

NORMAN LAMM
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Hebraha Kadisha Seudah
The Jewish Center

THEME: GEMILLAT HASADIM

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The term Gemillat Hasadim is usually taken to mean, in Jewish life, a free loan. I think it has deeper meaning.

There are two kinds of hessed: one is the ordinary and immature kind. The other is a more mature sort. The first type of hessed is where the one who does the favor secretly or unconsciously expects some kind of compensation, for he thinks to himself, "maybe someday I will need this man's favor, and therefore it is worth my time doing something for him now." It is basically utilitarian, a form of trade or barter.

The higher kind is motivated not by a sense of trade, but by genuine human kindness. It is a mature sort of hessed. Hence, the term gemillat, not from the world gamol, "to pay," but from the world le'higamel, to be weaned, as be'yom higamel Yitzhak. When a man is weaned from childishness of character, then he grows up spiritually, then he learns how to do a hessed for its own sake: This is the type of hessed that you of the Hebrah Kadisha do for those who have passed on to their eternal reward.

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