

He (Hashem) buried him in the depression. (34:6)

In Sotah 14a, the Talmud notes that the Torah begins with an act of chesed, kindness, and likewise concludes with an act of chesed. The Torah begins with Hashem fashioning kosnos or, garments of skin, for Adam and Chavah. It ends with Hashem burying Moshe Rabbeinu's mortal remains. It is noteworthy that Chazal select the kosnos or to serve as the example of Hashem's chesed. What is there about these garments or the act of clothing Adam and Chavah that stands out, making it more prominent than even the entire universe? Olam chesed yibaneh, "The world is built upon chesed/kindness" (Tehillim 89:3). Do Adam and Chavah's garments have greater significance?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, posits that the garments indicate personal attention, sensitivity, caring about one's individual needs. Adam and Chavah were unclothed, but they were not embarrassed.

Afterwards, they covered themselves with fig leaves. Hashem would not permit His creations, the first human beings, to be clothed in such an unseemly manner. He made garments of distinction for them, clothing that was appropriate for Adam and Chavah. Hashem was not satisfied with just any clothing. It had to be appropriate and "b'kavodik," honorable.

The Midrash further defines the essence of these garments as kosnos or, garments of light. Rabbi Meir compares them to a lantern which, like human beings, is wider on the bottom than it is on top. This indicates another aspect of the garments. Their purpose was not just there to cover the individual, but to fit him or her like a glove. This is kindness with forethought. Hashem was concerned with providing Adam and Chavah with garments that fit, were appropriate, and in "style." It was this unique concern for another's sensitivities that made this chesed stand out. It was not just chesed; it was tzedakah and chesed combined.

When Moshe Rabbeinu died, Hashem did not allow anyone else to arrange for his burial. Hashem wanted to do so personally. This was a lesson in chesed. Do not delegate; do it yourself. The Torah begins and concludes with chesed. The Torah is not demonstrating ordinary chesed to us.

We are not learning about saving someone from disaster or raising untold sums of money for some serious financial straits. No, this is not about the exotic acts of kindness. It is about responding to the individual needs of each person. This is chesed at its zenith.

Putting chesed into action is to take the time to notice people, to look at their faces, to look into their eyes, to appreciate each and every one with sensitivity to their individual needs. Sometimes it takes a big heart, the heart of a gadol b'Yisrael, Torah leader, whose heart encompasses the hearts and lives of so many, or it might be the innocent sensitivity of a young child that teaches us how to act with kindness.

A well-known rabbi went to visit a wealthy philanthropist for a donation. This was a man who, albeit not personally observant, supported the Torah study of many institutions. Curious, the rabbi asked him why he did this. Where did he develop such sensitivity towards yeshivos?

He gave the following explanation: "I was a wild teenager, going from trouble to trouble. My parents sent me to Radin to the yeshivah of the saintly Chafetz Chaim. Perhaps there I would be inspired to calm down. Regrettably, I was not accepted. I just was not considered yeshivah material. I was not granted permission even to sleep overnight in the yeshivah. But, where would I spend the night? The Chafetz Chaim said, 'You can stay at my home.' So, I went home with the Chafetz Chaim.

"The Chafetz Chaim's home was a two room shack. He gave me his own bed. The room had no light and no heat. Apparently, the great Torah leader was a very poor man.

"I was a young boy, accustomed to a hot meal and a warm bed. Laying there at night, I was shivering from cold, tossing and turning, trying to fall asleep. The Chafetz Chaim walked in and noticed the frigid air in the room. Thinking to himself, 'It is too cold in here for such a young boy,' the sage took off his long frockcoat which was probably going to be his protective clothing for the night, and placed it on me, over the covers.

"Years later, I became a wealthy Jew. Although I had never become observant, I never forgot that incident – how the Chafetz Chaim gave me his bed and covered me with his coat. I was a total stranger and he owed me nothing. Yet, he felt my pain and showed his love for me. I never forgot that feeling of being cared for and loved by a total stranger. I was so moved by that act of

unsolicited kindness that whenever a representative of a Torah institution approaches me for a donation, I give it to him gladly. I will never forget that cold night in that little house, and the elderly man with the giant heart.”

The Chafetz Chaim saw a need and acted. He did not say, “I have already done enough.” He saw that more was needed for this individual situation, and he immediately responded in turn. His act of chesed lived on in the beneficiary’s reciprocity.