

Eilu D'varim

אלו דברים שאין להם שיעור: הפאה והבכורים והראיון וגמילות חסדים ותלמוד תורה:
אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהם בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא,
ואלו הן: כבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים, והשכמת בית המדרש שחרית
וערבית, והכנסת אורחים, ובקור חולים, והכנסת כלה, ולוית המת, ועיון
תפלה, והבאת שלום בין אדם לחברו ובין איש לאשתו, ותלמוד תורה כנגד
כלם.*

Ei-lu d'va-rim sh'ein la-hem shi-ur. Ha-pei-a v'ha-bi-ku-rim v'ha-rei-a-yon u-ge-mi-lut
kha-sa-dim v'tal-mud to-ra.

Ei-lu d'va-rim she-a-dam o-kheil pei-ro-tei-hem ba-o-lam ha-zeh v'ha-ke-ren ka-ye-met lo
la-o-lam ha-ba, v'ei-lu hein: ki-bud av va-eim, u-g'mi-lut kha-sa-dim, v'hash-ka-mat beit
ha-mid-rash sha-kha'rit v'ar-vit v'khakh-na-sat or-khim u-vi-kur kho-lim, v'hakh-na-sat
ka-la, u-l'va-yat ha-meit, v'i-yun t'fi-la v'ha-va-at sha-lom bein a-dam la-kha'vei-ro u-vein
ish l'ish-to, <v'tal-mud to-rah k'ne-ged ku-lam>.

These are the things that do not have a prescribed measure: the corner (of the field, left for the poor), the first fruit offering, the pilgrimage, acts of lovingkindness, and study of Torah.

These are the things the fruit of which a person consumes in this world but whose principal endures in the world to come—they are: honoring mother and father, acts of lovingkindness, early (attendance) at the house of study, morning and night, welcoming guests, visiting the sick, bringing the bride (under the wedding canopy), accompanying the dead, devotion in prayer, and bringing peace between one person and another, and between husband and wife—and the study of Torah is equivalent to all of them.

D'rash

These are the things that do not have a prescribed measure—Because the upper standard for action was not established by the Torah, it was effectively left to each individual's discretion, although the principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin* (going beyond the letter of the law) should sensitize us against doing only the minimum required by our own conscience. **The corner (of the field, left for the poor)**—So that a minimum fraction (1/60th) of the produce of our labor should always accrue directly to those who are impoverished and malnourished. **The first fruit offering**—So that the civic duty of every citizen is to support adequately those who provide to the people the essentials of spiritual and moral guidance and education. **The pilgrimage**—Three times a year we are to respond not only to our narrow provincial interests but also to those of klal Yisrael, all the people, gathering together in *tefilla* (prayer), *teshuva* (repentance), *thanksgiving*, and *celebration*. **Acts of lovingkindness**—Unlike *tzedakah* (giving what justice requires), which is limited to 20 percent of one's income or wealth, lovingkindness has no limit and may be shown even to the dead. **And the study of Torah**—To guide our actions each day of our life, we are to study Torah each day, equally for its immediate illumination of the path and to remind us constantly of its singular light.

These are the things the fruit of which a person consumes in this world but whose principal endures in the world to come—We “consume” them because we too are the beneficiaries of our mitzvot, as it is said, “the reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah,” not only in the present moment but in the accumulation of goodness that redounds to the future of this world, and which, when linked to our spirit, uplifts others remaining here when we have passed on to the next world. **Honoring mother and father**—Seeking to find not their foibles and failures but worthy character and conviction, which we honor not with lip service but heartfelt performance of mitzvot in which

they may take pride. **Acts of lovingkindness**—Motivating ourselves to take greater pleasure from giving than receiving by affording the benefit of the doubt to all others, especially those in need, whether for spiritual, emotional, or material support. **Early (attendance) at the house of study, morning and night**—That regardless of what else occupies us, we begin each day with learning and teaching, acquiring for ourselves and sharing with others, knowledge of how to live in the image of God. **Welcoming guests**—Never losing sight of our own personal and national experience as strangers, the fear and pain and struggle, and showing to others empathy commensurate with the challenges they face. **Visiting the sick**—Recognizing that, given the importance of spiritual well-being to physical and emotional recovery, our show of care and kindness may dramatically improve or even save a life. **Bringing the bride (under the wedding canopy)**—Traditionally the mitzvah of providing a dowry to the impoverished, but in our time encompassing any form of nurture or support that enables a less fortunate young woman (or man) to make a successful Jewish marriage and home—to be performed with humility in private so as not to cause embarrassment or shame. **Accompanying the dead**—Referred to as *khesed shel emet* (true lovingkindness), because the honor we show to the deceased by accompanying them to the grave and assisting in its closure (in place of paid cemetery employees), exacts a high emotional price and can't be repaid. **Devotion in prayer**—That our prayer has authentic *kavvanah* (focused intention) because it leads and follows our mitzvot (biblically commanded good deeds) and *tikun olam* (repair of the world). **Bringing peace between one person and another, and between husband and wife**—Not simply contributing to the absence of strife and violence but teaching negotiation and mediation skills to enable constructive resolution of inevitable conflict, which is the necessary condition preceding all personal and social harmony and fulfillment. **And the study of Torah is equivalent to them all**—Because instinct, intuition, and commonsense are not reliable guides to find our way through the moral and ethical maze of social, political, and economic life.

Iyun Tefilla

KINDNESS IS FOREVER

How few
 Are the things
 About which I can say:
 This is truly
 Without measure!
 Do I dare
 To count my love
 Among them?
 I try to see my soul
 Stretching like
 That night garden,
 The starry sky,
 Or like that boundless
 Path of broken stars,
 The beach.
 But time always
 Has its way,
 Its end of the season,
 And place has
 Its end of the line.
 So how am I
 To think of kindness
 Without end?
 Let me try to remember
 How many
 Are the kindnesses,
 Ki l'olam khasdo,

On which
My life has depended.
Let me try to remember
In whose image,
I am created.
Ki l'olam khasdo.

* From the Mishnah, Peah 1:1, and the Gemara, Shabbat 127a.

Go to <http://www.gatherthepeople.org> for more congregational development and organizing tools.

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