

"And the Chasidah (stork)." (11:19)

It seems strange for a bird to have a name which is connected with *chesed*, kindness. The *Talmud* in *Chullin 63a* remarks on the bird's name and states that, indeed, it is a bird which demonstrates kindness towards members of its own species. One may wonder why the *Torah* saw fit to prohibit such a "compassionate" bird from human consumption. After all, if we are what we eat, is compassion not a character trait everyone should seek to possess ?

There are a number of answers to this question. Probably the most notable is one attributed to the *Imrei Emes*. He states that the *chasidah* does indeed perform kindness with members of its own species. It does so, however, only with members of its own species. Selective kindness is not a character trait worthy of emulation.

Horav Naftali Tropp, z.l., suggested another explanation which was appropriate for the time in which he was living. He lived in Russia under the rule of the Bolshevicks who preached the socialist ideology of taking from the rich to support the poor. *Horav Tropp* explained that the *chasidah* is an unclean bird because it sustains the members of its species with food it steals from others. This is not *chesed*! *Torah* dictate demands that in the course of performing kindness, we do not harm or steal from one to help another. This type of "*chesed*" is nothing more than glorified larceny.

Perhaps this is why it is called *chasidah*. Its name is its greatest fraud. In an effort to justify its nefarious behavior, it emphasizes its "kindness." By calling attention to its "humanitarianism," it hopes to conceal its deception and victimization of others. We would do well as human beings to follow the standards set forth by the *Torah* for determining unclean animals and fowl -- and to apply these principles to our own conduct.