

"An Amoni or Moavi may not enter Hashem's marriage group even after the tenth generation... (This is) because they did not greet you with bread and wife water." (23:4,5)

The spiritual fate of Amon and Moav was sealed not because of immorality, murder, or other vicious crimes, but because of their lack of *chesed*, kindness. An Egyptian who converts, even an Amalkite, is accepted into Hashem's congregation after the third generation. This is not the case with an Amoni or Moavi. This exclusion is due to their apparent disdain of the *middah*, character trait of *chesed*. *Klal Yisrael's* most vicious enemies, perpetrators of the most heinous acts of murder, can one day "make it." In contrast, the one who rejects *chesed* can not. This is perplexing! What greater lack of *chesed* is there than wanton murder?

Obviously, a murderous trait can be expunged after a specific amount of time. On the other hand, a lack of *chesed* is a blemish upon one's character which can not be expurgated. Why is the *middah* of *chesed* the defining principle of Jewish law.

Horav Avigdor Nebenzahl asserts that *chesed* is the single component in character development which makes man G-d-like. Hashem created the world purely as a sublime act of altruism. Man is implored to imitate Hashem in his every endeavor. Consequently, to the extent that one dedicates himself to the pursuit and fulfillment of *chesed*, he imitates Hashem. To deny *chesed* is essentially a form of distancing oneself from the Almighty. The spark of the Divine is attracted to acts of loving kindness. Thus, Amon and Moav distanced themselves from Hashem by rejecting *chesed*. One can not participate as a member of the Jewish people and simultaneously remain distant from Hashem. *Klal Yisrael* and Hashem are one. To distance oneself from Hashem is to sever himself from the source of existence.