

Building A World of Kindness

“*Olam chesed yibaneh*”, the entire world is built upon the kindness and benevolence of Hashem. Chazal highlight that the Torah begins with an act of *chesed* as Hashem clothed Adam and concludes with an act of *chesed* as Hashem buried Moshe Rabbeinu. Rav Friedlander in *Siftey Chayim* explains that this reflects the entire motif of Torah, emulating Hashem by doing acts of *chesed*.

Rav Friedlander continues; we ought to reframe all that we experience in this world as an expression of Hashem's unending *chesed*. Rav Pliskin suggests we accustom ourselves to think about the small and great gifts we receive daily, to see the goodness and be grateful for all the kindness. We should repeat to ourselves, “*Hodu LaHashem ki tov, ki leolam chasdo.*” When we habituate ourselves to reflect in this manner, we will be able to calmly repeat this mantra even when we experience annoyances and see the blessings in every situation, even in the snags and delays.

Rav Ahron Kotler, in *Mishnas Rav Ahron* notes that getting involved in acts of *chesed* is one of the most powerful ways to express the *tzelem Elokim* within us. The mitzvah of ‘clinging to Hashem’ is most fully illustrated through building, encouraging and helping others as opposed to isolating on a mountain top in deep meditation. Each person is a mini world. If the macro world is predicated on *chesed*, how much more so are our mini worlds.

Tzedakah is equated with human kindness, it focuses on the needs of the receiver

Rav Dessler in *Michtav MeEliyahu* quotes Rav Yisrael Salanter extolling the greatness of *Chanoch* who walked with Hashem. Chazal teach us that *Chanoch* was a shoemaker. He unified incantations of holy names with each stitch he sewed. Rav Salanter explains that *Chanoch* focused on each thread to ensure it was fastened in the finest way to provide maximum comfort for the wearer. Spirituality is best

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manifested through caring deeply for one another.

Yet true *chesed* is not simply filling someone's lack, rather it is going above and beyond for the other. The *Maharal*, explains the difference between *tzedakah* and *chesed*. *Tzedakah* is equated with human kindness, it focuses on the needs of the receiver. *Chesed*, on the other hand, is when the giver has a desire to give, even when the receiver is not lacking, even if the receiver needs nothing at all. Chazal teach that *Iyov* had his tent open on all sides and would feed people whatever they were used to eating. This is *tzedakah*. Avraham Avinu however, would feed people delicacies they had never tasted, even if they did not ask for it. We know that he prepared three beef tongues for angels who had no need for food whatsoever. This is *chesed*, giving from a desire to give.

As we once again begin reading about the creation of the world, let us be inspired to recreate our personal worlds with not only acts of *tzedakah*, but acts of true *chesed*. We will thus feel uplifted as we emulate Hashem in the most meaningful way. ■



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