

Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead, and spoke to the Bnei Cheis. (23:3)

This group of people, *Bnei Cheis*, is mentioned ten times in the *parsha*. The Torah is frugal with words and does not use an extra word unless it teaches a lesson or has unique significance. Therefore, the ten-time redundancy of *Bnei Cheis* (nine times in this *parshah* and once in *Parshas Vayechi*) begs elucidation. *Chazal* explain that these ten mentions correspond to the Ten Commandments, in order to teach the lesson that whoever assists in the business dealings of a *tzaddik*, righteous person, it is considered as if he carried out the Ten Commandments. This is a powerful statement. We have no question that assisting a *tzaddik* is laudatory, but that it is compared to fulfilling the Ten Commandments seems a bit “over the top.”

In “Wisdom For Living,” *Horav Noach Weinberg, zl*, explains (taken from his weekly *shmuess*, ethical discourse) that *Chazal* are teaching us that one act can make history, one achievement can alter a person’s life trajectory and transform him into a different person. *Bnei Cheis*, the *Chittim*, were a fierce nation, the name *Cheis* derived from the Hebrew word for fear. These *Bnei Cheis*, who were feared by everyone, were responsible for helping Avraham *Avinu*, our Patriarch, purchase the *Meoras HaMachpeilah* from Efron. One good deed for an individual whom they considered to be a Prince of G-d, is equal to their having fulfilled the Ten Commandments. By performing this singular act, they gave value to their life. One deed can make a world of difference. One act can alter the course of one’s life, thus elevating the value of his benefactor’s life. By helping someone change, one can create and concretize his place in history. This does not mean that he can now sit back, retire and rest on his laurels (like so many do). On the contrary, once he makes such an impact, he has elevated himself to the point that more is expected of him.

Life is about achievement. Life is about making an impact that lasts for eternity. Imagine changing the life of a fellow Jew – physically, emotionally, spiritually. To the naysayers, I say: We do not measure our impact by the beneficiary’s sense of gratitude. Just because he might be unable to acknowledge his debt of gratitude to you does not mean that it does not exist. We know whether we have succeeded and what change we have effected in another person’s life. He may not know how – or he may be too small of a person – to acknowledge it, but we know and Hashem knows. One act changes two lives: the life of the beneficiary and the life of the benefactor.

In the *Musrai Ha’Shlah*, the *Shlah HaKadosh* writes, concerning Avraham *Avinu’s ba’bayamim*, “well on in years” (24:1), literally translated, “came with his days”: Avraham lived a full life; every day was purposeful and filled with acts of *chesed* or Torah study; he actually came with his days.” *Tzarich adam liros she’b’chol yom v’yom mimei chayav yaaseh bo tov v’lo ra*, “A person should see to it that every day of his life he performs good, not bad. Only then does that day maintain its existence. A day has value and life from the good that is performed on it. Thus, a person who has wasted his days and not performed good deeds is considered to be deceased (even though he is alive).” Every day of life receives its value and designation as a day of life by virtue of the good that

one generates on that day.

We are able to transform a potentially bad situation into a good one, thus elevating it and ourselves. That one act can alter our own life's trajectory. Once, the anteroom outside of the *Chiddushei HaRim's* office was filled with Jews who had traveled from all over to petition the *Rebbe* for a *brachah*. A man entered the waiting room and proceeded to cut the line. The *gabbai*, *Rebbe's* sexton, who was in charge of all comings and goings with regard to the *Rebbe*, explained to the newcomer that there was a system in force, and a person was to enter the *Rebbe's* office when the *gabbai* signaled that it was his turn. The *gabbai's* explanation only served to enrage the man even more, to the point that he slapped the *gabbai* across the face.

The *gabbai* entered the *Rebbe's* office and reported what had happened, without divulging the incident of the outrageous slap. (The *Rebbe* did not require the *gabbai* to inform him of every detail that happened.)

Finally, the man's turn arrived, and he went into the *Rebbe's* room and burst out in copious weeping: "*Rebbe*, I need a *brachah*. My wife and I have been married for years and have yet to be blessed with children."

The *Chiddushei HaRim* immediately recognized from the *gabbai's* relating of the events that this man was the one who had disgraced his *gabbai* and said, "I will not listen to your request until you apologize to the *gabbai*." (The *Rebbe* was acutely aware that the man's actions were the result of his anxiety over not having children. Nonetheless, one's anxious tension, however justified, is not an excuse to disparage or physically impair the victim of his ire.)

The man broke down and apologized profusely to the *gabbai*. "I am so distraught over the situation that I do not know what I am doing."

The *gabbai* heard this and said, "*Rebbe*, I will forgive him, but only on one condition. The *Rebbe* must grant him a *brachah* to have children." The *Rebbe* was impressed with his *gabbai's* request, and he gave the *brachah*. One year later, the man and his wife were blessed with a child. The *gabbai* transformed a bad situation into one of hope and, ultimately, joy. One act changed many lives.

Horav Chaim Kreisworth, zl, was a brilliant *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshivah*. His encyclopedic knowledge of Torah was equaled by his sensitivity to people and their *mitzvah* observance. By this, I mean that he cared deeply that they act appropriately as observant Jews and not fall prey to societal trends that were distasteful both morally and spiritually. The following is one instance which demonstrates how a *Rav's* thoughtfulness can have a major impact.

A member of *Rav Kreisworth's kehillah*, congregation/community remarked to him that he spent too much time at weddings. (The idea that a lay person has no business criticizing or making

“suggestions” to his *Rav* – in and of itself gross *chutzpah* – is not addressed here.) “Other *rabbanim* stay a few minutes and then leave to return home to their Torah study,” the man said. “By remaining so long at weddings, you intimate to people (as if it is their business) that your time is not that important.”

Rav Kreisworth replied, “There is a considerable amount of *pritzus*, unrestrained, amoral, behavior at the weddings (behavior that is neither Jewish in nature, nor belongs at a wedding). It is, sadly, a sign of the times. As long as I am at the wedding (out of respect), however, the people behave with a modicum of restraint. Therefore, I remain for the entire wedding to prevent this misconduct.” This one act was an indication of his greatness.