Chesed and Caring for our Communities

According to the weekday service in Siddur Sim Shalom, based on Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 127a, “ These are the deeds which yield immediate fruit and continue to yield fruit in time to come: honoring one’s parents; doing deeds of lovingkindness; attending the house of study punctually, every morning and evening; providing hospitality; visiting the sick; helping the needy bride; attending the dead; probing the meaning of prayer; making peace between one person and another…And the study of Torah is the most basic of them all.”

Questions:

* Which of these phrases speak the loudest to you? Why?
* Why do you think that study of Torah is listed last? Why is it described as “the most basic of them all’?
* Some synagogues have created a Chesed Committee to help people keep these mitzvot. Read the following description of one synagogue’s Chesed Committee:

“We are pleased to announce that the Bikur Cholim and Helping Hands committees are being combined to create a new Chesed Committee for the benefit of our congregants. Our goal is to support congregants at times of need. The committee members:

--will telephone you during an illness and if you wish, visit you at home or in the hospital;

--will be available to sit in your house to provide security and accept deliveries while your family and friends attend the funeral of a loved one; (members will not be able to set up the kitchen, though);

--will assist you by driving you to doctor’s appointments, religious services or programs, or on errands;

--will call you at the end of the 30-day shloshim, or mourning period, to check in during your bereavement;

--will be available to lead shiva minyans or to attend shiva should you need help forming the minyan.”

* Does your synagogue have a Chesed Committee? Does it perform these functions? Does it perform any functions that are not listed here? If so, what are they?
* If your synagogue does not have a Chesed Committee, are you willing to start one? Would you expand the duties of this committee to include the needy bride? If so, what would the parameters entail? Would your sisterhood be part of this committee?

There are so many wonderful choices available to be a part of chesed. Many of us have been on the receiving end. Now is the time to join the giving end.

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