

An Amoni or Moavi shall not enter the congregation of Hashem....because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt. (23:4,5)

The character flaw which Moav exhibited was sufficient reason for the *Torah* to exclude them from *Klal Yisrael*. We must address how this negative trait was manifest in descendants of Lot, Avraham *Avinu's* nephew. Lot was a person who risked his life to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *hachnasas orchim*, hospitality to the wayfarer/stranger. His daughter died as a result of his commitment. Their family exemplified a conviction to *chesed*, kindness to others. How then did they become so degenerate that several generations later the family served as the paradigm of those who lack *chesed*?

Meilitz Yosher explains that the primary virtue of performing good deeds emanates not from the actual deed, but from the original motivation.. One who involves himself in acts of kindness must do so out of an innate desire to help others. At times, a person will do such acts of kindness as a result of an attitude of complacency. He does good deeds because he is used to doing good deeds --not out of a deep commitment towards helping others. Lot performed acts of kindness because Avraham raised him to be sensitive to others. . This is the type of behavior that was modeled in Avraham's home. Lot was not a good person; he simply performed good acts because he was accustomed to such behavior.

A behavior that is not innate will not necessarily be bequeathed to future generations. Lot's "goodness" was acquired over time. It was not an inherent part of his psyche. Consequently, his descendants did not inherit it. We, who are the seed of Avraham *Avinu*, the pillar of *chesed*, the apotheosis of kindness to others, have *chesed* in our very natures. Avraham's acts of kindness were transmitted through the generations to his descendants. Indeed, one of the character traits by which a Jew is distinguished is *gomlei chasadim*, acting kindly to others.

In his *Shaarei Kedushah*, **Horav Chaim Vital, zl**, writes: *Midos*, character traits, are not included in the *taryag mitzvos*; rather, they are basic determinants in the observance or disregard of the *mitzvos*. Thus, negative traits are much worse than the transgressions themselves. One must beware of his negative characteristics even more than he is zealous with regard to *mitzvos*, for by being a virtuous person, he will readily perform the *mitzvos*.

A person is characterized by his *middos*. *Middos*, more than anything else, determine how devoted one will act towards Hashem and His *mitzvos*. Rivkah *Imeinu* grew up in a home that exemplified evil. Her brother stands alone in setting the standard for corruption. In fact, her home town was basically wicked. Yet, because of her exemplary *middos*, her acute concern for the well-being of others and her other remarkable qualities, she attained an awesome level of *yiraas*

Shomayim, fear of Heaven. When Eliezer sought a wife for Yitzchak, Rivkah's character traits most impressed him. He knew that in order to be a Matriarch that would imbue the standard of *gemillus chasadim* in her descendants, it was essential for her to have refined character traits. He overlooked her environmental influences because he saw that the individual who stood before him was inherently the type of person he sought. He was obviously right.