Miriam, and the Clouds of Glory—miracles that sustained all of Yisrael in the wilderness. This demonstrates that Elohim evaluates kindness by entirely different criteria: the sincerity of the giver, the enthusiasm with which the mitzvah is performed, and the effort, time, and resources invested. By these standards, Avraham's hospitality was perfect, even in the absence of tangible benefit to the recipients.

Second, the Torah challenges the common assumption regarding kindness toward the wealthy. To human reasoning, refraining from assisting the rich seems justified: "He lacks nothing; what could I possibly add?" Yet the Torah rejects this logic. Although Yisrael in the wilderness was sustained miraculously and lacked no material need, the nations of Ammon and Moab were nevertheless condemned for failing to greet them with bread and water. Why? Because kindness is not merely about supplying deficiencies; it is also about recognizing human vulnerability. A traveler—even a wealthy one—experiences disorientation and unease in unfamiliar surroundings. A simple gesture of welcome restores dignity and comfort. Those who fail to perceive this, who cannot empathize with the emotional state of another simply because his physical needs are met, reveal a moral deficiency. Such a disposition, the Torah teaches, disqualifies a people from joining the covenantal community.

Third, people tend to undervalue acts of kindness performed out of obligation—especially when they serve to repay a prior favor. Yitro's hospitality toward Moshe might, at first glance, appear unimpressive. After all, Moshe had already saved Yitro's daughters and watered his flock; Yitro was merely returning the favor. Moreover, he may have had personal motives, hoping to marry Moshe into his family. Yet the Torah accords this act enduring significance. Centuries later, Elohim preserved the merit of Yitro's kindness for his descendants, granting them protection despite their proximity to hostile nations. Why is repayment itself considered kindness? Because one who feels compelled to repay demonstrates an inner identity as a giver. He is uncomfortable receiving without reciprocation. This disposition reflects a deep-rooted generosity of spirit. In contrast, one who sees himself as entitled—who assumes that all benefits are owed to him—rarely feels gratitude and thus rarely gives. Elohim, therefore, judges not only the act, but the underlying character it reveals, and rewards accordingly.

Finally, the Midrash addresses the case of a small gift that leads to great outcomes. Human reasoning would attribute success primarily to the recipient's initiative. The giver may deserve credit for the initial act, but not for the beneficiary's later prosperity. Yet the Torah again offers a different perspective. Boaz gave Ruth a modest portion of grain—an act of limited material significance. That this small gift sufficed and contributed to her eventual rise was, in part, due to her own merit. Nevertheless, Boaz was rewarded beyond measure: he married Ruth and became the progenitor of the Davidic dynasty, from which the Moshiach will emerge.

The explanation lies in the concept of Divine Providence. When a person's small act becomes the catalyst for another's great success, it indicates that he was chosen as an instrument of a larger Divine plan. His generosity and purity of intent rendered him a fitting vessel through which blessing could flow. Therefore, even if his role appears minor in human terms, he is credited with the full scope of the good that unfolds from it.

In all four cases, the Midrash reveals a consistent truth: kindness, in the Torah's view, is not defined by external outcomes alone. It is measured by the inner world of the giver—their intention, sensitivity, gratitude, and willingness to serve as a conduit for Divine goodness. What appears small to man may be immense in the eyes of Elohim, for the true value of kindness lies not merely in what is given, but in who the giver becomes through the act. Shalom.