

Loving-Kindness Gives Us Strength

Chesed Shabbat (Leviticus 27:10)

Parashat Behar/Bechukotai

May 8, 2026

Shabbat Shalom! In our Torah this week, we are finishing the Book of Leviticus. Over the past weeks, we have heard about the many sacrifices the Israelites are to perform; how to navigate the challenges of skin disease; and many other measures put in place so that the Israelites may remain pure throughout their journey to the Promised Land. We also explored many ethical commandments, ways in which we are to treat one another, including loving our neighbor as ourselves, loving the stranger, ensuring everyone has enough food to eat, and acting justly in our interactions with others. Leviticus, amidst all the sacrifices, purity tests, and skin diseases, is a guidebook for how to live well with one another, ensuring that everyone has the ability to thrive in community. And all of this is predicated on being in a covenanted relationship with one another, as we read in Torah:

אֵלֶּה הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי:

These are the commandments that GOD gave Moses for the Israelite people on Mount Sinai.¹

This final verse of the Book of Leviticus affirms this idea, bringing our relationships with one another all the way back to Mount Sinai.

¹ Leviticus 27:34

At the end of reading a book of Torah, we say the words Chazak, Chazak, V'nitchazeik. Be strong, be strong, and may we strengthen one another. We say these words because Torah gives us strength, and wisdom, and courage to live well in the world. We also strengthen one another when we engage with words of Torah together.

And, the same is true for our Chesed team, allowing us to strengthen one another through a system of mutual care and connection that stems from our covenant together as one community. Whether it's through the sustenance of a meal, soup, or challah; or the companionship of a phone call or visit; or the support during a funeral or shiva, the work of Chesed is to strengthen one another, so that we may live in a community rooted in goodness, love, compassion, and chesed, loving-kindness.

Tonight, we have two Chesed volunteers, Bonnie Bader and Hannah Vestal, who will share about their experiences with Chesed, both receiving and providing. Thank you both for speaking tonight. Bonnie, I'll invite you up first, and then Hannah to follow. Welcome!

Thank you, Bonnie and Hannah, for your words tonight, illuminating the work of Chesed. And I should say that we are always looking for more volunteers! There are ways to sign-up in the lobby and dinner after services.

I'd now like to invite to the bimah any and all Chesed volunteers.

Mi shebeirach avoteinu v'imoteinu, may the one who blessed our ancestors bless you, our beloved Chesed volunteers, as you continue to care for members of our community. Whether it is making and delivering food, supporting people through shiva, connecting with elders in our community, organizing care packages to show love during difficult times, or solving some of the challenges people in our community have in their lives, you are providing strength, care, and compassion to so many people throughout our community. I pray that in the weeks and months to come, that you continue to find ways, both small and big, to show up for this community, and that you understand the impact of a meal, a phone call, a care package, a loving hug. May you be kept safe, healthy, and well; and, know that Chesed is here for you too should you need support and care. Thank you for the many ways in which you bless this community, and allow us to strengthen one another, care for one another, and love one another. As we say at the end of reading a book of Torah, Chazak, chazak v'nitchazeik, be strong, be strong, and may you, and all of us, continue to strengthen one another for many years to come. And let us say, amen!