

G'MaH, ג'מח

Gemach is an acronym formed from the Hebrew letters **Gimmel Mem Het** short for the fundamental Jewish concept of *G'milut Hasadim*.
Reciprocal Acts of Loving-kindness.

And what are reciprocal acts of loving-kindness?

Gathering together our *peyot*, our fringes: Feeding the poor, caring for the disabled, housing the homeless, clothing the naked – dignifying each other's radiant embodied souls

In the Talmud, in tractate Sukkot,
a question is posed, “which of the many *mitsvot* is the most important?”
The answer? *G'milut Hasadim* –
Why? Because charity is performed with one's money;
lovingkindness, with one's money, one's time, and one's self.

And in this way, through our compassion for others we can fully express and know our divine likeness, our *tselem elohim*. What after all does it mean to walk in the ways of God?

To feed the poor, to care for the disabled, to clothe the naked, to support the most vulnerable...

Now *G'milut Hasadim* is a mitzvah incumbent on every individual,

and so, every individual may become like a twin of God, shining in the likeness of the divine image, the *tselem elohim*, through their acts of lovingkindness.

In the siddur, we are led to remind ourselves that the *mitsvah* of *G'milut Hasadim* is second only to learning Torah, since it is from Torah that we are enjoined to perform acts of lovingkindness.

Through these selfless acts, our Created World is not only sustained, a more *caring* and *connected community*, a more fair and just, kind and compassionate world is created,

and if we can imagine ourselves partners in Creation, then we can feel Creation itself as the benevolent expression of *G'milut Hasadim Tovim*.

And this is the deeper meaning of the Jewish communal organization called the **G'MaH, ג'מח** –
a collective of everyone in the community supporting one another
in performing acts of lovingkindness,

In Cincinnati, the *Gemach* was the template for the United Jewish Charities,
what we today call the Federation.

The *Gemach* supported a lending library and a school and a free loan society.

The *Gemach* supported a program for sharing wedding dresses

and for collecting funds for sustaining lives in the nascent state of Israel.

In a world that struggles so greatly with pain born of raw predation and obscene excess,
our *Gemach* is where we prove the relevance of our community,
where we cultivate our angelic identity as Yisrael,
born in dust, borne up to the heavens through our struggle
to make this world a world of lovingkindness,
as great and as gracious as we can imagine.