"And the chasidah (stork) (11:19)

The *Talmud* explains that the *chasidah* was given this name due to its natural instinct of doing *chesed* (kindness) with other members of its species *(Chulin 63a)*. The *Rambam* in the *Morhe Nevuchim* and the *Ramban* in his commentary on this *parsha* explain that the characteristics of the food that one eats will ultimately be absorbed into the nature of the person who eats them. The prohibition of eating the *chasidah* is therefore puzzling, since this bird performs acts of kindness. It would seem that partaking of it should be encouraged.

The initial response is that the *chasidah* performs its acts of kindness only with members of its own specie. Kindness, if it is to be performed properly, is not to be discharged on a selective basis. *Chesed* is one of the foundation stones of the Jewish personality. It is one of the attributes of Hashem, to which the adjective *"rav"* (great) - *rav chesed* - is appended. A Jew is obligated to perform *chesed* in abundant measure as a form of following Hashem's example. *Chesed* is more than merely dispensing charity or performing acts of kindness. It is the ability to totally shift one's concern from himself and focus it on another. It is not performed for pleasure, but rather because of a sense of total personal identification with another individual's troubles and concerns. One who acts out of *chesed* does not delineate between individuals, since this would be self-serving, but rather performs these acts of kindness to all that are in need.

The *Ibn Ezra* states that the *chasidah* is seen only at specific intervals of the year. It is implied from this statement that the *chasidah* performs its acts of kindness only at its own pleasure. A person who responds to the concerns of others only at specific times when it is convenient or opportune lacks in the concept of kindness. Undertaking to help certain individuals or organizations in order to effect for oneself public response and admiration, is not only selfish, but demeans the whole concept of *chesed*.