



RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY
Executive Director, Camp HASC
Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

For Others

When the Lubavitcher Rebbe shared the following story, which he heard from his father in law, the Frieddiker, or ‘Previous’ Rebbe, he remarked that there was a time when the chassidim refrained from sharing it publicly....

One Yom Kippur morning, Reb Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, stood in shul among his *chassidim*, deep in *deveikus*, when suddenly he became motionless, gazing into space. Snapping out of the trance, he closed his *sidur*, took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, and walked briskly out the front door.

Concerned, as well as curious, one *chassid* followed him at a distance, as the Rebbe strode along an icy road leading to the edge of the city, and then onto a footpath entering the woods. The *chassid* was stunned to see that when the great Alter Rebbe stopped at a clearing, he picked up an ax and began chopping wood. Then he carried the wood into a small house and, through the frosty window, he was visibly stoking a fire, heating water, making soup, and dipping a towel into the remaining water. Each of these activities was strictly prohibited on Yom Kippur!

However, when the *chassid* caught sight of the Rebbe serving the soup to a woman inside, who was helplessly shivering under her blankets, clutching a newborn baby... he understood.

.....
The Rebbe expounded on this story of *chesed* and sacrifice:

“Immersed in prayer, dressed in his tallis and kittel like a malach, the exalted spiritual level and deveikus that the Alter Rebbe reached on Yom Kippur is beyond our comprehension. Even so, the Alter Rebbe took off his tallis and kittel and went to the edge of the city, just to help bring another Jew into the world. This story also illustrates the necessity for action and doing all that we can in the service of others... This was the way of the Alter Rebbe: without pausing to draw up accounts, he interrupted his avodah in order to help a simple Jew, waiving his gashmiyus (physical well-being) and even his ruchniyus (spiritual pursuits) for the sake of loving another.

.....
Of the numerous *mitzvos* commanded in our *sedra*, the Torah forbids welcoming any male of Moavite or Ammonite descent as a convert:

לְאִיבָא עֲמוּנֵי וּמוֹאָבֵי בְּקֹהֶל ה' גַּם דּוֹר עֲשִׂירֵי לֹא יִבָּא לְהֶם
בְּקֹהֶל ה' עַד־עוֹלָם: עַל־דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְדְּמוּ אֲתֶכֶם בְּלָחֶם
וּבַמַּיִם בְּדַרְכֵי בְצִאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם. ...

No one from the nation of Amon of Moav shall be admitted into the congregation of Hashem; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall be admitted into the congregation of Hashem... because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt... (23:4-5)

Sefer haChinuch explored the essence of

this law and suggests a reason for the underlying principle:

והודיענו הכתוב מזה, גודל מעלת גמילות חסדים והרחקת מדת הנבלה והכילות, ועל כן צונו לקבוע שגאה עמהם שהשחיתו והתעיבו להראות תכלית רשעם ונבלותם, שלא להקדים אפילו בלחם ובמים לקראת קהל גדול עייפי הדרך העוברים בנגבום...

From here the Torah informs us of the greatness of the virtue of acts of loving-kindness, and the need to distance oneself from villainy and stinginess. And therefore we are commanded to prescribe a hatred for them, as they were wicked and abominable, in order to display the fullness of their evil and villainy in not even greeting with bread and water a large congregation exhausted from the road, passing their border..."

One of the fundamental human traits that Hashem expects of us is to engage in *ahavas chesed*, loving-kindness. The idea of *chesed* transcends a simple definition, yet gives voice to the essence of being a Jew and a human being. With every act of service and kindness, the *tzelem Elokim*, the Divine likeness within a person, is given expression. With each such expression, that person more fully realizes his or her mission on this earth.

The cruel refusal of Amon and Moav to extend any help to the forlorn people at their border showed that they were at odds with the *tzelem Elokim* itself. This is why it would be impossible to welcome them into our spiritual community and our collective mission.

Rav Daniel Z. Feldman, Maggid shiur at Yeshiva University, wrote eloquently on the

the nature of the *midah* or quality of *chesed*: "...It is a feeling to possess, an attitude to maintain, an action to perform, a personality to develop, a mindset to cultivate, a habit to acquire, a perspective to apply; it is mandatory and voluntary, basic and extraordinary, routine and outstanding all at once. It is a birthright and an inheritance, and yet it is actualized only through personal initiative and commitment. The Jewish mission is to bring this trait to life in all of its manifestations, and to pursue every method and every opportunity to do so.... To quantify or to limit this endeavor in any way is to do no less than hold back the very development of what a human being can be.

In the early 1980s, the Lubavitcher Rebbe began to speak on the importance of sharing the Torah's universal code of morality with the whole world through the Seven Laws of Noah. At that time, he related the above story, and said that if the Alter Rebbe could break the laws of the holiest day of the year to help a vulnerable person, then surely every Jew can set aside time to reach out to the rest of humanity.

As we approach the *Yamim Nora'im*, may we internalize the lesson learned from our sedra and turn our attention toward providing for the needs of others! ■

Shabbat afternoon shiur with
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider at 5:15pm
in the back garden
of the OU Israel Center

LONG-TERM RENTAL NEEDED
Mature couple seeks in Jerusalem

2 bedroom renovated kosher apartment either with Shabbat elevator or no higher than the first floor. Must have parking space. Must have a/c, walk-in shower. Willing to discuss sharing with owner to have apartment for Sukkot & Pesach & either Chanukah or 2 weeks beginning of Summer. WhatsApp1-718-7153022 or maturecouple4apt@gmail.com