

“These shall you abominate from among the birds, they may not be eaten...the chasidah.” (11:13,19)

What a beautiful name – *chasidah*! *Rashi* says that the *chasidah* truly was a bird that performed *chesed*, kindness – with members of its own specie. This is not an admirable trait. We Jews do not believe in selective, discriminatory, *chesed*. *Rashi*'s use of the word *chavrosehah*, its “friends”, seems to lend itself to a deeper thought. The term *chaver/chibur* means connection. When two people are connected with each other, they are considered *chaveirim*. The connection is of an equal and positive nature. There is something in common between the two. A *reyah* is a stronger form of friendship. In any event, the term *chaver* refers to someone who sees things in the same manner that I do. We are connected because we agree with each other. This implies that the *chasidah* acts kindly only with those it can call a *chaver*, with whom it sees “eye to eye.”

The *chasidah* represents the individual who acts kindly with those that are like him: they dress like him, they pray in the same *shul* where he prays, they believe in the same approach to serving Hashem as he believes. In short, they are of the same *weltanschauung*, they share the same perspective and world view.

Is that so bad? After all, there is just so much money and time to go around. Why not stay focused on one particular group – “my people”? First of all, this is not *chesed*. *Chesed* means to act benevolently towards others. One who discriminates, does not act kindly towards others – he acts kindly towards himself!

I think *Rashi* is emphasizing another point with the word *chaver*. What is the greatest *chesed* we can perform for another Jew? Even greater than physical *chesed* is spiritual *chesed*. Should we ignore another Jew just because he is not as observant as we are? What are we doing about his lack of observance? Is the Jew who is not *shomer Shabbos*, *Shabbos* observant, any better off than the observant Jew who is living in a state of poverty? There is no greater form of abject poverty than the Jew who is “empty of *mitzvos*!” Perhaps, if we would view our non-observant brethren in this light, as Jews in need, we might reach out to them and perform the ultimate *chesed* - spiritual *chesed*. We have to remember that our “*chavrusashaft*,” connection, with all Jews is the fact that we are all *bonei Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and

The *Klausenberger Rebbe*, *z.l.*, was a towering *tzaddik* whose overwhelming love for all Jews was legend. It was after the war, after the accursed Nazis had decimated so many of our people, that the *Rebbe*'s boundless love came to the fore. The American liberators supplied him with a vehicle and a driver. The *Rebbe* went to all the little villages surrounding Feldafing, the DP camp where he was stationed, with the slogan, “I am looking for my brothers.” There were Jews there that were hidden during the war who had completely given up hope of ever being reunited with their people. The *Rebbe* gave them hope; he gave them courage to carry on.

Many survivors followed the *Rebbe* to Feldafing, but really had no desire to go. They had food given to them by the Americans. They had support. So, why would they want to follow the *Rebbe*? Many even went so far as to say that they had suffered long enough as Jews. They no longer had any desire to continue living as the oppressed people. The *Rebbe* convinced them, slowly – very slowly and with great patience – that it was the right thing to be with other Jewish survivors.

Once, the *Rebbe* encouraged a young teenager to come with him to the camp. The boy resisted because he was sure the *Rebbe* would not let him go to the movies. The *Rebbe* was not deterred. He promised the boy that when life returned to some sort of normalcy and a movie theater was opened for the survivors – he would give him the money to purchase a ticket. The boy joined the *Rebbe*, who later kept his word and bought the boy a ticket to the movies. The *Rebbe*'s love eventually brought the boy back to *Yiddishkeit*.

The *Rebbe* did not lecture the survivors. He understood their questions and inner struggle. He showered them with love and kindness and these were the keys to opening their hearts and souls to return to Hashem. The *Rebbe* comforted everybody. His motto was: "If you are a Jew, you are my brother! I will do everything that I can for you."

There were dozens of young orphans in the camp with no one to care for them. The *Rebbe* felt it was his obligation to see to their physical and spiritual needs, in the same manner that a biological father cares for his child. The story is told about a young girl who, due to her abject poverty, walked around the camp without socks. Upon seeing her one day, the *Rebbe* took off his own socks in the middle of the street and gave them to her. "It is unbecoming for a Jewish girl to walk around this way," he said. While this narrative demonstrates the *Rebbe*'s love and caring, it also underscores his love for the Jewish People. A Jewish girl does not walk around without socks!

As mentioned before, the greatest *chesed* is the one that stretches across the great divide that exists between those that are observant and those who, for whatever reason, have not yet been fortunate enough to see the true way a Jew should live. The *Rebbe* did not care about a person's past or present – only his future. An American official once related to the *Rebbe* that there was a group of Hungarian Jewish girls in one of the DP camps who were acting inappropriately, in a manner indicating that they had completely forgotten their roots. The *Rebbe* spared no time, and he immediately left for the camp in search of these girls. He spoke to them like a loving father. With compassion and understanding, he was able to convince them to leave the camp and return with him. The *Rebbe* established a school for these girls, all of whom had been raised in observant homes. At times, when depression took hold of them, and the girls would cry bitterly about their lives and the losses they had experienced, the *Rebbe* would listen intently and offer soothing words that healed and encouraged.

Probably the greatest tribute to the *Rebbe* was the fact that **all** the children called him by one name – *Tatte*, father. They were attached to him like a child to a father, since, indeed, he was truly a spiritual father to them.

It would have been so easy to let apathy take control, and religious differences continue to breach Jewish unity. It took a great man to tower over these differences, to see beyond the petty and inconsequential, and look at the Jewish *neshamah*, soul, in its pristine beauty. Indeed, it takes a great person to focus upon the areas that unify us, rather than our differences.